



Yukon Legislative Assembly

1st Session

35th Legislature

Index to **HANSARD**

March 3, 2022 to April 28, 2022

NOTE

The 2022 Spring Sitting of the First Session of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature occupies two volumes

	Issue Numbers	Page Numbers
Volume 4	43 - 57	1205 - 1645
Volume 5	58 - 74	1647 - 2105

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

ACTING CHAIR'S STATEMENTS

Re addressing remarks through the Chair (Acting Chair White),	1929
---	------

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading	
(Motion to adjourn) (Dixon),	1225
(Time expired) (Clarke, N.),	1262
(Time expired) (Hassard),	1295
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading (Time expired) (Dixon),	1563
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76 (Amendment to) (Time expired) (Pillai),	393
Amendment to Motion No. 113 removed from Order Paper,	859
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	
(Motion to adjourn) (Division) (Dixon),	924
Motion No. 239 - Re establishing a publicly funded community walk-in clinic (Time expired)	
(White),	1052
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (Time	
expired) (Van Bibber),	1328
Motion No. 378 - Re fertility treatment tax credit (Time expired) (McPhee),	1786

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner Angélique Bernard,	1590, 1691, 2104
---------------------------------------	------------------

BILLS (see **BILLS DROPPED FROM ORDER PAPER**, **BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS** and **GOVERNMENT BILLS**)

BILLS DROPPED FROM ORDER PAPER

No. 300 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act</i> ,	1329
No. 303 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)</i> ,	1977

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
Bill dropped from Order Paper,	1329

BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS *(continued)***No. 301 - Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act** (Cathers)

Introduction and First Reading, 259

No. 302 - Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022) (Cathers)

Introduction and First Reading, 1230

Second Reading, 1306–1327

Amendment proposed (Dixon), 1318

Amendment negatived (Division), 1322

Division (Negatived), 1327

No. 303 - Act to Amend the Education Act (2022) (Tredger)

Introduction and First Reading, 1445

Bill dropped from Order Paper, 1977

No. 304 - Act to Amend the Education Act (Tredger)

Introduction and First Reading, 1478

Second Reading, 1556–1563, 1763–1776

Amendment proposed (Dixon), 1763

Amendment negatived (Division), 1766

Division, 1776

Committee of the Whole, 1776–1783

Amendment to clause 2 proposed (Streicker), 1782

Amendment to clause 2 agreed to, 1783

Clause 3 negatived, 1783

Reported with amendment, 1783

Third Reading, 1956–1966

Division, 1966

Assent, 2104

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

Questions, oral:

Health care services, 1364

Midwifery in Yukon, 1268

Opioid crisis, 1449

Social assistance rates, 1599

Speaks on:

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*: Second Reading, 1455Bill No. 14: *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022)*: Second Reading, .. 1367Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*: Second Reading, 1247

BLAKE, ANNIE *(continued)*

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Aging in place,	1596
Cross-border tourism,	1447

CATHERS, BRAD

Questions, oral:

Cost of living,	1363
Cyber security,	1215
Education system,	1712
Electrical rebate,	1510
Flood preparedness,	1302, 1954
Health human resource strategy,	1762, 1792
Immunization program,	1450
Magnetic resonance imaging program,	1735
Opioid crisis,	1923, 2034
Physician recruitment and retention,	1569, 1737
RCMP funding,	1980, 2006
Rent control,	1337, 2084
Stevens Quarry development,	1683, 1868
Territorial medical director,	1793
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staffing,	1656

Speaks on:

Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1454
Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1689
Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1349
Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1398
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)</i> :	
Second Reading,	1347
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)</i> :	
Third Reading,	1460
Bill No. 14: <i>Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022)</i> : Second Reading, ..	1367
Bill No. 14: <i>Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1395
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022</i> : Second Reading,	1368
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022</i> : Third Reading,	1396
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	1401

CATHERS, BRAD (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Third Reading,	1668
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1274
Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1339
Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Third Reading,	1397
Bill No. 302 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)</i> :	
Second Reading,	1306, 1319, 1326
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1766
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Third Reading,	1962
Ministerial statements:	
Aging in place,	1596
Atlin hydro expansion project,	1265
Chronic conditions support program,	1889
Community safety planning program,	1361
Opportunities Yukon Cornerstone project,	2005
Motion No. 282 - Re provisional Standing Order 76 during the 2022 Spring Sitting, ..	1272
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,	1546
Motion No. 294 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via video conference due to COVID-19 during the 2022 Spring Sitting,	1237
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2,	2090

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

Re relevance - amendment to a bill,	1354
Re when raising a point of order, don't characterize another member's speech as a tirade, ..	1353

CLARKE, NILS

Speaks on:

Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	1405
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1260, 1273
Ministerial statements:	
Green infrastructure program,	1949
North Klondike Highway construction project,	1918, 1919
Solar energy installations at highway camps,	1506, 1507

CLARKE, NILS (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Yukon aviation industry,	1388, 1389
Yukon Parks Strategy,	1863, 1864
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, .	1545

CLARKE, YVONNE

Capital project development progress,	1450
---	------

Questions, oral:

Affordable housing,	1233, 1891, 2088
Affordable housing and land development,	2059
Canada Winter Games infrastructure,	1512
Child Development Centre building,	1572, 1624
Chilkoot Trail Inn social housing,	1842
Consultation with Filipino community,	1684
Financial support for fertility treatment and surrogacy-related expenses (Clarke, Y.),	1734
Macaulay Lodge site development,	1923
McIntyre Creek park,	1842
Psychology profession regulation,	1216
Whistle Bend development,	1303, 1866
Whistle Bend pond maintenance,	1954
Whistle Bend school,	1391, 1655

Speaks on:

Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1259
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1766

Ministerial statements:

Housing initiatives fund,	1733
Macaulay Lodge site redevelopment,	1418
Safe at Home Society supportive housing project,	1534
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, .	1542

CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Reads bills for Assent,	1590, 1691, 2104
Reports on Petition No. 9,	1299
Reports on Petition No. 10,	1506
Reports on Petition No. 11,	1566
Reports on Petition No. 12,	2030

COMMISSIONER (Hon. Angélique Bernard)

Assents to bills, 1590, 1691, 2104

COMMITTEES, REPORTS OF STANDING

Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, Standing Committee on

3rd report tabled (dated December 15, 2021) (Sessional Paper No. 39) (Clarke, N.), .. 1208

4th report tabled (dated April 25, 2021) (Sessional Paper No. 44) (Clarke, N.), 2004

Public Accounts, Standing Committee on

2nd report tabled (dated April 2022) (Sessional Paper No. 47) (Dixon), 2029

Rules, Elections and Privileges, Standing Committee on

2nd report tabled (dated April 2022) (Sessional Paper No. 49) (Mostyn), 2053

3rd report tabled (dated April 2022) (Sessional Paper No. 50) (Mostyn), 2053

COUNTS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

(Amendment to clause 10), 1429

Bill No. 13: *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*

(Amendment to clause 2) (Negatived), 1355

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* (Motion that all clauses, schedules, and the title

of Bill No. 204 be deemed read and carried), 2103

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon University

(Negatived), 1739

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7 - Re appearance of witnesses from the Yukon

Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation (Negatived), 1797

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

Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood, 1753

DEPUTY CHAIR'S STATEMENTS

Re audibility of member's comments, 1673

Re request for a private member to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole, . 1829, 1925, 1986, 2011, 2036, 2061, 2090

DIVISIONS

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021):</i>	
Third Reading,	1492
Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022):</i>	
Second Reading,	1460
Third Reading,	1691
Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022):</i>	
Second Reading,	1349
Third Reading,	1398
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022):</i>	
Second Reading,	1348
Third Reading,	1461
Bill No. 14: <i>Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022):</i>	
Second Reading,	1368
Third Reading,	1395
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022:</i>	
Second Reading,	1369
Third Reading,	1396
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22:</i>	
Second Reading,	1407
Third Reading,	1669
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23:</i>	
Second Reading,	1346
Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23:</i>	
Second Reading,	1343
Third Reading,	1397
Bill No. 302 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022):</i>	
Amendment to motion for Second Reading (Negatived),	1322
Second Reading (Negatived),	1327
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act:</i>	
Amendment to motion for second reading (Negatived),	1766
Second Reading,	1776
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act: Third Reading,</i>	1966
Motion No. 282 - Re provisional Standing Order 76 during the 2022 Spring Sitting,	1273
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (Negatived), ..	1556

DIXON, CURRIE

Questions, oral:

Cannabis retail sales,	1759, 1819
<i>Child and Family Services Act</i> amendments,	1568
Child and Youth Advocate recommendations to Department of Education,	1709, 1710
Conflict of interest re Old Crow wellness centre,	2010, 2032
Consultation re school replacement,	1921
Cost of living,	1267
Dawson City recreation centre,	1535
Fuel prices,	1362
Land disposition process,	1334
Mandatory paid sick leave,	1338
Mining within municipal boundaries,	1681
Public sector growth,	1952, 2055
School replacement,	1419, 1447
Sexual abuse within elementary school,	1211
Yukon Fish and Game Association funding,	1652

Speaks on:

Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1458
Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1687
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1237
Bill No. 302 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1317
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1561, 1763
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Third Reading,	1960

Ministerial statements:

Early learning childcare,	1479
Russian invasion of Ukraine,	1210
Tank farm site development,	1300
Universal childcare,	1708
Yukon University strategic plan,	1790
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,	1554

FILED DOCUMENTS

42. *Report of Amanda Rogers, Independent Reviewer, in the matter of an independent review undertaken by the Government of Yukon, Department of Education, Re: Government Response to Allegation of Sexual Abuse Committed by Educational Assistant William Auclair-Bellemare at Hidden Valley Elementary School - January 31, 2022 (McLean),* 1208

FILED DOCUMENTS *(continued)*

43. *Action Plan for the Hidden Valley Elementary School Report - February 18, 2022* (McLean), 1208
44. Russian invasion of Ukraine, letter re (dated March 3, 2022) from Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, Yukon, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Premier Northwest Territories, and Hon. P.J. Akeegok, Premier, Nunavut, to Hon. John Horgan, Chair, Council of the Federation (Silver), 1208
45. *Making Work Safe - A Summary on the Engagement on Paid Sick Leave* (Tredger), 1208
46. Ongoing extra security costs in the Main Administration Building, letter re (dated March 14, 2022) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge to Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Cathers), 1387
47. Regulatory body for psychologists, letter re (dated March 14, 2022) from Reagan Gale, President, Psychological Society of Yukon to Brendan Hanley, Member of Parliament (Blake), 1387
48. *Better Buildings Program Oversight Committee and Working Group Terms of Reference* (Mostyn), 1412
49. *Better Buildings Working Group and Oversight Committee: Administrative approach for municipal and territorial governments* (Mostyn), 1412
50. Better Build Program Committees, letter re (dated March 7, 2022) from Gord Curran, President, Association of Yukon Communities to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 1412
51. Fleet Vehicle Agency Business Plan 2022 to 2025 (Clarke, N.), 1417
52. Recommendations on climate action, letter re (dated March 8, 2022) from Sandy Silver, Premier, to Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change panelists (Tredger), 1477
53. Amendment supporting LGBTQ2S+ students, letter re (dated March 23, 2022) from Theodore Hupé, President, Yukon Association of Educational Professionals, to Members of the Legislative Assembly (Tredger), 1532
54. Department of Education's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy, letter re (dated February 15, 2022) from students of the Porter Creek Secondary School's Gender and Sexuality Alliance to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Tredger), 1532
55. Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act*, letter re (dated March 23, 2022) from Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (Dixon), 1566
56. Comments about Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, letter re (dated March 11, 2022) from Diane McLeod-McKay, Information and Privacy Commissioner, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition and Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (Dixon), 1566

FILED DOCUMENTS *(continued)*

57. Bill No. 11, Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act, letter re (dated March 17, 2022) from Peter Johnston, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (McPhee),	1566
58. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy, letter re (dated November 20, 2019) from Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Education to Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance (McPhee),	1566
59. Child Rights Impact Assessment for Proposed Amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, letter re (dated March 7, 2022) from Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (McPhee),	1595
60. Apology for error during Oral Question Period, letter re (dated March 25, 2022) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (White),	1595
61. Motion No. 320, letter re (dated March 31, 2022) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (McLean),	1678
62. Investigations at Jack Hulland Elementary School, letter re (dated March 31, 2022) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate (McLean),	1678
63. Bill No. 304, <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> , letter re (dated March 31, 2022) from Tharian Botting, President, All Genders Yukon Society, to Emily Tredger, Member for Whitehorse Centre (Tredger),	1731
64. <i>Becoming — Strategic Plan 2022-2027 — Yukon University</i> (McLean),	1789
65. “YDC / YEC Witnesses Planned Opening Remarks — 07 April 2022” (Streicker),	1986
66. <i>Workers’ Advocate Office 2021 Annual Report</i> (McPhee),	2049
67. Yukon’s Policing Priorities for 2022-23, letter re (dated March 25, 2022) from Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Justice, to Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard, Commanding Officer, RCMP M Division (McPhee),	2080

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
Committee of the Whole,	1374–1383, 1407—1413, 1423–1429
Amendment proposed to clause 10 (Mostyn),	1427
Amendment to clause 10 agreed to (Count),	1429
Reported with amendment,	1441

GOVERNMENT BILLS *(continued)*

Third Reading,	1485–1492
Division,	1492
Assent,	1590
Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> (McPhee)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1299
Second Reading,	1451–1459
Division,	1460
Committee of the Whole,	1573–1590, 1606–1616, 1631–1645
Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 19 through 44 read and agreed to,	1641
Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 46 through 67 read and agreed to,	1641
Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 79 through 120 read and agreed to,	1643
Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 122 through 133 read and agreed to,	1644
Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 143 through 151 read and agreed to,	1645
Reported without amendment,	1645
Third Reading,	1685–1690
Division,	1691
Assent,	1691
Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> (Silver)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1230
Second Reading,	1348–1349
Division,	1349
Committee of the Whole,	1355–1357, 1371–1373
Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and title read and agreed to,	1373
Reported without amendment,	1383
Third Reading,	1397–1398
Division,	1398
Assent,	1590
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)</i> (McPhee)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1264
Second Reading,	1346–1348
Division,	1348
Committee of the Whole,	1350–1355
Amendment proposed to clause 2 (Cathers),	1352
Amendment to clause 2 negatived (Count),	1355
Reported without amendment,	1357

GOVERNMENT BILLS *(continued)*

Third Reading,	1460–1461
Division,	1461
Assent,	1590
Bill No. 14: <i>Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022)</i> (McPhee)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1331
Second Reading,	1367–1368
Division,	1368
Committee of the Whole,	1369–1370
Reported without amendment,	1383
Third Reading,	1395
Division,	1395
Assent,	1590
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022</i> (McPhee)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1331
Second Reading,	1368–1369
Division,	1369
Committee of the Whole,	1370–1371
Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and title read and agreed to,	1371
Reported without amendment,	1383
Third Reading,	1396
Division,	1396
Assent,	1590
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> (Silver)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1208
Second Reading,	1398–1407
Division,	1407
Committee of the Whole, . 1429–1441, 1461–1472, 1492–1501, 1513–1528, 1602–1606, 1628–1631, 1657–1668	
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7 cleared or carried,	1494
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 2 cleared or carried,	1494
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3 cleared or carried,	1501
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 15 cleared or carried,	1501
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 55 cleared or carried,	1606
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10 cleared or carried,	1631
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18 cleared or carried,	1662
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8 cleared or carried,	1668

GOVERNMENT BILLS *(continued)*

Reported without amendment,	1668
Third Reading,	1668
Division,	1669
Assent,	1691
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> (Silver)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1208
Second Reading,	1216–1225, 1237–1262, 1273–1295, 1343–1346
Division,	1346
Committee of the Whole, . 1669–1673, 1691–1703, 1713–1728, 1739–1753, 1798–1809, 1820–1834, 1843–1859, 1870–1885, 1895–1916, 1925–1946, 1966–1975, 1985–2001, 2011–2025, 2036–2048, 2061–2074, 2090–2103	
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54 cleared or carried,	1701
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10 cleared or carried,	1851
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7 cleared or carried,	1915
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18 cleared or carried,	1945
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 27 cleared or carried,	1986
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 22 cleared or carried,	1991
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51 cleared or carried,	2023
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 12 cleared or carried,	2024
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11 cleared or carried,	2069
Motion re deeming all clauses, schedules and the title read and carried (Count),	2103
Reported without amendment,	2104
Third Reading,	2104
Division,	2104
Assent,	2104
Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> (Silver)	
Introduction and First Reading,	1208
Second Reading,	1339–1343
Division,	1343
Committee of the Whole,	1373–1374
Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules and the title read and agreed to,	1374
Reported without amendment,	1383
Third Reading,	1396–1397
Division,	1397
Assent,	1590

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

No. 217 - Re supporting acting chief medical officer of health's recommendations	
(Streicker)	
Notice,	861
Debate,	921–924
Debate adjourned (Division) (Dixon),	924
No. 282 - Re provisional Standing Order 76 during the 2022 Spring Sitting (Streicker)	
Notice,	1208
Debate,	1271–1273
Motion agreed to (Division),	1273
No. 294 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via video conference due to COVID-19 during the 2022 Spring Sitting (Streicker)	
Notice,	1226
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	1236
Debate,	1236–1237
Motion agreed to,	1237
No. 295 - Re authorization for the Assembly to meet via video conference during the 2022 Spring Sitting (Streicker)	
Notice,	1226
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	1237
Debate,	1237
Motion agreed to,	1237
No. 296 - Re pairing arrangements for the 2022 Spring Sitting (Streicker)	
Notice,	1226
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	1237
Debate,	1237
Motion agreed to,	1237
No. 302 - Re Membership of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges	
Notice,	1264
Debate,	1895
Motion agreed to,	1895
No. 427 - Re appointment to the Yukon Human Rights Commission	
Notice,	2049
Unanimous consent re moving motion without notice,	2089
Debate,	2089
Motion agreed to,	2089

HARPER, JEREMY (see SPEAKER)**HASSARD, STACEY**

Questions, oral:

Beaver River watershed land use plan,	1681
Contract procurement,	1653
Cost of living,	1758, 1981
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures,	1213
COVID-19 vaccine requirement rollout,	1270
Dawson City recreation centre,	1508
Electrical rebate,	1536
Flood preparedness,	1366
Fuel prices,	1334
Highways projects,	1816
<i>Motor Vehicles Act</i> amendments,	1394
Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement,	1393
Ross River School,	1571
Secure medical unit,	1795
Universal paid sick leave,	1951
Wildlife harvest allocations,	1627

Questions, written:

Request for bids to supply and deliver calcium chloride,	1916
--	------

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Third Reading,	1486
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1293, 1343

Ministerial statements:

Green infrastructure program,	1950
North Klondike Highway construction project,	1919
Solar energy installations at highway camps,	1506
Yukon aviation industry,	1388
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,	1551

ISTCHENKO, WADE

Questions, oral:

Alaska fisheries impact on Yukon River salmon,	1839
Campground development,	1761

ISTCHENKO, WADE (*continued*)

Questions, oral:

Cost of living,	1232, 2086
Finlayson caribou herd,	1736
Fuel prices,	2056
Fuel-wood supply,	1923
Kluane school relocation,	1422
Land costs,	1983
Mining industry greenhouse gas reduction targets,	1538
Moose management,	1390, 1626
Rural fire protection services,	1305
Rural solid-waste transfer stations,	1484

Speaks on:

Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1245
--	------

Ministerial statements:

Coffee Gold project,	1231
Electric vehicle charging stations,	1756
White River First Nation community centre,	1622
Yukon Parks Strategy,	1864
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, .	1549

KENT, SCOTT

Questions, oral:

Capital plan for schools,	1422, 1448
Contract procurement,	2084
Diabetes programs for children,	1865
French immersion programming and capital plan for schools,	1920
Fuel-wood supply,	1890
Inclusive and special education,	1601
Mining legislation,	1538, 1840
School busing,	1623
School replacement,	1419, 1480
Teacher remuneration,	1955, 1984
Whistle Bend school,	1815

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Wolverine mine site,	1837
----------------------------	------

KENT, SCOTT (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, . 1553

Motion No. 427 - Re appointment to the Yukon Human Rights Commission, 2089

LEGISLATIVE RETURNS

33. 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* - NGO vaccination rates (McLean), 1208
34. 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* - supported child care worker program (McLean), 1208
35. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* - early learning framework (McLean), 1208
36. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* - supported child care worker program (McLean), 1208
37. Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: French immersion programming and capital plan for schools (McLean), 1208
38. Response to Written Question No. 3 re: development schedule for Whistle Bend (Mostyn), 1208
39. Response to Written Question No. 13 re: clearance times at the Fraser border crossing (Clarke, N.), 1208
40. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* - masking in schools (McLean), 1621
41. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* - additional COVID-19 staff (McLean), 1888
42. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to a ministerial statement re: COVID-19 testing at border crossings — Klondike Road Relay (Pillai), 2002
43. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to a ministerial statement re: COVID-19 testing at border crossings — ArriveCAN app (Pillai), 2002
44. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to a ministerial statement re: COVID-19 testing at border crossings — Chilkoot Trail (Pillai), 2002

LEGISLATIVE RETURNS *(continued)*

45. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to general debate on Vote 54, Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 204, First Appropriation Act 2022-23 - Conrad historic site (Pillai),	2002
46. Response to Written Question No. 15 re: Investing in Canada infrastructure program (Mostyn),	2029
47. Response to Written Question No. 16 re: Mayo reservoir project (Mostyn),	2029
48. Response to Written Question No. 17 re: Carmacks arena (Mostyn),	2029
49. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 204, <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> - Education Appeal Tribunal (McLean),	2029
50. Response to oral question from Ms. McLeod re: forestry industry (Streicker),	2053
51. Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: mining industry greenhouse gas reduction targets (Streicker),	2053
52. Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: mining legislation (Streicker),	2053
53. Response to oral question from Mr. Dixon re: mining within municipal boundaries (Streicker),	2053
54. Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: land costs (Streicker),	2053
55. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> - Yukon nominee program (Pillai),	2053
56. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> - Yukon nominee program (Pillai),	2053
57. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> - contractor engagement on Old Crow project (Clarke, N.),	2053
58. Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: teacher remuneration (Streicker),	2080
59. Response to Written Question No. 5 re: housing projects (Pillai),	2080

McLEAN, JEANIE

Speaks on:

Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1455
Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1689
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	1404
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1289
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1558
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Third Reading,	1958

McLEAN, JEANIE (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Early learning childcare,	1479, 1480
Universal childcare,	1707, 1708
Yukon University strategic plan,	1790, 1791

McLEOD, PATTI

Questions, oral:

Canada Winter Games infrastructure,	1737
COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding,	1655
COVID-19 vaccine requirement rollout,	1269
Faro community support services,	2060
Inclusive and special education,	1761
Individualized education plans,	1598
Recycling diversion credit program,	1868
Rent control,	1268
Support for seniors,	1893
Waste-water testing for COVID-19,	1794
Watson Lake continuing care,	1509
Wildland firefighters workers' compensation coverage,	1305

Questions, written:

Carmacks arena,	1917
Investing in Canada infrastructure program,	1754
Mayo reservoir project,	1916

Speaks on:

Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23: Second Reading</i> ,	1293
--	------

Ministerial statements:

Community fire halls and recreation infrastructure,	2030
Lot development,	2054
Polarettes Gymnastics Club facility,	1979
Wildland fire management agreement,	1332
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, .	1550

McPHEE, TRACY-ANNE

Speaks on:

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022):*

Second Reading,	1452, 1459
-----------------------	------------

McPHEE, TRACY-ANNE *(continued)*

Speaks on:

Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022):</i>	
Third Reading,	1685, 1690
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022):</i>	
Second Reading,	1346, 1347
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022):</i>	
Third Reading,	1460, 1461
Bill No. 14: <i>Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022):</i> Second Reading, ..	1367
Bill No. 14: <i>Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022):</i> Third Reading,	1395
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022:</i> Second Reading,	1368
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022:</i> Third Reading,	1396
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22:</i> Second Reading,	1402
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23:</i> Second Reading,	1285
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act:</i> Second Reading,	1766, 1768
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act:</i> Third Reading,	1961
Ministerial statements:	
Aging in place,	1595, 1597
Chronic conditions support program,	1889, 1890
Community safety planning program,	1361, 1362
Opportunities Yukon Cornerstone project,	2005, 2006
Motion No. 427 - Re appointment to the Yukon Human Rights Commission,	2089

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Aging in place (McPhee/Cathers/Blake),	1595
Atlin hydro expansion project (Streicker/Cathers/Tredger),	1265
Canada digital adoption program (Pillai/Van Bibber/White),	1679
Chronic conditions support program (McPhee/Cathers/White),	1889
Coffee Gold project (Streicker/Istchenko/White),	1230
Community fire halls and recreation infrastructure (Mostyn/McLeod/Tredger),	2030
Community safety planning program (McPhee/Cathers/White),	1361
COVID-19 relief and recovery fund for non-governmental organizations (Pillai/Van Bibber/White),	1567
COVID-19 testing at border crossings (Pillai/Van Bibber/White),	1650
Cross-border tourism (Pillai/Van Bibber/Blake),	1446
Early learning childcare (McLean/Dixon/White),	1479
Electric vehicle charging stations (Streicker/Istchenko/Tredger),	1756
Great Yukon Summer Freeze (Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger),	2082

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS *(continued)*

Green infrastructure program (Clarke, N./Hassard/Tredger),	1949
Housing initiatives fund (Pillai/Clarke, Y./Tredger),	1732
Lot development (Mostyn/McLeod/Tredger),	2054
Macaulay Lodge site redevelopment (Pillai/Clarke, Y./Tredger),	1417
North Klondike Highway construction project (Clarke, N./Hassard/Tredger),	1918
Opportunities Yukon Cornerstone project (McPhee/Cathers/Tredger),	2005
Polarettes Gymnastics Club facility (Mostyn/McLeod/White),	1978
Russian invasion of Ukraine (Silver/Dixon/White),	1209
Safe at Home Society supportive housing project (Pillai/Clarke, Y./Tredger),	1533
Solar energy installations at highway camps (Clarke, N./Hassard/Tredger),	1506
Tank farm site development (Pillai/Dixon/Tredger),	1300
Universal childcare (McLean/Dixon/White),	1707
White River First Nation community centre (Mostyn/Istchenko/White),	1621
Wildland fire management agreement (Mostyn/McLeod/White),	1332
Wolverine mine site (Streicker/Kent/White),	1837
Wood Street Centre dress code (McLean/Clarke, Y./White),	1813
Yukon aviation industry (Clarke, N./Hassard/Tredger),	1388
Yukon Parks Strategy (Clarke, N./Istchenko/Tredger),	1863
Yukon University strategic plan (McLean/Dixon/White),	1790

MOSTYN, RICHARD

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Third Reading,	1485, 1489
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1249

Ministerial statements:

Community fire halls and recreation infrastructure,	2030, 2031
Lot development,	2054, 2055
Polarettes Gymnastics Club facility,	1978, 1979
White River First Nation community centre,	1621, 1623
Wildland fire management agreement,	1332, 1333
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2,	2089, 2090

MOTIONS (see GOVERNMENT MOTIONS, MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS, MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS and MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF)

MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**No. 6 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon University (Streicker)**

Moved,	1739
Debate,	1739
Motion negated (Count),	1739

No. 7 - Re appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation (Streicker)

Moved,	1796
Debate,	1796–1797
Motion negated (Count),	1797

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**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. 168 - Re reviewing social assistance rates (Blake)

Notice,	549
Debate,	622–632
Amendment proposed (Pillai),	632
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Mostyn),	633

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

Notice,	989
Debate,	1047–1052
Debate adjourned (Time expired) (McPhee),	1052

No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (Van Bibber)

Notice,	1209
Debate,	1328
Debate adjourned (Time expired) (Van Bibber),	1328
Debate,	1539–1555
Motion negated (Division),	1556

No. 378 - Re fertility treatment tax credit (Clarke, Y.)

Notice,	1728
Debate,	1783–1786
Debate adjourned (Time expired) (McPhee),	1786

MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS**No. 2 - Re concurrence in the 3rd Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges (Mostyn)**

Notice,	2075
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	2089
Debate,	2089–2090
Motion agreed to,	2090

MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF

Blake

Motion No. 349 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1565
--	------

Cathers

Motion No. 133,	1205
Motion No. 277 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1205
Motion No. 346 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1565
Motion No. 359 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1647
Motion No. 369 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1705
Motion No. 380 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1835

Clarke, Y.

Motions No. 141 and 264,	1205
Motion No. 379,	1755

Dixon

Motion No. 156,	1205
-----------------------	------

Istchenko

Motions No. 36, 37, 69 and 70,	1705
--------------------------------------	------

Kent

Motions No. 179, 230 and 262,	1205
Motion 284,	1415

McLeod

Motion No. 142,	1205
-----------------------	------

Mostyn

Motion No. 309 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1359
--	------

Tredger

Motion No. 394 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1835
--	------

Van Bibber

Motion No. 358 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1647
--	------

MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF *(continued)*

White

Motions No. 136, 151, 173, 226 and 227, 1205
 Motion No. 376, 1729
 Motion No. 381, 1835

NOTICE OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Opposition private members' business

Order of business for March 9, 2022 (Cathers/Tredger), 1271
 Order of business for March 23, 2022 (Tredger/Kent), 1512
 Order of business for April 6, 2022 (Tredger/Cathers), 1738
 Order of business for April 20, 2022 (Kent/Tredger), 1924

PAGES

Introduction of (Speaker Harper), 1205

PETITIONS

No. 9 - Re Wood Street School dress code (White)

Presented, 1264
 Not received, 1299

No. 10 - Re climate emergency (Tredger)

Presented, 1478
 Received, 1506
 Response (Streicker), 1678

No. 11 - Re pandemic policy forum (Cathers)

Presented, 1532
 Received, 1566
 Response (Silver), 1731

No. 12 - Re road safety in Rabbit's Foot Canyon area (Tredger)

Presented, 2004
 Received, 2030
 Response (Clarke, N.), 2080

PILLAI, RANJ

Speaks on:

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23: Second Reading*, 1254
 Bill No. 302 - *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022): Second Reading*, . 1322

PILLAI, RANJ *(continued)*

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Canada digital adoption program,	1679, 1680
COVID-19 relief and recovery fund for non-governmental organizations,	1567, 1568
COVID-19 testing at border crossings,	1650, 1651
Cross-border tourism,	1446, 1447
Great Yukon Summer Freeze,	2082, 2083
Housing initiatives fund,	1732, 1733
Macaulay Lodge site redevelopment,	1417, 1418
Safe at Home Society supportive housing project,	1533, 1534
Tank farm site development,	1300, 1301

POINTS OF ORDER

Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood (Cathers),	1212
Speaker's ruling,	1212
Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood (Streicker),	1753
Deputy Chair's ruling,	1753
Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood (Streicker),	2057
Speaker's ruling,	2057
Re imputing false or unavowed motives to another member (Streicker),	2031
Speaker's ruling,	2031
Re insulting language (Clarke, N.),	1488
Speaker's ruling,	1488
Re insulting language (Streicker),	1487
Speaker's ruling,	1488
Re members not to refer to members by name (Cathers),	1257
Speaker's ruling,	1257
Re proper procedure for giving oral notice of a motion (Cathers),	1388
Re proper procedure for tabling returns and documents (Cathers),	1678
Speaker's ruling,	1678
Re relevance - amendment to a bill (Cathers),	1354
Chair's ruling,	1354
Re relevance - bill (Cathers),	1324
Speaker's ruling,	1324
Re volume of off-mic comments interfering with ability to hear (Streicker),	1342
Speaker's statement,	1342

QUESTIONS - ORAL

Affordable housing (Clarke, Y.), 1233, 1891, 2088

Affordable housing and land development

 (Clarke, Y.), 2059

 (Tredger), 1420

Alaska fisheries impact on Yukon River salmon (Istchenko), 1839

Beaver River watershed land use plan (Hassard), 1681

Campground development (Istchenko), 1761

Canada Winter Games infrastructure

 (Clarke, Y.), 1512

 (McLeod), 1737

Cannabis retail sales (Dixon), 1759, 1819

Capital plan for schools (Kent), 1422, 1448

Capital project development progress (Clarke, Y.), 1450

Carmacks arena (Van Bibber), 1868

Child and Family Services Act amendments (Dixon), 1568

Child and Youth Advocate recommendations to Department of Education (Dixon), 1709, 1710

Child Development Centre building (Clarke, Y.), 1572, 1624

Chilkoot Trail Inn social housing (Clarke, Y.), 1842

Conflict of interest re Old Crow wellness centre (Dixon), 2010, 2032

Consultation re school replacement (Dixon), 1921

Consultation with Filipino community (Clarke, Y.), 1684

Contract procurement

 (Hassard), 1653

 (Kent), 2084

Cost of living

 (Cathers), 1363

 (Dixon), 1267

 (Hassard), 1758, 1981

 (Istchenko), 1232, 2086

COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding (McLeod), 1655

COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures (Hassard), 1213

COVID-19 vaccine requirement rollout

 (Hassard), 1270

 (McLeod), 1269

Cyber security (Cathers), 1215

QUESTIONS – ORAL *(continued)*

Dawson City recreation centre	
(Dixon),	1535
(Hassard),	1508
(Van Bibber),	1481
Deaths at Whitehorse Emergency Shelter (Tredger),	2085
Department of Education sexual orientation and gender identity policy (Tredger),	1537
Diabetes programs for children (Kent),	1865
Education system (Cathers),	1712
Electrical rebate	
(Cathers),	1510
(Hassard),	1536
Electricity rates (Tredger),	1234, 1711
Essential services staffing (Tredger),	1953
Faro community support services (McLeod),	2060
Financial support for fertility treatment and surrogacy-related expenses (Clarke, Y.),	1734
Finlayson caribou herd (Istchenko),	1736
First Nation School Board (Van Bibber),	1894
Flood mitigation impact on Schwatka Lake float plane operations (Van Bibber),	1538
Flood preparedness	
(Cathers),	1302, 1954
(Hassard),	1366
Food security (Tredger),	1793
French immersion programming and capital plan for schools (Kent),	1920
Fuel prices	
(Dixon),	1362
(Hassard),	1334
(Istchenko),	2056
Fuel-wood supply	
(Istchenko),	1923
(Kent),	1890
Funding for non-governmental organizations (White),	1625
Health care services	
(Blake),	1364
(White),	1760
Health human resource strategy (Cathers),	1762, 1792
Hemodialysis services in Yukon (White),	1711

QUESTIONS – ORAL *(continued)*

Highways projects (Hassard),	1816
Homebuyer and tenancy advocacy (Tredger),	2058
Immunization program (Cathers),	1450
Inclusive and special education	
(Kent),	1601
(McLeod),	1761
(Van Bibber),	1597
(White),	1736
Individualized education plans (McLeod),	1598
International mining company regulatory oversight (Tredger),	2009
Kluane school relocation (Istchenko),	1422
Land costs (Istchenko),	1983
Land disposition process (Dixon),	1334
Land use planning (White),	1682
Long COVID support (White),	1509
Macaulay Lodge site development	
(Clarke, Y.),	1923
(Van Bibber),	1393
Magnetic resonance imaging program	
(Cathers),	1735
(White),	1600
Managed alcohol program (Tredger),	2008
Mandatory paid sick leave (Dixon),	1338
McIntyre Creek park (Clarke, Y.),	1842
Mental health counselling services for children (White),	1392
Mental health services for LGBTQ2S+ community (Tredger),	1365
Mental health services (White),	1818, 1841
Midwifery in Yukon	
(Blake),	1268
(White),	1892
Mine closure security (White),	1235
Mining industry greenhouse gas reduction targets (Istchenko),	1538
Mining legislation (Kent),	1538, 1840
Mining project oversight (Tredger),	2033
Mining within municipal boundaries (Dixon),	1681
Moose management (Istchenko),	1390, 1626

QUESTIONS – ORAL *(continued)*

<i>Motor Vehicles Act</i> amendments (Hassard),	1394
Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement (Hassard),	1393
Opioid crisis	
(Blake),	1449
(Cathers),	1923, 2034
(White),	1214, 1982
Physician recruitment and retention (Cathers),	1569, 1737
Property crime in Whitehorse (Van Bibber),	1235
Psychology profession regulation (Clarke, Y.),	1216
Public sector growth (Dixon),	1952, 2055
RCMP funding	
(Cathers),	1980, 2006
(Van Bibber),	2007, 2035
Recycling diversion credit program (McLeod),	1868
Rent control	
(Cathers),	1337, 2084
(McLeod),	1268
Ross River School (Hassard),	1571
Rural fire protection services (Istchenko),	1305
Rural solid-waste transfer stations (Istchenko),	1484
School busing (Kent),	1623
School replacement	
(Dixon),	1419, 1447
(Kent),	1419, 1480
Secure medical unit (Hassard),	1795
Sexual abuse within elementary school (Dixon),	1211
Social assistance rates (Blake),	1599
Species at risk (Tredger),	1654
Stevens Quarry development (Cathers),	1683, 1868
Support for seniors	
(McLeod),	1893
(White),	1570
Support services for Hidden Valley Elementary School victims of abuse (White),	1817
Teacher remuneration (Kent),	1955, 1984
Territorial medical director (Cathers),	1793
Transportation between communities (White),	1483

QUESTIONS – ORAL *(continued)*

Universal paid sick leave	
(Hassard),	1951
(Tredger),	1867
Ventilation systems in schools (Van Bibber),	1421
Waste-water testing for COVID-19	
(McLeod),	1794
(White),	1922
Watson Lake continuing care (McLeod),	1509
Wetlands protection (White),	1304
Whistle Bend development (Clarke, Y.),	1303, 1866
Whistle Bend pond maintenance (Clarke, Y.),	1954
Whistle Bend school	
(Clarke, Y.),	1391, 1655
(Kent),	1815
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staffing (Cathers),	1656
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staffing (White),	1336
Wildland firefighters workers' compensation coverage (McLeod),	1305
Wildlife harvest allocations (Hassard),	1627
Youth Panel on Climate Change recommendations (Tredger),	1482
Yukon Fish and Game Association funding (Dixon),	1652

QUESTIONS - WRITTEN

No. 3 - Re: development schedule for Whistle Bend (Clarke, Y.)	
Filed at Table,	914
Response (Mostyn) (Legislative Return 35-1-38),	1208
No. 5 - Re: housing projects (Clarke, Y.)	
Filed at Table,	226
Response (Pillai) (Legislative Return 35-1-59),	2080
No. 13 - Re: clearance times at the Fraser border crossing (Kent)	
Filed at Table,	1204
Response (Clarke, N.) (Legislative Return 35-1-39),	1208
No. 14 - Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee (White)	
Filed at Table,	1673
No. 15 - Investing in Canada infrastructure program (McLeod)	
Filed at Table,	1754
Response (Mostyn) (Legislative Return 35-1-46),	2029

QUESTIONS – WRITTEN *(continued)*

No. 16 - Mayo reservoir project (McLeod)	
Filed at Table,	1916
Response (Mostyn) (Legislative Return 35-1-47),	2029
No. 17 - Carmacks arena (McLeod)	
Filed at Table,	1916
Response (Mostyn) (Legislative Return 35-1-48),	2029
No. 18 - Request for bids to supply and deliver calcium chloride (Hassard)	
Filed at Table,	1916
No. 19 - Auxiliary-on-call and casual staff (White)	
Filed at Table,	1975
No. 20 - Re: full-time equivalents in 2016-17 budget year (Istchenko)	
Filed at Table,	2075
No. 21 - Re: bid value reductions associated with First Nation procurement policy (McLeod)	
Filed at Table,	2105
No. 22 - Re: general duty policing review report (Cathers)	
Filed at Table,	2105
No. 23 - Old Crow health and wellness centre and tenplex housing project (Kent)	
Filed at Table,	2105
No. 24 - value of claims exchanged for compensation (Kent)	
Filed at Table,	2105
No. 25 - Re: health care in rural Yukon communities (Cathers)	
Filed at Table,	2105
No. 26 - Re: mental health services (Cathers)	
Filed at Table,	2105
No. 27 - Re: home care in communities (Cathers)	
Filed at Table,	2105

SESSIONAL PAPERS

38. <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> (March 3, 2022) (Speaker Harper),	1208
39. <i>Third Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees</i> (December 15, 2021) (Clarke, N.),	1208

SESSIONAL PAPERS *(continued)*

40. <i>Child Rights Impact Assessment - Bill No. 11, Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022) - Child and Youth Advocate Office and Child Rights Impact Assessment of Bill No. 11, Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> , letter re (dated March 10, 2022) from Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (Speaker Harper),	1331
41. Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2021-2022 (Speaker Harper),	1978
42. <i>Environment Act — Performance Audit — 2015-2018 — Yukon Executive Council Office Government Internal Audit Services</i> (January 2022) (Clarke, N.),	2004
43. <i>Review of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act Interim Progress Report</i> (March 2022) (Streicker),	2004
44. <i>Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees</i> (April 25, 2022) (Clarke, N.),	2004
45. <i>Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report — November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020</i> (McPhee), ..	2029
46. <i>Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report — November 1, 2020 to October 31, 2021</i> (McPhee), ..	2029
47. <i>Second Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i> (April 2022) (Dixon),	2029
48. <i>Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2020-21 Annual Report</i> (Speaker Harper), ..	2053
49. <i>Second Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges</i> (April 2022) (Mostyn),	2053
50. <i>Third Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges</i> (April 2022) (Mostyn),	2053
51. <i>Report of the Chief Electoral Officer — Election Financing Returns — 2021 Territorial General Election</i> (Speaker Harper),	2080
52. <i>Report of the Chief Electoral Officer — Recommended Changes to the Elections Act 2021</i> (Speaker Harper),	2080
53. <i>Report of the Chief Electoral Officer — The Administration of the 2021 Territorial General Election</i> (Speaker Harper),	2080
54. <i>Department of Education 2021 Annual Report</i> (McLean),	2080

SILVER, SANDY

Speaks on:

Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1348, 1349
Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1397
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	1398, 1406
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Third Reading,	1668
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1216, 1344

SILVER, SANDY *(continued)*

Speaks on:

Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1339, 1341
Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Third Reading,	1397, 1398
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1773
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Third Reading,	1964
Ministerial statements:	
Russian invasion of Ukraine,	1209, 1211

SITTING DAYS

No. 43 March 3, 2022 (Thursday),	1205–1226
No. 44 March 7, 2022 (Monday),	1227–1262
No. 45 March 8, 2022 (Tuesday),	1263–1295
No. 46 March 9, 2022 (Wednesday),	1297–1328
No. 47 March 10, 2022 (Thursday),	1329–1357
No. 48 March 14, 2022 (Monday),	1359–1383
No. 49 March 15, 2022 (Tuesday),	1385–1414
No. 50 March 16, 2022 (Wednesday),	1415–1442
No. 51 March 17, 2022 (Thursday),	1443–1473
No. 52 March 21, 2022 (Monday),	1475–1502
No. 53 March 22, 2022 (Tuesday),	1503–1529
No. 54 March 23, 2022 (Wednesday),	1531–1563
No. 55 March 24, 2022 (Thursday),	1565–1591
No. 56 March 28, 2022 (Monday),	1593–1617
No. 57 March 29, 2022 (Tuesday),	1619–1645
No. 58 March 30, 2022 (Wednesday),	1647–1673
No. 59 March 31, 2022 (Thursday),	1675–1704
No. 60 April 4, 2022 (Monday),	1705–1728
No. 61 April 5, 2022 (Tuesday),	1729–1754
No. 62 April 6, 2022 (Wednesday),	1755–1786
No. 63 April 7, 2022 (Thursday),	1787–1809
No. 64 April 11, 2022 (Monday),	1811–1834
No. 65 April 12, 2022 (Tuesday),	1835–1859
No. 66 April 13, 2022 (Wednesday),	1861–1886
No. 67 April 14, 2022 (Thursday),	1887–1916
No. 68 April 19, 2022 (Tuesday),	1917–1946
No. 69 April 20, 2022 (Wednesday),	1947–1975

SITTING DAYS *(continued)*

No. 70 April 21, 2022 (Thursday),	1977–2002
No. 71 April 25, 2022 (Monday),	2003–2025
No. 72 April 26, 2022 (Tuesday),	2027–2049
No. 73 April 27, 2022 (Wednesday),	2051–2075
No. 74 April 28, 2022 (Thursday),	2077–2105

SITTING LENGTH

Government House Leader's report on (Streicker),	1395
--	------

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

Introductions

Abbott, Colin and grade 10 ACES class from Wood Street School,	1503
Blake, Frederick Jr.,	1385
Clethero, Bengie,	1297
Pages,	1205
Tables documents,	1208, 1331, 1978, 2075, 2080

SPEAKER'S RULINGS (see also DEPUTY SPEAKER'S RULINGS)

Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood,	1212
Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood, members should temper their remarks on and off-mic,	2057
Re imputing false or unavowed motives to another member,	2031
Re insulting language,	1488
Re members not to refer to members by name,	1257
Re proper procedure for tabling returns and documents,	1678
Re relevance - bill,	1324

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS (see also DEPUTY SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS and ACTING SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS)

McCain-Armour, Brenda, retirement, recognition of,	2077
Re artwork in the Legislative Assembly, recognition of,	1227
Re being respectful when other members are speaking,	2087
Re cellphones not permitted during Oral Question Period,	1536
Re Committee of the Whole consideration of private member's bill (Bill No. 304),	1776
Re introduction of visitors outside of the time provided for in the Daily Routine rubric "Introduction of Visitors,"	1249
Re request for a private member to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole,	1776

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS *(continued)*

Re "Tabling Returns and Documents" in the Daily Routine is not an opportunity for debate, and descriptions should not constitute commentary,	1675
Re "Tabling Returns and Documents" in the Daily Routine is not an opportunity for debate, tabling Hansard excerpts is unnecessary, legislative return returned to Minister,	1811
Re visitors in the gallery not to hold up signs,	1892
Re volume of off-mic comments, being respectful and mindful when a member has the floor,	1252, 2087
Re volume of off-mic comments interfering with ability to hear, 1342, 1392, 1406, 1869, 1893, 2057	

STANDING ORDERS

Provisional change to Standing Order 76 (see Motion No. 282 under GOVERNMENT MOTIONS)

STREICKER, JOHN

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Third Reading,	1488
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	1401
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1281
Bill No. 302 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading, .	1309
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1765
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Third Reading,	1964
Ministerial statements:	
Atlin hydro expansion project,	1265, 1266
Coffee Gold project,	1230, 1231
Electric vehicle charging stations,	1756, 1757
Wolverine mine site,	1837, 1838
Motion No. 282 - Re provisional Standing Order 76 during the 2022 Spring Sitting,	1272
Motion No. 294 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via video conference due to COVID-19 during the 2022 Spring Sitting,	1237

TERMINATION OF SITTING

As per Standing Order 76(1), as modified by Motion No. 282,	2103
As per Standing Order 76(2), as modified by Motion No. 282	2104

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

Questions, oral:

Affordable housing,	1151
Affordable housing and land development,	1420
Deaths at Whitehorse Emergency Shelter,	2085
Department of Education sexual orientation and gender identity policy,	1537
Electricity rates,	1234, 1711
Essential services staffing,	1953
Food security,	1793
Homebuyer and tenancy advocacy,	2058
International mining company regulatory oversight,	2009
Managed alcohol program,	2008
Mental health services for LGBTQ2S+ community,	1365
Mining project oversight,	2033
Species at risk,	1654
Universal paid sick leave,	1867
Youth Panel on Climate Change recommendations,	1482

Speaks on:

Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1280
Bill No. 302 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1315
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1556, 1764, 1774
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Third Reading,	1956, 1965

Ministerial statements:

Atlin hydro expansion project,	1266
Community fire halls and recreation infrastructure,	2030
Electric vehicle charging stations,	1757
Great Yukon Summer Freeze,	2083
Green infrastructure program,	1950
Housing initiatives fund,	1733
Lot development,	2055
Macaulay Lodge site redevelopment,	1418
North Klondike Highway construction project,	1919
Opportunities Yukon Cornerstone project,	2006
Safe at Home Society supportive housing project,	1534
Solar energy installations at highway camps,	1507
Tank farm site development,	1301
Yukon aviation industry,	1389
Yukon Parks Strategy,	1864

TREDGER, EMILY *(continued)*

Speaks on:

Motion No. 294 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via video conference due to COVID-19 during the 2022 Spring Sitting,	1237
Motion No. 427 - Re appointment to the Yukon Human Rights Commission,	2089
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2,	2090

TRIBUTES

Agriculture Award, Yukon, recognition of (Streicker/Cathers/White),	1207
Air North inaugural flight to Toronto, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger),	2051
Alaska Highway 80 th anniversary, recognition of (Clarke, N./Istchenko/Tredger),	1385
Arctic Inspiration Prize winners, recognition of (Silver/Van Bibber/White),	1229
Autism Acceptance Month, recognition of (Tredger),	1730
Autism Awareness Month, recognition of (McPhee/McLeod),	1729
Available Light Film Festival, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger),	1205
Canadian Mining Hall of Fame inductee Peter Risby, recognition of (Streicker/Hassard/White),	1330
Celebration of Swans festival, recognition of (Streicker/Istchenko/White),	1730
Community Safety Awards recipients, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/Blake),	1415
Daffe, Bob, remembrance of (Clarke, N./Istchenko/White),	1787
Dental Hygienists Week, National, recognition of (Streicker/Cathers/Tredger),	1705
Early childhood educators, recognition of (McLean/Dixon/Tredger),	1836
Earth Day, recognition of (Clarke, N./Istchenko/Tredger),	1947
Edwards, Nicole, remembrance of (Streicker/Clarke/White),	1593
Elimination of Racial Discrimination, International Day for the, recognition of (McPhee/Clarke/Blake),	1476
Engineering Month, National, recognition of (Clarke, N./Hassard),	1298
Fisher, Mickey, remembrance of (Cathers/Pillai),	1977
Francophonie Day, International, recognition of (Streicker/Clarke/White),	1475
Green Shirt Day, recognition of (McPhee/Clarke, Y./Tredger),	1788
Heritage Award recipients, 2021, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger),	1649
Heritage Day, World, recognition of (Pillai/Istchenko/Tredger),	1917
Impaired Driving Prevention Week, National, recognition of (Clarke, N./Hassard/White),	1531
Kemble, Dan, remembrance of (Streicker),	1755
Kyikavichik, Elizabeth, early childhood educator, recognition of (McLean/White),	1706
Local business anniversaries, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/White),	1387
Local farmers and food producers, recognition of (Streicker/Cathers/Tredger),	2052
MacBride Museum 70 th anniversary, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber),	1329

TRIBUTES

Mourning, Day of, recognition of (Mostyn/McLeod/Tredger),	2078
Northern Canada Producer Accelerator program, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger),	1565
Nutrition Month, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/Blake),	1297
Olympics Yukon, 2022, representatives Dahria Beattie, Graham Nishikawa, and Wayne Vallevand, recognition of (Mostyn/McLeod/White),	1228
Pi Day, recognition of (Streicker/Tredger),	1360
Pink, International Day of, recognition of (McLean/Clarke/White),	1861
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, recognition of (Istchenko/Clarke, N.),	1444
Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, National, recognition of (Mostyn/Cathers/White), ...	1835
Recycling Day, World, recognition of (Clarke, N./McLeod/White),	1443
Seitz, Agnes, remembrance of (Streicker/Tredger),	2003
Soccer, Canadian, recognition of (Clarke, N./McLeod/White),	1647
Special Olympics Yukon 40 th anniversary, recognition of (Mostyn/Dixon/Tredger),	2079
Spruce Bog, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/White),	1620
Staff commitment and resiliency throughout COVID-19 pandemic, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/White),	1504
Thomas, Bill, remembrance of (Streicker/Cathers/White),	1887
Total North Communications 50 th anniversary, recognition of (Pillai/Hassard/White),	1619
Transgender Day of Visibility, International, recognition of (McLean/Istchenko/Tredger),	1676
Water Day, World and Water Week, Canada, recognition of (Clarke, N./Istchenko/Tredger),	1503
Webber, Adeline, recognition of (McLean/Dixon/Tredger),	2027
Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce 2022 Business Excellence Awards, recognition of (Pillai/Dixon),	1948
Wildlife Week, National, recognition of (Clarke, N./Istchenko/Tredger),	1811
Women in Mining Canada 2022 Trailblazer Award recipient Anne Lewis and Yukon Mining and Geology Week, recognition of (Streicker/Kent/Tredger),	2028
Women's Day, International, recognition of (McLean/Clarke, Y./Tredger),	1263
Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre 25 th anniversary, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger), ..	1862
Yukon Public Libraries March Break Take 5 program, recognition of (Mostyn/McLeod/White), .	1359

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> Re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to,	1373
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022</i> Re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to,	1371

UNANIMOUS CONSENT *(continued)*

Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*

Re deeming all lines in Vote 2 cleared or carried, 1496

Re deeming all lines in Vote 3 cleared or carried, 1501

Re deeming all lines in Vote 7 cleared or carried, 1494

Re deeming all lines in Vote 8 cleared or carried, 1668

Re deeming all lines in Vote 10 cleared or carried, 1631

Re deeming all lines in Vote 15 cleared or carried, 1525

Re deeming all lines in Vote 54 cleared or carried, 1662

Re deeming all lines in Vote 55 cleared or carried, 1606

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*

Re deeming all lines in Vote 7 cleared or carried, 1915

Re deeming all lines in Vote 10 cleared or carried, 1851

Re deeming all lines in Vote 11 cleared or carried, 2069

Re deeming all lines in Vote 12 cleared or carried, 2024

Re deeming all lines in Vote 18 cleared or carried, 1945

Re deeming all lines in Vote 22 cleared or carried, 1991

Re deeming all lines in Vote 27 cleared or carried, 1986

Re deeming all lines in Vote 51 cleared or carried, 2023

Re deeming all lines in Vote 54 cleared or carried, 1701

Bill No. 205: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*

Re deeming all clauses, schedules, and the title read and agreed to, 1374

Bill No. 304 - *Act to Amend the Education Act: Second Reading*

Re recess to consider amendment, 1763

Re proceeding to third reading (Not granted), 1783

Motion No. 294

Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, 1236

Motion No. 295

Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, 1237

Motion No. 296

Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, 1237

Motion No. 427

Re moving motion without notice, 2089

Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2

Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, 2089

VAN BIBBER, GERALDINE

Questions, oral:

Carmacks arena,	1868
Dawson City recreation centre,	1481
First Nation School Board,	1894
Flood mitigation impact on Schwatka Lake float plane operations,	1538
Inclusive and special education,	1597
Macaulay Lodge closure,	1393
Property crime in Whitehorse,	1235
RCMP funding,	2007, 2035
Ventilation systems in schools,	1421

Speaks on:

Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1279
--	------

Ministerial statements:

COVID-19 relief and recovery fund for non-governmental organizations,	1567
COVID-19 testing at border crossings,	1650
Cross-border tourism,	1446
Great Yukon Summer Freeze,	2082

Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,	1539, 1555
---	------------

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF

Abbott, Colin and grade 10 ACES class from Wood Street School (Speaker Harper/McLean),	1503
Adel, Ted (Silver),	1205
Alexandrovich, Shiela (Streicker),	2003
Allan, Grant (Streicker),	1329, 1593
Allen, Samantha (McLean),	1675
Alsbury, Brooke (McLean),	1475
Amerongen, Mary (White),	1475
Amos, Jesse (McLean),	1811
Anderson, Linda (Streicker),	2003
Ashthorn, Heather	
(Clarke, N.),	1443
(Tredger),	1475
Asp, Jerry (Streicker),	1329
Asquith, Ben	
(Mostyn),	1329
(Pillai),	1593

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Bahm, George (McLean),	1675
Bailey, John (Streicker),	1205
Baker, Em (McLean),	1811
Ball, Matt (Streicker),	2051
Balzer, Gisli (Pillai),	1917
Banks, Paula (McLean),	1675
Barker, Nari (Tredger),	1947
Barnes, Karen (McLean),	1787
Barton, Brad (Streicker),	1205, 2003
Barton, Bradley (Streicker),	2051
Bartzak, Crystal (Clarke, N.),	1787
Basnet, Jason (Clarke, N.),	1787
Bass, Keely (McPhee),	1475
Battiston, Pamela (Streicker),	1475
Bélanger, Edith (Streicker),	1475
Bellon, Mike (Clarke, N.),	1787
Bergeron, Jean-Pierre (Pillai),	1619
Bergeron, Josée (Pillai),	1619
Biedermann, Stephan (Pillai),	1917
Bisaria, Ajay (Pillai),	1297
Blais, Jean-Sébastien (Streicker),	1475
Blake, Frederick Jr. (Speaker Harper),	1385
Blodgett, Chase (McPhee/White),	1415
Blysak, May (McPhee),	1729
Bock, Michael (Pillai),	1385
Bogaard, Jack (Streicker),	1887
Boland, Kels (Pillai),	1329
Botting, Tharian (McLean),	1675
Bouquot, Dave (Streicker),	2003
Bouquot, Dawn (Streicker),	2003
Bourcier, André (Streicker),	1475
Bradley, Gwenda (Streicker),	1887
Brais, Melanie (Istchenko),	1443
Brais, Paul (Istchenko),	1443
Brault, Jan (Streicker),	1755

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Brekke, Dave	
(Pillai),	1329
(Streicker),	1593
Brekke, Irene (Pillai),	1329
Brennan, Lawrence (Clarke, N.),	1787
Brennan, Walter (Clarke, N.),	1787
Brinda, Kayla (McPhee),	1297, 1443
Broeren, Aberdeen (Pillai),	1593
Broeren, Michael (Tredger),	1947
Brook, Dave (Streicker),	1593
Brown, Lesley (McLean),	1475, 1787
Buckle, Blake (McLean),	1475, 1787
Buffalo, Amanda (White),	1263
Burgess, Carl (Streicker),	2051
Burke, Jeanne (Clarke, N.),	1787
Burke, Mike (Streicker),	1329
Burnett, Ross (Streicker),	1593
Burrell, Heather (Clarke, N.),	1787
Burrell, Heather (Streicker),	2027
Burrell, Scott (Clarke, N.),	1787
Bus, Cyprian (Streicker),	1887
Byram, Jennifer (Pillai),	1385
Cable, Bryna (Clarke, N.),	1443
Calnan, Hilary (Clarke, N.),	1787
Campbell, Boyd (Clarke, N.),	1787
Carruthers, Carly	
(Clarke, N.),	1647
(Silver),	1205
Carruthers, Kristine (McPhee),	1729
Casson, Linda (Silver),	1205
Chambers, Shadelle (McPhee),	1443
Champagne, Marc (Streicker),	1475
Charles, Arianna (Tredger),	1947
Charlie, Jason (Streicker),	1887
Chasse, Leo (Cathers),	1977
Chaturvedi, Bharati (Pillai),	1297

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Chevalier, Lisa (Streicker),	2003
Christensen, Michelle (Streicker),	2003
Chua, Ernest (Mostyn),	2077
Clark, Amelie (Streicker),	1887
Cleghorn, Christine (Clarke, N.),	1443, 1503, 1811
Clethero, Bengie	
(McPhee),	1443
(Speaker Harper),	1297
(Streicker),	1593
Clethero, Louise (Pillai),	1385
Close, Lee (Streicker),	1593
Close, Paris (Streicker),	1593
Clusiau, Michelle (Streicker),	2003
Coad-Broeren, Desiree (Pillai),	1593
Connors, Andrew (Pillai),	1205
Cook, Jason and Porter Creek Secondary School Rainbow Room students (Tredger),	1531
Cook, Jason (White),	1947
Cooper, Brent (Pillai),	1385
Cowie, Cindi (Clarke, N.),	1647
Cowie, Keiran (McLean),	1811
Craig, Kristina (Streicker),	1887
Cratty, Morris (Istchenko),	1443
Cross, Leilah (Pillai),	1619
Cunning, Patricia (Pillai),	1329
D'Abramo, Rodney (Clarke, N.),	1787
Daffe, Alison (Clarke, N.),	1787
Daffe, Danielle (Clarke, N.),	1787
Daffe, Kevin (Clarke, N.),	1787
Daffe Lamothe, Issac (Clarke, N.),	1787
Dara, Dak (McPhee),	1415
Dattani, Birju (McPhee),	1475
Davis, Ron (Streicker),	1887
DesLauriers, Jean Francois (Streicker),	1887
Desmarais, Claire (Streicker),	2003
Devries, Kirsti (Streicker),	1755
Dickson, Angie (Clarke, N.),	1385

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Dieckmann, Kurt (Mostyn),	2077
Dixon, Bonnie (Streicker),	2027
Donald, MJ (Silver),	1227
Dougherty, Michael (Streicker),	1887
Dow, Candace (Clarke, N.),	1811
Dowd, Erin (Streicker),	1329
Dremeyer, Kathy (Streicker),	1755
Drineyer, Terri-Lynn (Streicker),	1755
Duncan, Mikayla (Mostyn),	2077
Eastmuire, Lori (Streicker),	1755
Eckert-Maret, Tiffany (Pillai),	1593
Edwards, Morgan (Streicker),	1593
Elines, Andrew (Mostyn),	2077
Elliott, Maegan (Clarke, N.),	1811
Ellis, Lindsay (McPhee),	1415
Ellis, Roger (McLean),	1675
Ewing, Teagan (McLean),	1811
Fischer, Cole (Clarke, N.),	1503
Flynn, Melissa (McLean),	1675
Foster, Al (Streicker),	2003
Foster, Kyle (Pillai),	1619
Froese, Kathleen (Clarke, N.),	1787
Gagne, Andre (Streicker),	1593
Gallagher, Marie (White),	1263
Gedrose, Ann (Streicker),	1593
Gedrose, Steve (Streicker),	1593
Genest, Karine (Clarke, N.),	1787
Genier, Chantal (Silver),	1227
Giangrande, Peter (White),	1947
Gilday, Byron (Streicker),	1755
Gillis, Lois (Pillai),	1619
Gingell, Judy (McLean),	2027
Gishler, Chris (Streicker),	1887
Gishler, Elliott (Streicker),	1887
Gishler, Liam (Streicker),	1887
Gishler, Sophie (Streicker),	1887

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Gishler, Thomas (Streicker),	1887
Gladwin, Shannon (Streicker),	2051
Glyka, Fabian (Clarke, N.),	1647
Good, Cameron (Streicker),	1755
Gottschall, Candice (Streicker),	2027
Govindasamy, Vikram (Silver),	1227
Grabowski, Terry (McPhee),	1415
Graham, Emily (Tredger),	1947
Green, George (Streicker),	1887
Greenway, Leah (Mostyn),	2077
Grossinger, Red (Pillai),	1917
Guilbeault, Amelie (McLean),	1811
Hall, Jessica	
(Pillai),	1205
(Streicker),	1593
Hardie, Jillian (McPhee),	2003
Harper, Michelle (Streicker),	2003
Hartling, Lars (Pillai),	1947
Hawkins, Hannah (McLean),	1675
Hierlihy, Heather (McPhee),	1729
Hill, Spence (Tredger),	1475
Hindson, Bria (McLean),	1811
Hines, Cathy (Pillai),	1647
Hobbis, Barb (McLean),	2027
Hobbis, Dave (McLean),	2027
Hobbis, Molly (Tredger),	1947
Hoffmeister, Lee (McPhee),	1443
Hogan, Azarioa (Tredger),	1947
Hogan, Donna (Pillai),	1385
Holway, Helen (McLean),	2027
Hopkins, Gabriel	
(Pillai),	1329
(Tredger),	1947
Huang, Anne (Clarke, Y.),	1787
Hunston, Jeff (Pillai),	1861
Hyde, Andrew (Clarke, N.),	1787

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Isaac, Gerald (McLean),	1675
Jansen, Rebecca (Pillai),	1917
Janzen, Len (Clarke, N.),	1787
Jasma, Karin (Streicker),	1755
Jirousek, Heather (Clarke, N.),	1503
Johnson, Alyce and students from Kluane Lake School (McLean),	1675
Johnson, Dan (Pillai),	1619
Johnston, Peter (McLean),	1675, 2027
Johnstone, Kevin (Clarke, N.),	1811
Jones, Serenity (Streicker),	1755
Jules, Tina (McLean),	1675
Kabirii, Ngeta (Streicker),	1887
Kayseas, Leeann (McPhee),	1297, 1443
Keats, Clayton (McLean),	1705
Kemble, Amy (Streicker),	1755
Kemble, Casey (Streicker),	1755
Kemble, Vince (Streicker),	1755
Kemble, Wesley (Streicker),	1755
Kenward, Andrea (Streicker),	2027
King, Annette	
(McPhee),	1443
(Streicker),	1593
Kitchen, Brian (Streicker),	1593
Klippert, Jan (Clarke, N.),	1787
Kloer, Harley (Tredger),	1947
Komish, Carmen (Clarke, Y.),	1787
Kozmen, Dale (Cathers),	1977
Kucharuk, Olive (Dixon),	2051
Kucharuk, Tim (Dixon),	2051
Kulachkosky, Kristin (Streicker),	1887
Kulachkosky, Nate (Streicker),	1887
Labonté, Cynthia (Streicker),	1475
Lagersson, Melvin (McPhee),	1415
Lalena, Guin (Pillai),	1205
Laluk, Melissa (Streicker),	1887
Lamb, Randy (Streicker),	1205, 2051

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Land, Peggy (Tredger),	1475
Landman, Theresa (Clarke, N.),	1787
Leas, Amanda (McLean),	2027
LeBlanc, Amy (Pillai),	1619
Lee, Yeonseon (Tredger),	1947
Léonard, Sylvie (Streicker),	1887
Lewis, Anne (Streicker),	2027
Lewis, Randy (Streicker),	2027
Lewis, Stuart (Streicker),	2027
Li, Annie (Tredger),	1947
Liederwicz, Josi (Streicker),	1593
Lien, Matthew (Streicker),	1593
Lillies, Scott (Mostyn),	2077
Loretz, Trish (Clarke, N.),	1787
Loxam, Erin (Clarke, N.),	1443
Lucas, Jonathan (Streicker),	2051
Lyslo, Cynthia (McPhee),	2003
Lyslo, McKenna (Dixon),	2077
Macdonald, Danny (Dixon),	2077
Macdonald, Joanne (Streicker),	1755
Macdonald, Rob (Streicker),	1755
MacFeeters, Laurie (Streicker),	1887
MacKenzie, Tanya (McPhee),	1443
Macklon, Karen (McPhee),	1729
MacLean, Ryan (Clarke, Y.),	1787
Macleod, Courtney (McPhee),	1729
Maides, Nancy (Streicker),	1755
Marnoch, Frank (Mostyn),	2077
Matechuk, Judy (Pillai),	1619
Matsunami, Rika (Pillai),	1329
McBride-Dixon, Jackie (Streicker),	2051
McCallum Rougerie, Sylvie (McPhee),	1565
McColeman, Andrea (Streicker),	1593
McEachern, Cory (Clarke, N.),	1531
McGill, Kelly (Clarke, N.),	1787
McIntosh, Staci (Silver),	1205

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

McKenna, Karen (Streicker), 2003

McLean, Alisha (McPhee), 1443

Mead-Robins, Trevor (Pillai), 1947

Meikle, Sue (Streicker), 2003

Menzies, Heather (Mostyn), 2077

Metropolit, Jean (Streicker), 1205

Metropolit, Lorne (Streicker), 1205

Mewett, Joe (McPhee), 1415

Michaud, Serge (Mostyn), 2077

Milligan, Bruce (Mostyn), 2077

Mills, Maddy (Tredger), 1947

Milner, Kelly (Pillai), 1565

Milnes, Bobbie (Streicker), 1205

Mitchell, Arthur (Silver), 1205

Mitchell, John (Clarke, N.), 1787

Mole, Nathan (Clarke, N.), 1787

Moore, Evey (Tredger), 1947

Moreau, Manon (Streicker), 1475

Morgan, Anne (Pillai), 1647

Morgan, Nicole (McLean), 2027

Morrison, David (McLean), 1787

Mostyn, Peter (Mostyn), 1705

Mostyn, Susan (Mostyn), 1705

Mowat, Paula (McPhee), 1297

Mulligan, Brendan (Clarke, N.), 1503

Murray, Nansen (Pillai), 1917

Mykituk, Faith Green (Clarke, N.), 1443

Nagano, Gina (Silver), 1227

Nason, Rob (Clarke, N.), 1531

Nelson, Vida (McPhee), 1475

Ness, Claire (Streicker), 1593

Nickel, Jacob (Cathers), 1977

Nickel, Jamie (Cathers), 1977

Nickel, Lila (Cathers), 1977

Nickel, Rod (Cathers), 1977

Nielsen, Rick (Pillai), 1329, 1385

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Noble, Corin (Pillai),	1329
Nordling, Monica (Streicker),	1329, 2027
Novecosky, donaSun (Clarke, N.),	1787
Novodvorsky, Nicole (Clarke, N.),	1503
Oakley, Alex (McLean),	2027
O'Brien, Will (Clarke, N.),	1787
O'Brien-Jackson, Kiersten (Tredger),	1947
O'Connor, Helen (Streicker),	1593
Pare, Mike (Mostyn),	2077
Parenteau, Nathalie (Streicker),	1755
Parker, Al (Clarke, N.),	1787
Parker, Brigitte (Streicker),	2003
Parker, Ella (Clarke, N.),	1503
Parker, Laurie (McLean),	1475
Parlee, Tom (White),	1475
Partridge, Sophie (McLean),	1705
Patterson, Dan (Streicker),	1755
Patton, Edmund (Mostyn),	1705
Peever, Priscilla (Pillai),	1329
Pemberton, Mike (Silver),	1205
Percival, Christel (Streicker),	1593, 2003
Percival, Peter (Streicker),	1593, 2003
Perron, Josée (Clarke, N.),	1385
Pinard, J.P.	
(Streicker),	1593
(Tredger),	1475
Pope, Al (Streicker),	1593
Power, Nancy (Streicker),	1475
Power, Susan (McLean),	2027
Powter, Maggie (McLean),	1475
Prematunga, Bobby (McPhee),	1297, 1443
Preto, Lisa (Clarke, N.),	1787
Price, Kirk (Streicker),	2051
Quarton, Gerry (Streicker),	1755
Randell, Norm (Pillai),	1329
Rannells, Lee (McPhee),	1443

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Readman, Danette (Streicker),	1593
Reid, Lahela	
(McLean),	1811
(White),	1263
Rhein, Werner (Streicker),	2003
Risby, Norma (Streicker),	1329
Risby, Wayne (Streicker),	1329
Robertson, Elena (Streicker),	2003
Robinson, Mark (Clarke, Y.),	1787
Robinson, Sally (Pillai),	1647
Roske, Jason (Streicker),	2051
Roske, Kate (Streicker),	2051
Roske, Krista (Streicker),	2051
Rotstein, Stephen (McPhee),	1565
Rowlatt, Linnea (Streicker),	2003
Roy-Jauvin, Olivier (Clarke, N.),	1787
Rudge, Simone (Streicker),	2051
Rudge, Tom (Streicker),	2051
Rudolph, Jonathon (Clarke, N.),	1385
Rushant, Geoff (Streicker),	1755
Ryan, Ben (Pillai),	1385
Sager, Nahanni (Clarke, N.),	1443
Salter, Samantha (Streicker),	1593
Samson, Andrei (Pillai),	1947
Sanchez-Aguirre, Carlos (Clarke, N.),	1531
Sangria, Jasmine (Streicker),	2027
Savoie, Anne (Streicker),	2051
Scharrer, Gertie (Streicker),	2003
Schiman, Elaine (Streicker),	1593
Schwinnson, Josh (Streicker),	1593
Scoble, Rob (Streicker),	2003
Scoville, Lance (Streicker),	1755
Selby, Lana (Silver),	1227
Sellars, Jess (Streicker),	2003

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Senger, Dennis	
(McPhee),	1593
(Streicker),	1887
Shadow, Sharon (McLean),	1675, 2027
Shannon, Icarus (McLean),	1675
Shannon, Judy (McLean),	1675
Sherman, Terry (Silver),	1205
Shorty, Dan (McLean),	2027
Shorty, Sharon (McLean),	2027
Sirois, Mira (McLean),	1675
Sjodin, Jeffrey (Silver),	2077
Slama, Helen (Mostyn),	2077
Smith, Fred (Clarke, N.),	1787
Smith, Virginia (Streicker),	1755
Soltani, Jerry (McLean),	2027
Spicer, Rune (Tredger),	1947
Stanton, Joan (White),	1227
Steele, Gord (Cathers),	1977
Steele, Karin (Pillai),	1619
Stepanian, Evan (Pillai),	1205
Strand, Shauna (McPhee),	1297
Swales, Janna (Pillai),	1647
Swales, Katie (McLean),	1705
Tait, Diane (Clarke, N.),	1787
Tait, Russel (Clarke, N.),	1787
Tayler, Wendy (Streicker),	2027
Taylor, Elaine (Hassard),	1249
Taylor, Natalie	
(McLean),	2027
(Streicker),	1887
Taylor, Will (Hassard),	1249
Thomas, Bev (Clarke, Y.),	1787
Thomas, Chad (Mostyn),	1329
Thomas, Doug (Clarke, Y.),	1787
Thomas, Ellen (Streicker),	1887

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Thompson, Anna (Mostyn),	2077
Thompson, Val (Tredger),	1947
Tiessen, Mary (Streicker),	1263
Timmons, Clarence (Silver),	1205
Trim, Jan (McPhee),	1593
Tyrrell, Amy (Clarke, N.),	1385
Vallier, Heidi (McLean),	1811
Van Bibber, Shannon (Pillai),	1917
Van Marck, Jacquie (Clarke, N.),	1531
Van Tighem, Graham (Streicker),	2003
Vanderlou, Bradley (Streicker),	1755
Veniat, Edwine (Streicker),	1475
Vernon, Michael (McLean),	1787
Vogt, Astrid (Streicker),	2003
Walters, Jennifer (Streicker),	2027
Waugh, Jo-Ann (Pillai),	1329
Webber, Adeline (McLean),	2027
Webber, Bill (McLean),	2027
Wellman, Suki (Streicker),	1593
Whelen, Jesse (Streicker),	1887
Wilkinson, Hilary (Streicker),	1887
Williams, Andy (Pillai),	1329
Williams, Joline (Streicker),	1887
Wilson, Laura (McPhee),	1297
Wright, Sally	
(Streicker),	1593
(Tredger),	1475
Yanson, Leneath (Streicker),	2027
Young, Kristin (Silver),	2077
Zanger, Menna (McLean),	1811

WHITE, KATE

Questions, oral:

Funding for non-governmental organizations,	1625
Health care services,	1760
Hemodialysis services in Yukon,	1711

WHITE, KATE (*continued*)

Questions, oral:

Inclusive and special education,	1736
Land use planning,	1682
Long COVID support,	1509
Magnetic resonance imaging program,	1600
Mental health counselling services for children,	1392
Mental health services,	1818, 1841
Midwifery in Yukon,	1892
Mine closure security,	1235
Opioid crisis,	1214, 1982
Support for seniors,	1570
Support services for Hidden Valley Elementary School victims of abuse,	1817
Transportation between communities,	1483
Waste-water testing for COVID-19,	1922
Wetlands protection,	1304
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staffing,	1336

Questions, written:

Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee,	1673
Auxiliary-on-call and casual staff,	1975

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Third Reading,	1486
Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1459
Bill No. 11: <i>Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1689
Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1349
Bill No. 12: <i>Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1398
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)</i> : Second Reading,	1347
Bill No. 13: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1460
Bill No. 14: <i>Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017 (2022)</i> : Third Reading,	1395
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022</i> : Second Reading,	1368
Bill No. 15: <i>Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022</i> : Third Reading,	1396
Bill No. 203: <i>Third Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	1401
Bill No. 204: <i>First Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1242
Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Second Reading,	1341

WHITE, KATE (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Bill No. 205: <i>Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23</i> : Third Reading,	1397
Bill No. 302 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)</i> :	
Second Reading,	1321, 1325
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Second Reading,	1770
Bill No. 304 - <i>Act to Amend the Education Act</i> : Third Reading,	1962
Ministerial statements:	
Chronic conditions support program,	1889
Coffee Gold project,	1231
Community safety planning program,	1361
COVID-19 relief and recovery fund for non-governmental organizations,	1567
COVID-19 testing at border crossings,	1651
Early learning childcare,	1480
Polarettes Gymnastics Club facility,	1979
Russian invasion of Ukraine,	1210
Universal childcare,	1708
White River First Nation community centre,	1622
Wildland fire management agreement,	1333
Wolverine mine site,	1838
Yukon University strategic plan,	1791
Motion No. 282 - Re provisional Standing Order 76 during the 2022 Spring Sitting, ..	1272
Motion No. 288 - Re celebrating Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, .	1548

WITNESSES (see MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

APPENDIX A*(Bill No. 203 - Third Appropriation Act 2021-22)*

General Debate, 1429–1441, 1461–1469

Detailed breakdown of vote discussions

Economic Development, 1469–1472, 1492–1494

Education, 1496–1501

Executive Council Office, 1494–1496

Health and Social Services, 1501, 1513–1526

Highways and Public Works, 1526–1528, 1602–1606

Justice, 1663–1668

Public Service Commission, 1628–1631

Yukon Housing Corporation, 1657–1668

(Bill No. 204 - First Appropriation Act 2022-23)

General Debate, 1669–1671

Community Services, 1671–1673, 1701–1703, 1714–1728, 1739–1753, 2011–2023

Economic Development, 1895–1915

Education, 1798–1809, 2069–2074

Energy, Mines and Resources, 1870–1885, 2090–2103

Environment, 1820–1834

Finance, 2023–2024

French Language Services Directorate, 1985–1986

Health and Social Services, 1851–1859, 1915–1916, 1992–2001, 2024–2025

Highways and Public Works, 2036–2048

Justice, 1966–1975

Public Service Commission, 1843–1851

Tourism and Culture, 1691–1701

Women and Gender Equity Directorate, 2061–2069

Yukon Development Corporation, 1986–1992

Yukon Housing Corporation, 1925–1946



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 43

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 3, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 3, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

I would like to begin the 2022 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly by respectfully acknowledging all Yukon First Nations and that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

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 they are now outdated: Motions No. 136, 173, 226, and 227, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 142, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motions No. 179 and 262, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; and Motion No. 264, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 141, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre; Motion No. 133, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motion No. 151, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 156, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; and Motion No. 230, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

Finally, Motion No. 277, notice of which was given on December 2, 2021 by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the action requested in the motion has been taken in whole or in part.

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Legislative pages who will be serving the House during the 2022 Spring Sitting. They are: Noah Kinney and Melody Qiu from Vanier Catholic Secondary School; Aislynn Thompson-Elias and Adanchilla Nolan from Porter Creek Secondary School; Ariel Ibrahim, Audrey Provan, and Hassan Amir from F.H. Collins Secondary School; and Gabriel Mamer-Roode from CSSC Mercier.

Today we have with us Audrey Provan and Gabriel Mamer-Roode. I would ask all members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to ask my colleagues of the Legislative Assembly to help welcome some folks who are in the gallery today.

We have Carly Carruthers joining us. We also have Mike Pemberton and Arthur Mitchell, former Leader of the Liberal Party. We also have Linda Casson, Staci McIntosh, Terry Sherman, and I believe Ted Adel is with us as well today. Thank you.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, could we please welcome, from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Deputy Minister John Bailey, Bobbie Milnes, director of the Agriculture branch, and Brad Barton and Randy Lamb.

Also, we have recipients for this year's Yukon Agriculture Award, Lorne and Jean Metropolit. I just learned — and I think that it's worth mentioning — that Lorne is the past president of the Yukon Ukrainian association — if we could please welcome them here today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a moment to welcome Clarence Timmons to the House. He is a mentor — he is my old boss — so, please take a moment to welcome him to the House.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also like to introduce some individuals who are with us today for our tribute to the Available Light Film Festival's 20th anniversary. Joining us today — Mr. Andrew Connors, Guin Lalena, and Jessica Hall, and I think we were also hoping to see Mr. Evan Stepanian. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors? Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Available Light Film Festival

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 20th anniversary of the Available Light Film Festival. Co-founded in 2003 by festival director Andrew Connors and the Yukon Film Society Board, Available Light has become a treasured mid-winter celebration of art and culture — an increasingly prestigious showcase of the voices and stories of local, northern, international, and indigenous artists.

Over these 20 years, we have seen the festival flourish and expand its content, reputation, and audience. With its unique blend of dedication to the north and its cinematic storytellers and new, innovative, and international filmmakers, it has become one of the circumpolar world's outstanding film festivals.

The festival showcases feature-length and short films, industry workshops, artist talks, and social events, and in the COVID era, the organizers have adapted to offer on-demand screenings and virtual events enjoyed from the comfort of one's home. The Available Light Film Festival presents a diverse selection of compelling and challenging content from Canada and beyond, with an emphasis on captivating stories of the First Nation and indigenous north. This festival has become synonymous with thought-provoking work exploring a wide range of genres and topics that encourage us to examine history, society, and ourselves.

Each year, festival organizers curate a diverse lineup of films that are personal, profound, impactful, and artistic. Available Light also nurtures the creative development of Yukon artists, building valuable film partnerships across the north and beyond.

Through the industry conference and workshops, Yukon filmmakers and industry delegates learned from the content with distributors, financiers, broadcasters, and potential production partners to promote the Yukon film industry as a whole.

I ask the members of this House to join me in extending sincere congratulations and gratitude to the founders, organizers, technicians, volunteers, and, of course, the countless filmmakers and presenters who have shared their voices, perspectives, and knowledge over the past 20 years.

This festival is made possible by these dedicated creators, organizers, and volunteers. Thank you for your talents, passion, and time. As the continued success and the steam of the Available Light shows, there is a lot to look forward to as the film and media industry in the Yukon grows and evolves.

The power of sharing culture and storytelling connects us. It strengthens us; it strengthens our communities locally, internationally, and globally as we move together into the future. Sharing our unique Yukon stories with the world helps to build awareness of our developing industry and our beautiful territory.

We look forward to what the future of the Available Light Film Festival has in store. Again, Mr. Speaker, and to everybody, thank you.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 20th anniversary of the Available Light Film Festival. The *Worst Person In The World*, *Skymaster Down*, and *Licorice Pizza* — such titles to pique one's interest. The Cariboo, Prince Edward Island, and Dawson City, all shooting locations that people would recognize or identify as Canadian — a diverse selection that will satisfy any film buff.

Held this year from February 11 to 28, the festival is geared to showcase northern films as well as Canadian and international titles. It truly is a window to the world. Between two venues — the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre and the Yukon Film Society's newly acquired space, the Yukon Theatre — people could view in person or go online for over 100 presentations.

Around the world, film festivals are held, but with the main focus on the north, the Available Light Film Festival continues to provide a world-class event. By encouraging film production and general interest and what is available to amateur and professional filmmakers, the festival continues to expand and explore new talent and new exposure for ideas and dreams.

The end receivers of any event, the audience, sometimes never think of how much goes on before, during, and after to make such a festival happen, and very few events are done single-handedly. We would like to give a huge thank you to all of the board, the organizers, the sponsors, the volunteers, and all who eventually make it a success by participating; well done and continued success in future years.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: It is with great delight that I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the Available Light Film Festival. My colleagues have already spoken about the history of this festival and its incredible achievements, so I would like to tell you about a few of the festival's personal highlights for me.

I have always enjoyed ALFF as an audience member, but it was a few years ago that I got to see the work that they do to support filmmakers. At the time, I had started experimenting with animation, but certainly didn't have the confidence to call myself a filmmaker. That changed because of how incredibly welcoming and supportive everyone at ALFF was. I remember when I was first invited to an industry event, and I was half convinced that I wouldn't be allowed in, but everyone there was so kind and welcomed me with open arms. People from all sides offered help and advice, feedback, and offers of collaboration and encouragement. They told me that I could do it and helped me problem-solve when I got stuck. The support of ALFF is the reason that I made my film, and I'm confident that I'm not the only person out there who can say that.

ALFF works so hard to support Yukoners, especially those from marginalized communities, to overcome the barriers to making their visions into reality. Thanks to that work, we all benefit from seeing these stories on the big screen. ALFF rose to the occasion again this year with an extraordinary array of films. I would like to tell you a little bit about my personal favourite from this festival because I think that it's especially relevant to us here in the Legislature.

It was a short called *Svonni vs the Swedish Tax Agency*. It told the story of a Sámi woman in Sweden fighting to have her purchase of a dog for herding reindeer recognized as a business expense. She was told by the tax agency that it was just a pet and that dogs were obsolete for herding reindeer, so she appealed the decision over and over again until she won. It was a funny but also insightful story of how bureaucracy and systems created with only one world view in mind can marginalize entire ways of life.

Film can do so many things. It can help us examine the systems that we live in and empower us to change them; it can delight us; it can terrify us; it can take us out of the world that we're in or help us to see the world we're in more clearly. Every year, ALFF brings us films that do all of those things and make

the Yukon a richer, more enjoyable place to be. Thank you to the organizers, volunteers, staff, filmmakers, storytellers, and to everyone who makes it happen, thank you.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Agriculture Award

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to pay tribute to Lorne Metropolit, owner and operator of Yukon Gardens, as the recipient of this year's Yukon Agriculture Award.

Lorne is being celebrated for his decades of work developing agriculture and building food security in the Yukon. We announced the award last week as part of the 2022 celebration for Canada's Agriculture Day. In 1985, Lorne started Yukon Gardens as a show garden to demonstrate what can be grown in the north's colder climate. Over the span of 40 years, the family business diversified from supplying Yukon residents with bedding plants to growing greenhouse produce. Yukon Gardens' produce of tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and lettuce can all be found on the shelves of most of Whitehorse's grocery stores. The produce is available from early spring until late fall each year, greatly extending the season for Yukoners to be able to access locally grown produce.

Over time, Yukon Gardens has become the Yukon's largest family-run greenhouse and garden centre. It is also one of the largest employers in the Yukon's agriculture industry. In the late 1980s, Lorne was promoting what can be grown in our northern climate on CBC's *Canadian Gardener*, a national television show. In 2019, he was featured on the cover of *Greenhouse Canada* for his hydroponic vegetable greenhouse heated with biomass. Lorne has also delivered many gardening programs at our correctional facility and in communities and schools across the territory. His resilience, innovation, and hard work has ensured that Yukon Gardens' greenhouses continue to put healthy, nutritious food on the tables of Yukoners and is an example of the territory's ability for self-sufficient food production.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to Lorne and his family being recognized, we also received nominations for other exemplary members of our agriculture community, including Trevor Amiot, Sunnyside Farm; Megan Waterman, Jean Van Bibber, Gail Riederer, Al Stannard, Bluebird Farm, Jolene Billwiller, and the late and wonderful Agnes Seitz, who, I have been told, came a very close second for this year's award.

Mr. Speaker, despite all of the hardships and uncertainties that our agriculture community has faced during this pandemic, we have watched our agriculture community rise to the challenge of skyrocketing demands to increase the Yukon's food self-sufficiency. Lorne, his family, and staff are doing their part in building the Yukon's agriculture industry.

Again, congratulations to Lorne Metropolit and his family on winning the 2022 Yukon Agriculture Award, and I wish Lorne, Jean, their family, and all those involved in Yukon agriculture the best for the upcoming season.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to congratulate Lorne Metropolit and his family and Yukon Gardens for

winning the 2022 Yukon Agriculture Award. Yukon Gardens has been part of Yukon's agricultural community for over 40 years. It is the largest family-run greenhouse and garden centre in the Yukon, and beyond plants and produce, you can purchase soil, decorative trees, shrubs for landscaping, and novelty gardening items. Their customers range from gardeners of the backyard-hobby variety to master gardeners, contractors, and more.

Their greenhouse operation has expanded over the years to provide fresh, locally grown lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, and other vegetables to grocery stores, the Fireweed Community Market, and the food bank. In addition to the experienced and knowledgeable staff at Yukon Gardens, you can also find imported bees and ladybugs hard at work throughout the greenhouse, doing their job of pollination.

Food security and buying local has always been important, but there's growing recognition of the importance of this to the Yukon and across the country. Lorne's northern-specific agricultural knowledge helps to ensure that local produce is readily available and to expand the season during which it is available to Yukoners.

I encourage Yukoners to drop by Yukon Gardens this spring ahead of planting season and show your support by purchasing their produce once it hits the grocery store shelves. Thank you to Yukon Gardens for all you do to support Yukoners and to expand the range of produce available here.

I would also like to recognize the second runner-up, Agnes Seitz, for her work in the Annie Lake Road food forest, which I understand holds a wide array of trees, plants, vegetables, wild foods, and herbs, and I would also like to recognize the other nominees for this award, including Jean Van Bibber, Gail Riederer, Al Stannard, Trevor Amiot, Jolene Billwiller, Sunnyside Farm, Laststraw Ranch, and Bluebird Farm for their contributions to the Yukon's agricultural industry.

Again, congratulations to Lorne and the entire Metropolit family on this award, and all the best for the upcoming season.

Ms. White: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to congratulate the winner of the 2022 Agriculture Award, Lorne Metropolit. He and his team at Yukon Gardens have proven that, with innovation and a lot of gumption, you can overcome the dark and the cold of a Yukon winter and still run a successful greenhouse that feeds the community around you.

I remember the first summer that Yukon Gardens became a regular at the Fireweed Market. Setting up hear his daughter, Kelsey, was always fun, because I got to hear her share with enthusiasm what she and her family were up to.

The hard work, education, and big dreams of this team have produced herbs, cucumbers, peppers, and — most exciting — heaps of tomatoes for Yukon tables. The efforts and actions of this family-run business are addressing the very real issues of climate change and food security in the north. So, congratulations to Lorne and his team. We all wait with bated breath to see what comes next for our tables.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling a report from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on the absence of members from sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its committees, dated March 3, 2022. This report is tabled pursuant to the direction of the Members' Services Board.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling a copy of the independent review regarding Yukon government's response to the allegation of sexual abuse committed at Hidden Valley Elementary School, completed by Amanda Rogers on January 31, 2022. Additionally, I have for tabling the action plan for the Hidden Valley Elementary School report, completed by the Hidden Valley Elementary School deputy minister committee on February 18, 2022.

Further, I have five legislative returns, mainly arising out of Committee of the Whole Vote 3 for Education during the last Sitting.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have for tabling a letter from me, as well as the premiers of Northwest Territories and Nunavut, to the Chair of the Council of the Federation, Premier John Horgan of British Columbia. In this letter, we have outlined the severe concerns that we, the northern premiers, have following Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a legislative return responding to a question from the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

Ms. Tredger: I have for tabling the report entitled *Making Work Safe: A Summary on the Engagement of Paid Sick Leave*.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have a legislative return for tabling pursuant to a question raised by the Member for Copperbelt South.

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling the taxi safety report.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling the third report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Boards and Committees, dated December 15, 2021.

Speaker: Are there any other reports of committees to be presented?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 204 agreed to

Bill No. No. 205: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 205 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT Standing Order 76 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly be amended for the 2022 Spring Sitting by deleting all instances of the words "Government Bill" and substituting in their place the words "appropriation bill"; and

THAT, following the 2022 Spring Sitting, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges convene to review this provision prior to the 2022 Fall Sitting.

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House supports efforts by the Government of Canada and the international community to respond to the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia by:

(1) imposing strong sanctions on Russia, including banning the import of oil and other products;

(2) helping the people of Ukraine defend their freedom, including by providing equipment and other resources; and

(3) welcoming refugees from Ukraine.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to provide updated COVID-19 operational plans for schools, including clarity about whether indoor mask use will continue to be mandatory, prior to the start of the 2022 spring break.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation to support Yukoners trying to afford homes by reintroducing programs cancelled by the previous minister, such as the first-time homebuyer program.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of making protection of our Arctic sovereignty a top priority by taking immediate action to modernize and strengthen our air force, navy, army, reserves, and Coast Guard.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with residents of southeast Yukon to design, build, and operate a continuing care facility in Watson Lake.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners by:

(1) creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions they have made to their community or to the Yukon; and

(2) providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2, 2022, in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Teslin School to install a PA system in the school.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to take action to improve the north Alaska Highway by:

(1) meeting with the Alaska government to jointly develop a plan for funding reconstruction of the Alaska Highway from Beaver Creek to Haines Junction and Haines, Alaska to Haines Junction, known as the Shawkak portion; and

(2) using the 2022-23 capital budget to make additional investments.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to work in collaboration with the Yukon Fish and Game Association and the Yukon Agricultural Association to explore adaptive management options in the *Management Plan for Elk in Yukon* to address the elk-agriculture conflict, with the goals of improving protection of farms and providing increased elk hunting opportunities.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to commit to protecting 25 percent of Yukon's landmass by the end of 2025.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to accept and implement the recommendations of the Making Work Safe Panel on paid sick leave for Yukoners.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Russian invasion of Ukraine

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yukoners, Canadians, and people around the world are deeply disturbed to witness the tragic events that are unfolding in Ukraine. We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. Russia's horrific and unprovoked attacks on Ukraine and President Putin's blatant disregard for international law and human rights have been condemned by international leaders around the world. The message is clear: Russia's unjust actions will have consequences.

It is important that we work together, as members of the international community, to bring an end to these attacks and to support the people of Ukraine.

This week, our government announced that we will be donating \$50,000 to the Canadian Red Cross to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and to help ensure that Ukrainians can get food, clothing, shelter, and other assistance. Russia's aggression in Ukraine demonstrates its ambition to secure power at the expense of others and is a threat to global security, including the Arctic. I also met this week with my fellow northern premiers to discuss our shared concerns about Russia's aggression and its implications for the Arctic Council. We have written a joint letter to the Prime Minister urging the Government of Canada to bolster security in the Arctic and to confirm a meeting with northern premiers to discuss Arctic sovereignty and security.

We stand by the strong sanctions that Canada has imposed on Russia and support further measures that are being taken with international partners. We have also written to our fellow premiers at the Council of the Federation for their support in these increasingly important conversations.

Yukon's minister responsible for immigration has been working closely with his fellow immigration ministers, including the federal immigration minister, Sean Fraser, to find ways to support refugees to enter Canada and to find employment opportunities here in the territory. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of Northwestel, which has announced that they will be waiving all long-distance call charges and messages to Ukraine until March 23.

Every action that we can take to support Ukrainians during this challenging time is contributing to a larger global effort. It warmed my heart to see Yukon's Ukrainian community, and Yukoners across the territory, joining the demonstration in Whitehorse this past weekend, including representatives of all three parties of the Legislative Assembly.

The minister responsible for immigration met with Yukon's Ukrainian community last night to listen and to learn about how we can best support them. He provided clear and accurate information about how the Yukon and Canadian governments are working together to support the people of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian flag is flying alongside the Yukon and Canadian flags outside the Assembly. It symbolizes that we stand united in support of the people of Ukraine in these challenging times. The Yukon government will continue to monitor the situation in Ukraine and work to support Ukrainians.

We continue to work with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners to advocate for Ukraine's sovereignty.

I want to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time to speak today.

Mr. Dixon: First of all, I would like to make absolutely clear, on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, our unequivocal condemnation of the abhorrent atrocities taking place in the sovereign nation of Ukraine by Russia. The images emerging on social media and on television are truly heartbreaking and unfathomable in the 21st century. I cannot help but think of the many Yukoners and Canadians with family in or connections to the nation of Ukraine. It is truly disturbing that an otherwise peaceful and stable democracy is being invaded in an attempt at an illegal and immoral annexation.

I share the concern for Ukraine and the anger that Ukrainians' rights and the right to choose their future and their right to live free from war are being stripped away by Putin's illegal invasion.

World War II taught us a lot of things that in recent years seem to have been forgotten. The lesson that we must learn as a global community is that dictators ultimately must be dealt with like bullies. That begins by standing up to them together — united. That is why I would like to thank the Premier for his words today and the actions taken to date by the Yukon government. I am indeed pleased to learn that he has met with northern premiers and that they have jointly agreed to press the federal government to increase of level of attention paid to Arctic sovereignty in light of the aggression of Putin's Russia in the north. Increasing efforts and measures related to Arctic

sovereignty is something that the Yukon Party certainly supports and has pushed for, for years.

We are also supportive of the variety of actions that are taking place here in Yukon and across Canada. We also applaud Northwestel for their long-distance calling exemption for Yukoners to connect with family and friends in Ukraine. We encourage Yukoners to donate to the Red Cross in support of humanitarian efforts and appreciate the donation from the Yukon government.

I am pleased to see sanctions being introduced that demonstrate that an illegal war cannot be conducted without consequences — consequences such as banning the import of Russian petroleum products, closing Canadian airspace to Russian commercial traffic, and imposing economic sanctions against high-ranking Russian officials.

Further, as I stated last week, it is my view that the Russian ambassador ought to be expelled from the country.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Economic Development for his swift actions on this issue. Some will be aware that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, wrote to the minister urging him to work with the federal government to streamline the process to allow refugees from Ukraine to come to the Yukon and to ensure that the Yukon was ready to welcome them. We are very pleased to hear that he is working with other immigration ministers to make that happen, and we hope that his department is engaging with organizations and businesses to ensure that they are prepared to receive these refugees. This work could help displaced Ukrainians build a new life in Canada — in the Yukon, if they so choose.

While I know that many of us do not want to see a further escalation of the fighting, we must be ready to help those who want to be free to make their own choices when it comes to merely existing as a sovereign nation. I know that many Yukoners have been concerned about what has been happening, as witnessed by Sunday's rally in downtown Whitehorse, which I was honoured to attend with other members of the Legislature. We certainly share those concerns. We may not know what is next, but all I can say in closing is that we hope for a peaceful resolution, peace for the people of Ukraine, and for a sovereign Ukraine now and for many years to come.

Ms. White: Over a week ago, Russia launched a comprehensive invasion of Ukraine, marking a major escalation of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. What we have seen since has been hard to understand. On Friday, I was sitting on my couch scrolling through Twitter and I was overcome with emotion reading people's stories of what is happening on the ground. What lessons haven't we learned at the cost of others already? — and tears, because honestly it all feels very hopeless. But there is hope in all of that darkness. Stories are making their way of regular people doing incredible things to look out for each other. We have seen beautiful examples of resistance in Russia as well, as Russian citizens stand in solidarity with their Ukrainian neighbours.

I was contacted later on Friday night with a message from a neighbour that read — and I quote: "The Ukrainian community here is in pain. We are watching from a distance as

our homes are destroyed, as our friends and families are put in harm's way. As with every armed conflict, it is the common people who are hurt the most.

"I am asking for you to show your support for the Ukrainian community, and to join us on Sunday."

So, Mr. Speaker, under a beautiful blue sky on Sunday, I joined hundreds of others. It was an incredible show of support. Blue and yellow fabric was flapping in the wind, yellow flowers and flags. Of all the things that could be said, I think that what Svetlana shared to open the event says it so well, and I share it today with her permission.

I am quoting: "Good afternoon, my name is Svetlana Koptyeva. I am a Yukoner, and a Ukrainian.

"The first that comes to mind when I think of Ukraine on a regular day is the Dnipro River. It flows from Russia into Belarus and then into the Ukraine. Within Ukraine, the river expands tenfold before emptying into the Black Sea.

"Ukraine turns the averaged size river into a flowing and unstopable mass, and that is what Ukrainian people are.

"Unbreakable people who even in the most horrifying time in their lives, do not give up, and even make jokes and try to make their relatives abroad feel better.

"Last Wednesday night, my close friend messaged me to tell me the city near her in eastern Ukraine was under attack. That message began a nightmare for me for which I see no end.

"My friend made it to safety. Many others have not. My mother is in Kyiv, my brother is trying to get closer to the border in the west. Our friends and our families are under attack. Friends and families of Canadian citizens are under attack.

"A tyrant is taking the world hostage. The Russian invasion is far bigger than Ukraine. We've all been taught that fairness and justice mean more than taking what you want, when you want it.

"Ukraine will survive. A nation is more powerful than any government. The Ukrainian nation, our culture, and our people have survived tyranny many times before. Every time we have shrugged it off, and our people have endured.

"Yukoners, please stand with us. Stand with us to denounce tyranny and justice, and stand with us so that those fighting to protect our homeland know that they are not alone. We believe in our strong army that is defending our cities from aggression alone at this very moment. Their battle will echo for generations to come.

"Thank you for being here and hearing us. We are incredibly grateful for the support Canadians have given Ukraine so far."

Mr. Speaker, I and many others went to a very powerful chant on Sunday afternoon: "Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes."

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm happy to see Members of the Legislative Assembly standing united in support of Ukraine and Ukrainian people around the world in the face of authoritarianism and aggression. It is our duty as leaders to lead with integrity and to stand up for what is right, and I commend you for doing that today.

The battle today is in Ukraine, but it is also our fight here too.

I want to highlight the actions that the Government of Canada has taken to address the situation in Ukraine, to limit Russia's power, and to help Ukrainians to defend themselves against Putin's war of aggression.

Working closely with G7 leaders, Canada is imposing crushing sanctions on the Russian economy, marking the strongest economic actions taken on a major economy to date. Canada has announced that all Canadian financial institutions will immediately be prohibited from engaging in any form of transaction with the Russian central bank, the Russian federation's national wealth fund, the Ministry of Finance, and members of the Security Council.

They have announced sanctions on Russia's energy sector prohibiting the import of Russian oil, restricting Russian ships and vessels from entering Canadian waters and Russian planes from entering into Canadian airspace. Following the northern premiers' joint letter to the Prime Minister yesterday, the federal Minister of Foreign Affairs announced today that Canada will not be sending representatives to Russia for the meetings of the Arctic Council, a forum that Russia chairs, and will be temporarily pausing the participation in the council and its subsidiary bodies.

I continue to work closely with my fellow premiers and the Prime Minister to ensure the future of Arctic sovereignty, including a strong Canadian presence. Canada has donated millions of dollars to humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and, following requests from our government, has begun to introduce new immigration streams for Ukrainian refugees who want to come to Canada temporarily or permanently.

Our country is actively coordinating with NATO allies to fulfill the aid request by Ukraine to send arms, ammunition, and protective gear, which are aiding Ukrainian fighters on the ground now. I'm extremely proud of our country and its leadership and our actions to aid the people of Ukraine to stop Russia's unjust and unprovoked action.

As Canada continues to work with allies and partners around the world to hold Russia accountable, the Yukon will continue to support their efforts in every step and in every way. We are overwhelmed by the support for Ukrainians shown by Yukoners and local businesses. We will continue to work with partnerships to support the friends and families of our Ukrainian community.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school, government accountability

Mr. Dixon: On the day before the Fall Sitting last year, the Liberal government commissioned a Vancouver lawyer to complete a report looking at the Hidden Valley school scandal. Throughout the Fall Sitting, the Liberals stonewalled opposition, media, and Yukoners who were looking for answers. However, just over four weeks ago, the Rogers report was released, and unfortunately, it confirmed what many of us

already believed. It confirmed that the government's response to the matter was entirely inadequate, that the government failed, and that parents and Yukoners were justified in their outrage.

Despite this, the Liberals' response was that enough people across enough departments made mistakes that no one should actually be held responsible. The result of this is that not a single person in the entire government has received even the slightest reprimand for this failure. They have avoided responsibility, and they have avoided accountability.

How can the Premier think that this is acceptable?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today in the House to speak about important matters that mean a great deal to Yukoners. We started out on this note in the last Sitting, and I see that we will start there again. I ask that we always keep at the heart of this that there are children at the heart of the matters we are speaking about. So, I keep that in the forefront always and know that there are still families going through incredibly difficult processes within systems in our government and with other institutions. There is absolutely nothing more important, Mr. Speaker, than the safety and well-being of students when they come into our care. We acknowledge that there have been breakdowns of trust between families at Hidden Valley school and the Department of Education.

As I talked about many, many times in the last Sitting, I worked to have an independent review happen. That independent review has now provided us with a detailed account of what happened in 2019 and I will continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, my question was for the Premier, about leadership and accountability. As much as I have thought about this, I haven't been able to come up with a better metaphor than the one used by one of the affected parents in the media. She said to the CBC — and I quote: "If a large ship accidentally plowed into a dock, severely injuring a bunch of kids, even if the captain didn't intentionally do it, would they not still be held accountable?"

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the former minister's intentions were — she hasn't told us — but what we do know is that Yukoners expect accountability from their government. The buck has to stop somewhere. So, my question is to the Premier: Where does the buck stop in his government?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, I will continue building on my response here. I was talking just a moment ago about the independent review and the findings of that review. It revealed significant long-standing policy gaps in the Department of Education and government as a whole. We are implementing all of the report's recommendations to ensure that this does not happen again. Last month, just a very short time ago, we released the implementation action plan that was created to ensure that these issues are addressed immediately. This action plan provides tangible next steps for us to improve the coordination of government department responses, address gaps in internal policies, and enhance oversight mechanisms. We are committed to making system-wide changes to ensure that we respond swiftly and effectively to incidents in our

schools. Supporting our students is a top priority as we move forward on a long and important healing journey.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to speak with the Hidden Valley school council last night. I've had meetings virtually with families and the affected communities, and I'll continue to do so.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the response to the independent report. Of course, we'll have plenty of time for debating policy gaps, intergovernmental protocols, communication guidelines, and internal staff training manuals, but that's not what this is about; this is about accountability and it's about leadership. Sadly, we've seen neither of those things from this government.

How can the Premier tell us that no one should be held responsible and that no one should be held accountable and expect us to believe that's leadership?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should be accountable for his own words. The Yukon Party has been completely unreliable when it comes to this issue. They have jumped to conclusions, disregarded the facts. They ought to correct the record and apologize for misleading Yukoners, including comments about addendums to briefing notes that absolutely did not exist.

The independent review made it clear.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: In the Premier's choice to use the word "misleading", he is clearly in contravention of Standing Order 19(h), and I would ask you to have him retract the comment and apologize for making it.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think that Standing Order 19(g) talks about false or unavowed motives of another member, and misleading is not talking about lying or any issue like that. It's talking about — in 19(h) — deliberate falsehoods. This is just talking about statements being misleading, and I hope we're able to talk about that here.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is a point of order and I would ask the member not to phrase his debate in that manner.

Please continue.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me make my point: The independent review report made it clear that the information did not flow up to the minister's office or to anyone in Cabinet. The decision about informing parents was not made by anyone in Cabinet. As soon as officials learned about the incident in 2019, the individual was removed immediately to prevent any further harm. The independent review found that there was a prior incident with this educational assistant in 2014 and 2015. It was not properly documented or reported.

Can the members opposite explain why that incident was mishandled? Will the members opposite go back and take a look at Hansard at what they said in October and correct the record if necessary?

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, over the last two years, the Yukon has been in a state of emergency for a staggering 21 months. For 21 of the last 24 months, the Liberals have exercised emergency powers, bypassed legislation, restricted the ability of the tourism industry and small businesses to survive, and imposed massive restrictions on the way that people live their lives. The justification for this has always been that decisions are only being made based on science; however, over the last year, it has become more and more clear that political science has been a big part of the motivation for this Liberal government.

Can the Premier explain the science, other than today being the first day of the Spring Sitting, that justifies the removal of vaccine passports and mandates on employees over the next few weeks?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back here in the Legislative Assembly this afternoon, especially given events around the world. It is very important to recognize that this Chamber is so very important to our democracy and it's great to be answering questions on the floor this afternoon.

On November 13, Mr. Speaker, a state of emergency was declared in the Yukon due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The state of emergency was put in place to allow for a mask order, a health protection order, and an enforcement order. The decision was based on the expert advice of the chief medical officer of health, and we thank everyone who continues to follow these orders, protecting themselves and others. The sacrifices and the support that these measures received from the Yukon public have made the territory one of the shining examples of how we can navigate this pandemic.

Due to the arrival of Omicron in December 2021, ministerial orders continued to be adapted to respond to and mitigate its spread with the goal of safeguarding Yukoners. That has always been our goal, Mr. Speaker — to make sure that Yukoners are safe, to enable a quick response, and to continue our current health protection measures. On February 3, 2022, our state of emergency was extended for another 90 days. We are reviewing the situation and will remove the state of emergency as soon as possible.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, there was no answer in that response. Throughout the pandemic, it has been hard to ignore the influence of politics on the decisions that the Premier says are based on science. Shortly after they extended the state of emergency in March last year, they called an unnecessary snap election. Then, in August 2021, they ended the state of emergency just in time for another politically motivated snap election, which was just in time for the chief medical officer of health to run for election. Now, on the eve of the Spring Sitting, knowing full well that they would have to explain and answer questions about the nonsensical restrictions

that they have imposed, they announced the removal of most of the remaining restrictions.

It certainly seems that the timing of this is based on political science as much as anything else. So, can the Premier explain why the vaccine mandate needs to be in place today but not on April 4?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today. I am going to take the opportunity here — having a matter being brought before us of the evidence of how long this COVID-19 situation has been here for us all to deal with. Our government has had a measured response; we have followed the science. For the past two years, we have worked every day, all day — including front-line workers, nurses, doctors, and health care professionals — across the territory to keep Yukoners safe. We have avoided the most severe health and economic impacts as a result of the decisions that have been taken — difficult decisions — every day by this government in response to the science that has come with Omicron, with COVID-19, across the territory, with ups and downs that have had Yukoners struggling.

Our strong leadership has guided us through the pandemic and kept our economy going. Our top priority has always been the health and safety of Yukoners.

By working with our partners, we have supported Yukoners and avoided the most severe health and economic impacts, and we would not be in a position to have done that without the efforts of every Yukoner and our front-line health care workers.

Mr. Hassard: Again, no answers.

Now, the Premier has refused or been unable to explain the evidence that backs up the decision to impose any of these incoherent rules that he has imposed on sports organizations, faith communities, and NGOs. He has been unable to explain how the vaccine mandate on employees is needed today but won't be needed in April.

What we do know is that, a few weeks ago, public polling came out that indicated that the popularity of this Premier and his government is waning and that Yukoners want to see a clear path forward. Businesses, NGOs, sports organizations, and chambers of commerce have been expressing strong concern for months about how little sense these restrictions make and how negatively they are impacting Yukoners, yet it's not until the Premier realizes that his approach has been unpopular and his support is crumbling that he will decide to change course.

How can Yukoners look at the Premier's —

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I guess the Yukon Party goes with what's popular or not popular. We go with science, absolutely. The state of emergency was completely unpopular, but it was necessary. It has supported an effective response and that's what we did. We avoided the most severe health and economic impacts because of our measures, because of our leadership through policy with recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. We are in a position to lift the state of emergency, yet the opposition is not happy with that.

The Yukon Party has supported lawsuits against the Government of Yukon regarding the state of emergency. The

same people who have taken the Yukon government to court over the state of emergency are listed as donors to the Yukon Party. It is important that Yukoners know that this lawsuit is costing taxpayers around \$3 million and it is being supported by the members of the Yukon Party.

The Yukon Party is focused in on dividing Yukoners. Our direction and leadership, for two years, is making sure that Yukoners are safe and protected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, since 2016, Yukoners have been grieving the loss of loved ones to overdose. Last year, 23 Yukoners lost their lives to drug poisoning. This year, the tragedy of deaths by drug poisoning has only continued.

While the Yukon watched and waited, it was Yukon First Nations that took action. It was Yukon First Nations that developed treatment programs when this government wouldn't, and it's a Yukon First Nation that is opening a managed alcohol program when this government wouldn't. It was Yukon First Nations that declared a state of emergency when this government wouldn't, and it was only after Yukoners from all over the territory took to the streets that this government finally listened.

Can the minister tell us why it took so long for this government to finally declare an emergency for the opioid crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's my pleasure to rise and address this important issue here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. The Yukon is facing an unprecedented rate of drug-related deaths. On January 20, 2022, our government declared a substance use health emergency. In the month of January, eight Yukoners died from drug poisoning over a three-week period, and this followed unprecedented numbers from 2021.

We recognize that the illicit drug supply in Yukon and across Canada is toxic, is putting anyone who consumes any drug in this area at significant risk of drug poisoning — absolutely everyone. This requires an urgent and comprehensive response, and that is what the declaration of a substance use health emergency is. It is a call to action by our government; it is a call to action to every Yukoner; and it is a call to action for a coordinated partnership response across the territory. Every element of what has been announced by First Nation governments, by our government, by community groups, and by individuals to address this issue are important parts of how this substance use health emergency will become a priority here in the territory.

Ms. White: So, let's compare this to another recent emergency that we faced last summer — that of a flooding emergency. During that emergency, the government allocated \$8 million right away to help people save their homes, for good reason, but imagine if, instead, the government reacted like we just recently saw, and they called a summit full of experts who all said the same thing: Yes, the Yukon has a flooding problem; yes, people's houses are being flooded as we speak — and then did nothing — no real concrete help, no more boots on the ground, no support, and no new money, just a summit.

So, how many more conversations and how many more summits and experts does the minister need to call on before this government offers real support to Yukoners who are dying of preventable drug-poisoning deaths today?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am extremely disappointed to hear the comments from the member opposite and disparaging remarks with respect to the Mental Wellness Summit, which was held here in the territory on February 14 and 15, 2022 — a few weeks ago. Our government hosted part 1 of a mental wellness summit where leading experts from across the territory and the world shared innovative and successful approaches to mental health and substance use. More than 550 participants tuned in to be part of that conversation and provide their feedback.

Presenters at the summit discussed mental wellness topics such as prevention, treatment, support services, and after-care while also sharing a variety of harm-reduction models and approaches. The focus of the summit was education and to spark conversation and to spark ideas here in the territory. It did just that.

Ms. White: It makes me wonder if the Minister of Health and Social Services was watching the comments section as all those presenters were saying that there was a crisis and that there were solutions. Maybe she even heard from some of the presenters who said that we have had enough conversation; let's see action.

It has been over a month since the declaration of a substance use emergency was declared in the Yukon and still no real change has happened. Safe supply is still nowhere to be found in the communities, and it's almost impossible to access, even in the City of Whitehorse. Long-term mental health supports are still impossible to access, the wait-list for family doctors is still never-ending, and the Yukon government still hasn't opened a managed alcohol program — all while Yukoners are still dying of drug poisoning.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell Yukoners when these services will finally be available to those who need them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, I think that some of the comments made here today are not really helpful and are not really supportive of this process going forward. The NDP would have Yukoners believe that the solutions to this emergency are easy. In reality, the root causes are complex and the situations require that we all work together. I know that recently the Third Party of the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution. My question with respect to the resolution about action going forward is: What are they prepared to do? How are they prepared to be a partner, and how are they prepared to help?

Actions that have been taken to date, Mr. Speaker, include developing a new territory-wide public awareness and education campaign to address issues and be focused on youth. We are expanding drug testing and opioid treatment services to rural communities and continuing to expand availability in Whitehorse by enhancing Yukon government's existing supervised consumption site to support people who use inhalants, which will be only the second place in Canada to do so.

We're increasing the land treatment options within the territory. We're working with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend the hours and the operation of the outreach van and to consider a second van. We're developing a drug and substance harm-reduced action plan to roll forward. I welcome all members of this House to help us with this work.

Question re: Cyber security

Mr. Cathers: As Putin's illegal war against Ukraine and its people has developed, Canada and international allies have imposed a series of strong sanctions on Russia. Provinces and territories, including the Yukon, have also taken action.

We strongly support these actions, as well as sending weapons, ammunition, and equipment to Ukraine and supporting refugees fleeing the conflict, but we need to be ready for potential retaliation. Many security experts have noted that these sanctions could illicit a response from Russia.

A few weeks ago, the federal Canadian Centre for Cyber Security issued a threat bulletin urging critical infrastructure operators to raise awareness and mitigate against known Russian-backed cyber-threat activity.

Has the Yukon government taken any steps in response to this warning from the federal agency?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As we mentioned earlier in the minister's response and the ministerial statements, it's extremely important that Yukon does its part when it comes to these outrageous aggressions to the Ukrainian people. Their sovereignty and their territorial integrity must be respected, and the Ukrainian people must be free to determine their own future.

The Yukon will stand with our allies in condemning the actions of Russia, and we will continue to look to offer support where we can, whether that is in conversations with the Council of the Federation's First Ministers' meetings on Arctic sovereignty — actions early from Yukon have determined Canadian actions when it comes to the Arctic Council — or any other conversations when it comes to technologies as well.

We welcome suggestions from the opposition when it comes to making sure that Yukon has all of our different variables being considered and that we are not shy on how we can help support the federal government when it comes to Russia's actions that are a global threat to security and that are a global threat to international rule-based order.

The security piece definitely has an economic activity component to it, but it also has a technologies position as well.

Mr. Cathers: We do believe it is important to stand united around the world in supporting Ukraine, but the Premier didn't provide me an answer to the specific question that I asked.

Over the past several years, cyber attacks have increased considerably. In 2020, cyber attacks shut down the municipality of St. John, New Brunswick, and last year, Newfoundland and Labrador's health care system was brought to a standstill by a cyber attack that still causes problems today. Now with the war in Ukraine and the tendency of Russia and Russian-backed groups to use cyber attacks as retaliation against western sanctions, experts are advising Canadian businesses,

governments, and organizations that deal with critical infrastructure to begin preparing. In cyber warfare, Russia is one of the most sophisticated and capable in the world.

Will the Yukon government take steps immediately to ensure that our cyber security is enhanced and that we are doing everything we need to do in order to proactively monitor for and mitigate against potential cyber attacks?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, keeping government-held information secure is a key objective. In recent years, the Yukon government has seen an increase in cyber attacks, which are increasingly happening around the world to both governments and companies alike. We take these threats seriously, and in an effort to counter these threats, Highways and Public Works is continuously evolving our security threat and detection solutions to repel attacks, improving the government's resiliency by taking new approaches to the ways in which we protect information, retaining a digital security contractor to monitor our IT infrastructure 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and conducting security threat risk assessments on systems and regularly patching servers.

I can advise that in the whole-of-government approach, in the budget discussions that we will have during the course of the spring session, the member opposite will note that additional funds were provided to the Department of Highways and Public Works to improve the resiliency of the cyber infrastructure of the territory.

So, we are very mindful of the comments made by the Member for Lake Laberge and couldn't agree more that we should be vigilant with respect to cyber threats, whether it is from Russia or from anybody else.

Mr. Cathers: I want to emphasize that my colleagues and I believe that it is important that we stand united in supporting Ukraine and opposing Russia's illegal and immoral actions, but also that we prepare for retaliation for sanctions.

An area of particular concern to many experts in the field of cyber security is the electricity generation sector. A few weeks ago, Brian Hay, the president of the Mackenzie Institute, which is a Canadian think-tank focused on domestic and global security, said that electricity-generating companies are likely to be targeted by Russian-based groups for cyber warfare.

In light of the growing war and the likelihood of Russian retaliation against sanctions, including the possibility of cyber war for targeting us and others in the west, will the Government of Yukon consult with cyber-security experts here in the Yukon and in the federal government to immediately assess the vulnerability of our critical infrastructure, including our electricity grid, and take the necessary steps to protect it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for his question. I will reach out to Yukon Energy to flag this concern and to see what steps they are taking, and I'm happy to look into it for the member opposite. Of course, the Yukon has an islanded grid. Our grid is not connected to the national grid, so it's a very different reality for us, as Yukoners, both in terms of our energy security and our energy insecurity. That's just one of the realities that we have, but I take the point and also the points of all members who have risen today talking about the importance of supporting Ukraine and making sure that we are

protecting the safety of Yukoners, and I will happily follow up on that suggestion.

Question re: Psychology profession regulation

Ms. Clarke: The availability and quality of mental health services has been something on the minds of many Yukoners recently, and when we consider mental health services, it's impossible to ignore the role of psychologists. Unfortunately, the Yukon remains the only jurisdiction in the country without any regulation at all of this important sector.

Last year, I introduced a motion in this House urging the government to introduce a regulatory framework for psychology in the Yukon. Can the government tell us what work has been done on this important file?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is a very important issue. The regulatory environment that we have in the territory to govern all of our medical professionals — certainly psychologists, psychiatrists, and a number of other professional services — is woefully out of date. My predecessor in this role and I are working very hard to update the rules. We're looking at all sorts of measures to make sure that these professions are regulated properly and thoughtfully by the government.

We're a very small jurisdiction; we have many, many thousands of regulatory services to provide, so it's a very taxing environment and we are looking very hard at how we can improve this and make it efficient and not onerous on the professions that we are regulating. I will have more to say on this in follow-up questions.

Ms. Clarke: One solution that has been advocated by the Psychological Society of Yukon is to develop an agreement with the College of Alberta Psychologists and allow that organization to handle the regulatory aspect. This is how the other two territories have approached the regulation of psychology.

Will the minister consider this approach and, if so, when will Yukon have such an agreement in place?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Late last year, I met with representatives of the psychologists' association and we had a very good talk. They actually floated this idea with us. The Department of Community Services has looked at this, working in tandem with Justice officials. Unfortunately, we have determined that we do not have the ability to form such a partnership with the agency in Alberta. That said, we are now looking at other options and looking at how we can modernize and change our regulations and our legislation to make such synergies and cooperative arrangements possible.

This was a platform commitment of our government. We are going to stand by it. We are working very hard on this. I have heard about this from not only psychologists, but we have physiotherapists and optometrists. There is a whole raft of people who are looking for change to make these efficiencies so that these medical professionals can actually offer the services that are offered in other jurisdictions. This was woefully ignored for decades, Mr. Speaker. We are working very hard to overcome a large backlog of work that should have been done a long time ago.

Ms. Clarke: Regulation is important for at least two reasons. First, it introduces a standard of practice that ensures that Yukoners receive services guided by a set of professional standards and, second, that there is a mechanism in place for complaints and professional conduct. We know that regulation will take some time, but while the government is doing the work to develop regulation, how will the Yukon government ensure that Yukoners can receive psychology services that are guided by professional standards and that they will have the recourse of a disciplinary process if they are harmed in the interim?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There's a lot of unanimity in the House this afternoon. We agree — absolutely right. We are fully in agreement, Mr. Speaker. The difference is that we are the government, and we are looking at how we can actually execute on this, and the opposition doesn't understand the full complexities of what we have before us. We are working through the process with my colleague in Justice to make sure that these professions are properly regulated.

The Yukon government itself only uses official and certified psychiatrists and psychologists. We go through and make sure that the services we are providing to Yukoners are done by professionals who are certified, and we will continue to do that, but the work is underway to revise the *Health Professions Act* and improve how we regulate health care service professionals. This multi-year project will ensure a high standard of regulation that responds to Yukon's unique needs and context.

This is one of the areas of legislation that has been woefully neglected for a long time. My good colleague, my predecessor in this role, worked very hard on this file. I have inherited the work that he has already done, and I am continuing that work to make sure that these professions are brought up to the modern age and so that these professionals can actually provide the services that they're allowed to in other jurisdictions.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 204, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm very pleased to present Yukon's budget for the upcoming fiscal year. It's a great honour to be on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to present our government's

second budget, which comes at a very pivotal time in our territory's history.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created acute challenges across the Yukon, testing the strength of our public health system and the resolve of our communities, of our businesses, and of our people. After two long and trying years, Yukoners — like people right across the country and around the world — are looking to turn the page on COVID-19 and to move firmly along the path to recovery.

At the same time, the promise of the Yukon continues to draw people to our beautiful territory. Our commitment to reconciliation based on respectful relationships with our First Nation partners, balancing environmental stewardship with economic growth and diversification, building healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities and a modern, inclusive, and welcoming society is resonating. It is resonating well beyond our borders. Our government's strong leadership has guided our territory through the pandemic and kept our economy going.

The Yukon is leading the nation as we witness unprecedented growth in our territory's population and economy. The 2022-23 budget includes \$1.97 billion in spending. Of this, a record \$546.5 million in capital expenditures is identified, representing a 26-percent increase from last year and nearly doubling the capital budget from just five years ago.

Operation and maintenance expenditures account for a total of \$1.42 billion. This year's budget shows a surplus of \$39.5 million, which reflects our government's enduring commitment to responsible fiscal management, even in the face of COVID-19.

Budgets are fundamentally about choices. With limited resources, choices must be made about where to focus government spending to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of the present while also creating the conditions of prosperity for the future. This year's budget addresses critical needs in the territory while making necessary investments to make sure that all Yukoners benefit from the territory's historical economic growth.

We are building a brighter future for our territory by investing in housing, education, health care, social services, green energy, and resilient infrastructure that will create sustainable communities for the next generation of Yukoners.

The Yukon's economy is seeing tremendous growth that truly sets us apart from the rest of Canada. Indeed, our economy continues to experience strong growth despite the impacts of COVID-19. At the outset of the pandemic, our government took immediate action to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

We introduced comprehensive economic relief programs to protect Yukon businesses and mitigate the effects on local employees, employers, and organizations.

We have continued to adapt program supports throughout the pandemic. To date, these programs have provided over 500 businesses and organizations with more than \$85 million in support.

The Yukon's economic support programs have been recognized as the best and most generous in the country, and they have prevented the most severe economic impacts of COVID-19. In fact, the Yukon's economy exceeded expectations throughout the pandemic. In 2020, the Yukon had the strongest GDP growth in the country and was one of only two jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth. We also continued to have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, as we have for much of the last few years.

Along with the 2022-23 main estimates, I am pleased to present the fiscal and economic outlook for the Yukon. It forecasts robust economic growth of 9.6 percent in 2022, along with continued economic growth each year out to 2026.

Among other promised trends, the outlook notes that our tourism sector continues to recover along with our labour market, which has seen gains in every industry since May 2020. The average weekly earnings of Yukoners continued to increase while consumer spending is pushing record levels. The outlook for employment also shows strong growth for both 2022 and 2023.

Under the leadership of our government, mining is flourishing in the Yukon, creating tangible benefits and economic opportunities for communities and Yukon First Nations.

In 2015, the Yukon was in a recession. It had a single operating mine and was mired in division and expensive legal disputes that discouraged investment. We have built strong relationships with First Nations, and we have fostered reconciliation and worked in partnership with industry to help restore investor confidence in the Yukon.

Our territory now has three operating mines with a number of others under development. Mineral production is expected to increase to more than \$1.1 billion this year — a record high — while staying above \$1 billion every year through to 2026.

Mineral exploration spending was \$139 million in 2021, and we are developing a new mineral exploration fund to support junior mining companies in the Yukon.

This year, Victoria Gold president and CEO, John McConnell, was awarded the Association for Mineral Exploration's 2021 E.A. Scholz Award for excellence in mining development in British Columbia or Yukon for his work to bring the Yukon's Eagle Gold mine into production. The mine continues to provide many jobs and benefits to Yukoners, particularly First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun citizens and the Village of Mayo.

Through industry leadership and a commitment to creating positive community impacts, Mr. McConnell and his team continue to demonstrate what modern mining is all about. Mining remains a significant driver of our territory's economy, and our government has worked with partners to ensure that the Yukon is helping to lead the way in the development of sustainable mining practices.

The strong momentum of our economy is bolstering private sector confidence in the Yukon and will continue moving us along the path to recovery. Northern Vision Development recently announced plans for the first Hyatt hotel

in northern Canada, on Main Street in the heart of downtown Whitehorse.

Our tourism sector has been deeply impacted by COVID-19, and Northern Vision Development's commitment to developing Hyatt Place Whitehorse represents a bold investment in the future of tourism in the Yukon. Condor has announced that it will resume direct international flights from Frankfurt, Germany to Whitehorse this summer. Air North, Yukon's airline, will also be introducing services to Toronto for the first time this year. This is fantastic news for the Yukon's tourism operators as they prepare to welcome back tourists from all around the globe to enjoy the unique and world-class experiences offered across the territory.

Strategic investment in this year's budget will continue to support our private sector and increase economic opportunities for Yukon businesses. Alongside the budget, I'm very pleased to present the Government of Yukon's latest five-year capital plan, which includes average annual spending of \$519 million for a total of nearly \$2.6 billion in spending. Since it was first introduced five years ago, the five-year capital plan has dramatically increased transparency around government capital planning while creating more certainty for the private sector.

It has also maximized federal funding opportunities through improved coordination with our First Nation, municipal, and private sector partners. By working together, we are addressing a historic infrastructure deficit while advancing community-driven priorities throughout the Yukon. Despite record spending, I am proud to once again deliver a balanced budget that reflects the prudent fiscal management that Yukoners expect from their government and which they deserve.

Our government's sustained efforts to build a modern Yukon continues to attract people to our territory. Yukon's population has grown at a rate higher than any other Canadian jurisdiction over the last decade. Since 2016, our population has grown by 12.1 percent — well above the national average of 5.2 percent. This has created an unprecedented demand for housing in the territory that we are working to address through strategic investments and partnerships.

Over the past five years, housing construction has kept pace with population growth, with the number of private dwellings in Yukon increasing by 12.9 percent. In fact, residential investment has reached record highs in the Yukon, with \$267 million in residential construction in 2021, shattering the 2020 record of nearly \$200 million.

This budget includes more than \$60 million for housing initiatives across the Yukon. We are investing \$255 million in capital over the next five years to support access to stable, affordable housing and to allow for future development. These are historic investments throughout the housing spectrum, from land development and affordable housing construction to barrier-free housing and supportive, accessible housing for seniors and people with disabilities. Our government is making more affordable and supportive housing available for Yukon families through partnerships with the private sector. We are also working together with the municipalities to make more residential lots available throughout the territory.

A flurry of housing construction is happening right across the territory, and a variety of exciting projects are scheduled to be completed this year. In Whitehorse alone, where the majority of new citizens are choosing to live, hundreds of new homes will soon be available for Yukon families.

The Yukon Housing Corporation's new community housing project at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street will create 47 new affordable homes along the Yukon River for those in need. Challenge Disability Resource Group's Cornerstone supportive housing project will create 45 new homes for vulnerable Yukoners at the end of Main Street. The Normandy Manor project on Range Road will create 84 new homes for Yukon seniors within walking distance of McIntyre Creek, and in the city's newest neighbourhood of Whistle Bend, 87 new homes will soon be available as part of the Boreal Commons affordable and rental housing project.

In partnership with local businesses and organizations, our government has helped to fund these innovative projects that fill long-standing gaps in the territory's housing continuum. New homes are taking shape in our rural communities as well. More than \$15 million is budgeted for the completion of a new mixed-use community housing project that will provide 10 new homes in Old Crow. Money is also included for a planned mixed-use community housing project in Carcross. A total of \$6.5 million in northern carveout funding under the National Housing Co-investment Fund is supporting community housing projects in Dawson City, Teslin, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse this year.

We have also included \$1.5 million through the new community housing development fund to support community partnerships that increase housing supply throughout the territory. Our strategic investments in lot development and residential construction are helping to ensure that all Yukoners have access to modern, affordable housing into the future.

In partnership with First Nation governments and Yukon communities, our government is working to develop land to address increasing demand for residential lots. This year's budget includes more than \$30 million for land development. Our territory's population growth continues to be concentrated in Whitehorse where construction of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood continues, along with planning for the Range Point Road subdivision in partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. More than \$11 million is included to incentivize residential construction for projects like the proposed Kwanlin Dün First Nation subdivision expansion in Copper Ridge that will create more than 180 new residential lots. The land parcel at 5th Avenue and Rogers Street, which has the potential for new downtown residential lots, will also be out for tender this year, while the site of the old Macaulay Lodge will create new housing development opportunities in Riverdale.

We continue to work with partners to meet the demand in our growing communities as well. Work on serviced and country residential lots is underway on the Dome Road and the Dredge Pond development in Dawson City.

In Carmacks, urban and country residential lots are under development. We are also working with the Village of

Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to plan new residential and industrial subdivisions.

New lots are being serviced in Haines Junction as planning gets underway for the next residential and industrial subdivisions, together with the Village of Haines Junction and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

Residential lots in the upper bench above Mayo are being planned in partnership with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo.

A substantial portion of the Lone Tree development near Teslin is scheduled for completion this year, and we're working with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Village of Teslin to identify further areas for residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Planning and feasibility work is also underway in Watson Lake, Carcross, and other rural communities.

Our government continues to take bold and progressive action to address the housing needs in our territory. In 2019, we opened the first-ever Housing First residence in the north to provide barrier-free housing to those in need in Whitehorse. Last year, operations were successfully taken over through an innovative partnership between the Council of Yukon First Nations and Connective. We are providing an additional \$650,000, for a total of \$1.25 million, to ensure that these organizations can continue to provide holistic and culturally informed service delivery to our most vulnerable Yukoners. Also, \$4.2 million is included to build a new Housing First residence in Watson Lake, in collaboration with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. An additional \$383,000 will help to establish community housing for justice-involved women for the first time in our territory.

Now, meeting the ever-increasing housing demands in the territory is not something that any one government or organization can accomplish on its own. That is why we continue to develop and support partnerships in innovative approaches to address housing needs in the territory.

Now, last year, we provided the Safe at Home Society \$5 million to help transform the old High Country Inn into a new supportive housing program that will help Yukon youth and women who need a safe place to call home.

We have identified land in Whitehorse for the territory's first community land trust. This will provide a long-term, affordable housing solution not seen before in the Yukon.

We also continue to support First Nation governments to register their settlement lands in the Yukon Land Titles Office in a way that does not impact aboriginal rights and title. This has created new residential and industrial land lease opportunities in the territory while creating exciting new economic opportunities for Yukon First Nations.

Yukoners want to see more affordable housing in the territory, and our government is listening. The housing initiatives fund continues to support the development of affordable housing options, from housing with services and rental housing to home ownership. Since 2018, it has supported the development of approximately 470 new homes in partnerships with developers, contractors, community

organizations, First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, and individual Yukoners.

More than half of these homes will remain affordable for the next 20 years. This fund has increased affordable housing options across the Yukon, and we are pleased to increase the amount of funding available this year by \$2.1 million, for a total of \$5.7 million.

Nearly \$2.5 million in this year's budget will help Yukoners afford to rent homes and meet their needs. More than \$1 million is budgeted for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. This innovative program provides up to \$800 per month directly to Yukon tenants to help them afford rent. \$1.4 million will continue to help several Yukon households afford a place to live through private-market retail supplements. \$13.7 million is included for rent-g geared-to-income housing. Together, these community housing programs provide much-needed housing solutions to roughly 1,000 Yukon households.

The amount of \$1.65 million under the home repair program will also help Yukoners afford to make emergency repairs and accessibility enhancements to their homes. A further \$3.2 million will help rural Yukoners buy or build their first home through the rural home ownership program. By continuing to work collaboratively with partners in support of diversity of housing options, we will ensure that Yukoners have a safe, affordable place to call home.

The health and well-being of Yukoners is the foundation of a bright future for our territory.

Targeted investment is needed to meet the needs in our communities and to continue building a sustainable health and social services system that supports holistic, collaborative, and people-centred care to improve outcomes for all Yukoners into the future.

The Yukon, like the rest of Canada, is in the grip of two health emergencies of historic proportions that have had devastating impacts in each of our communities. Successive waves of COVID-19 have tested the limits of our public health system, while altering the lives and livelihoods of all of our citizens. Our government ensured Yukoners had access to life-saving vaccines as soon as they became available. A swift, comprehensive, and historic vaccination rollout provided a robust layer of protection throughout the territory that prevented the most severe outcomes from occurring.

Nevertheless, the pandemic has taken a toll on our territory. More than 20 Yukoners have lost their lives from COVID-19, and new variants have emerged during the pandemic, presenting additional challenges for the territory and for the rest of the world. Faced with a historic and unprecedented public health emergency, our government has consistently followed the science to protect the health and safety of Yukoners. With a highly vaccinated population, we have developed a plan to forge ahead toward recovery in a way that protects the most vulnerable in our territory and supports the health and well-being of all of our communities. We owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to Yukon health care professionals and essential front-line workers who have gone above and beyond in response to the pandemic. These are the heroes who have ensured that Yukoners continue to have

reliable access to services and supplies, while supporting our loved ones.

More than \$11.6 million in this year's budget is dedicated to the health and social resources necessary to manage the ongoing risks of COVID-19 in our territory. Guided by forging ahead with the Yukon's continuing response to COVID-19, we will continue to address both acute care and public health responses, such as testing, transmission control and mitigation, vaccinations, and vaccination verification. We have also included a \$10-million COVID-19 contingency fund to ensure that we can continue to respond effectively as we move from pandemic to endemic. As Yukoners have been affected by the pandemic, our government will continue to support them as we move toward the path to recovery.

Alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, another crisis has wreaked havoc on our communities and taken the lives of far too many Canadians. Substance use is killing people and creating mental health crises in our communities, as people grapple with the grief and pain of the tragic loss of lives. We need to face this challenge with resolve and with compassion, ending the stigma of substance use to ensure that people get the supports that they need.

Earlier this year, the Yukon declared a substance use health emergency in recognition of a tragic increase in overdose-related deaths in our territory. That declaration is a commitment to action by our government and a call to action to all Yukoners. We need to work together to address substance use in our territory and to make our communities safer and healthier. The root causes of the substance use health emergency are complex. Addressing them requires leadership and coordination across all levels of government, communities, and health and social care professionals.

Last month, our government brought together hundreds of individuals from across the Yukon and Canada for phase 1 of a mental wellness summit. This was a vital opportunity to discuss substance use prevention, treatment, support services, and after-care and to share information about harm-reduction models and solutions. As we heard, there is no magic solution to substance use and the associated mental health challenges that Canadians and Yukoners are facing. What is critical is that we work together to address these challenges and to improve the health of all Yukon communities.

Substance use, at its core, is a health problem. Our government has taken the most progressive steps toward substance use harm reduction in the history of the Yukon. Building on our 2018 opioid action plan, we have continued to expand harm-reduction initiatives that have saved lives in our territory. Last year, we opened the first supervised consumption site in the north to increase safety for those who use substances and improve access to social, medical, mental wellness, and substance use supports.

Last year, we also expanded access to a safer supply of opioids for Yukoners suffering from addiction and serious substance use issues. The supervised consumption site and the safer supply program are important tools to address the opioid crisis, along with continued outreach, public education, and harm-reduction initiatives like drug testing. While we have

taken significant actions to address substance use in our territory, we know that we need to do more.

Over \$5.5 million in this year's budget will support our government's immediate response to the substance use health emergency. This includes more than \$1.1 million to enhance the supervised consumption site, to increase access, and to support more people in need. More than \$850,000 will allow the safer supply program to be expanded to rural communities and increase availability in Whitehorse. Nearly \$1.8 million will support additional mental health and social services throughout the territory. As part of increasing funds for policing services this year, almost \$300,000 will bolster the RCMP's response to the toxic supply of illegal drugs in our territory.

We know that many Yukoners are struggling with mental health and substance use issues. By coming together as a territory, we are working to find solutions to help ensure every Yukoner can access the supports that they need, when they need them.

To ensure a bright future for the territory, we must continue to invest in a sustainable, people-centred health and social services system that improves outcomes for all Yukoners. As our government continues to implement the recommendations in the *Putting People First* report, Yukon's health care system is being transformed into a national leader.

Mr. Speaker, our government has taken significant steps to make service delivery more sustainable, effective, and responsive to the needs of all Yukoners, including reducing pharmacy markups and fees and expanding palliative and end-of-life programs and supports for Yukoners.

We've doubled the medical travel benefit for Yukoners as part of enhancements to the medical travel program and hired additional nurse practitioners to increase access to primary health care providers in Yukon communities. We have also expanded access to publicly funded vaccines, including the shingles vaccine. In fact, our government received the highest grade improvement, out of all Canadian jurisdictions, for our adult vaccination program this year.

Work is also underway to establish "Wellness Yukon", a new public health agency for Yukon that will improve outcomes and experiences for clients, patients, families, and health and social service providers. Our government is committed to modernizing Yukon's health and social services delivery to better meet the needs of all Yukoners. \$20.7 million is identified in this year's budget to continue to transform our health care system into a national leader.

More than \$1.8 million will allow us to begin providing dental coverage to uninsured Yukoners. There is \$13 million for the health and wellness centre in Old Crow to ensure quality services are available in our most remote communities.

More than \$2.6 million will support the new bilingual health centre in Whitehorse. This health centre will use a collaborative team-based model of care and will be the first health care centre in the Yukon based on the integrated primary health care model that was recommended in *Putting People First*.

Yukoners can be proud of the growing range of quality health care services being delivered through Yukon hospitals.

Just last year, Yukon's orthopaedic care team completed the territory's first-ever total hip replacement surgery at the Whitehorse General Hospital. The orthopaedic care team includes one of our homegrown surgeons, Dr. Scott Westberg. It is wonderful to see Yukoners pursuing the honourable calling of health care professions.

This year, \$255,000 will support health and social services training in Yukon communities. An additional \$250,000 is included to support careers in health and social services, including adding an additional cohort to the licensed practical nurse program at Yukon University. This program provides opportunities for up to 18 new students each year to pursue health care careers and to have jobs waiting for them upon graduation.

The amount of \$397,000 in the budget will allow us to hire additional nurse practitioners and a chief nursing officer to enhance community nursing in the territory. By investing in the territory's health care system, our government is increasing access to medical services while reducing wait times and the need for out-of-territory medical travel. A total of \$88 million will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation to continue providing Yukoners with the best hospital care services.

We have once again increased the Hospital Corporation's operation and maintenance budget, as we have in each of the last five years, to ensure that Yukoners receive the standard of care that they deserve. An additional \$1 million is included for drug dispensing units and mobile units for the Hospital Corporation. Another \$1 million will expand spirometry services in the territory. This will provide care close to home for all Yukoners, and it will keep wait times low and will reduce the need for travel outside of the territory for specialist lung appointments.

In addition to expanding services, we're also enhancing our health care facilities to ensure that they meet the needs of all Yukoners. The amount of \$10.8 million in this year's budget is for the completion of a new short-stay psychiatric unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. This will offer a safe place for patients with a mental health diagnosis to receive medical care.

More than \$3.3 million is budgeted for the ongoing implementation of IHealth, a modernized information system that will give health care providers and Yukoners improved access to integrated, accurate health care records and information. A further \$315,000 will support renovations to the health and wellness centre in Carcross.

Together with modernized health and social services, creating safer communities is vital to the well-being of all Yukoners. Working with partners across the territory, our government continues to fund innovative community safety programs across the Yukon. There is \$300,000 in this year's budget to advance the community safety planning project. It is part of nearly \$3 million to support the implementation of community safety initiatives in the coming years. A further \$400,000 will support the Selkirk First Nation community safety officer program. These community-designed and community-led initiatives have been recognized across Canada for helping to create safer and stronger communities across the territory. An increase of \$125,000 will support the expansion

of the sexualized assault response team to rural communities to improve access to victim-centred wraparound services for victims of sexualized assault. Nearly \$150,000 will allow the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to continue to provide women and children with support through the Sally and Sisters program. There is \$3.2 million included in the cultural connections program to support children living in out-of-home care to remain connected to their communities, languages, and cultures.

The Yukon was the first jurisdiction to develop a strategy to respond to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This year's budget includes \$285,000 for the ongoing implementation of *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy*. We are proud to work in partnership with Yukon First Nations and indigenous women's organizations to take action to address the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people. This is a vital aspect of our efforts to advance reconciliation and to ensure a brighter and safer future for all Yukoners.

We are also providing \$595,000 to support the work of the Yukon First Nation governments' burial site investigation committee. Our government recognizes the lasting impacts of trauma caused by the residential school system on survivors, their families, and their communities. We continue to support efforts to bring to light and to record the harms of residential schools as we move together along the path of reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, creating a safer territory requires ending discrimination and making a more inclusive society that is welcoming to all Yukoners. In 2021, our government launched the territory's first ever LGBTQ2S+ action plan as part of our commitment to reducing barriers, increasing inclusivity, and creating more equitable government programs and services. We have included \$110,000 to continue implementing this innovative plan, which takes a multi-faceted approach to creating a more inclusive territory.

We have also included \$425,000 toward the very first Pride Centre in the Yukon — a safe and welcoming community space for LGBTQ2S+ individuals and their families, operated by Queer Yukon. This funding is being delivered by the Yukon Women and Gender Equity Directorate — formerly the Women's Directorate. The new name reflects our government's commitment to advocate and support women, girls, and the LGBTQ2S+ community in our territory.

Our government continues to make historic investments in early learning and childcare to ensure that all Yukoners have access to a brighter future. Last year, we launched the Yukon's first universal, affordable childcare program to put more money in the pockets of Yukon families and to ensure that Yukon children get the best start at life. The program offset the cost of childcare by up to \$700 per month per child. It also ensures that fully qualified early childhood educators in the Yukon receive over \$30 per hour — the highest minimum wage for early childhood educators in the country. This ground-breaking program has made the territory — and I quote: "Canada's new leader in early learning and childcare", according to the

Atkinson School for Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto. By investing in early learning and childcare, we are making life more affordable for Yukon families and ensuring that our children have the support that they need to succeed.

We are building on historic investments in Yukon families by contributing more than \$40 million this year toward early learning and childcare initiatives. Working collaboratively with our partners, we have reached an agreement to access an additional \$54.3 million in federal funding over the next five years to support expanded access to high-quality early learning and childcare throughout the territory.

Ensuring that Yukon learners are supported from childhood right through to adulthood is an essential part of building a brighter future for our territory. We are committed to working together with our partners to ensure that our education system empowers all Yukon students on their learning journey.

This year, on the 49th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, our government officially established the Yukon First Nation School Board in partnership with the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education. This marks an exciting new chapter as we continue to build a modern education system that meets the needs of all Yukon students. This historic partnership reflects our government's unwavering commitment to reconciliation based on respectful relations with our First Nation partners.

As more families choose to raise their children in the Yukon, our education system continues to grow. More than \$25 million is included in this year's budget to build a new elementary school in Whistle Bend — the fastest-growing neighbourhood in Whitehorse. The school is being built by Whitehorse-based Ketzka construction and will be the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in more than 25 years. It will provide modern learning spaces for over 400 students and support a vibrant and thriving community.

Additionally, more than \$1 million will advance the planning and design for the new Kluane Lake school project that is in Burwash Landing, while over \$2 million will support modernizing learning spaces in Dawson City.

Nearly \$800,000 in this year's budget will support the implementation of the recommendations of the review of inclusive and special education in the Yukon. The review provides a blueprint for providing a world-class system where the strengths of every learner are built upon to help them meet their own personal goals. Our government is committed to improving and modernizing inclusive and special education programming to more effectively support student learning needs and outcomes.

The health and wellness of our students is paramount. More than \$450,000 will ensure that Yukon students are successful at school in the era of COVID-19 while also ensuring the health and safety of students, families, and staff. An additional \$400,000 will bolster mental health supports for Yukon schools. Through increased education and expanded developmental supports, we will ensure that we give students

the ability to talk about, understand, and seek support for their mental health.

Supporting our educators is instrumental to the success of our students. This year, \$3.7 million will support educational professionals throughout the territory to continue empowering Yukon students. Through a new agreement with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, the salaries for teachers will increase over the next three years while teachers on call, educational assistants, and Yukon First Nation language teachers all receive additional pay to support their invaluable work.

As Yukon communities continue to enjoy historic population and economic growth, it's important to continue expanding advanced and post-secondary education opportunities within the territory. Yukon University provides a growing range of opportunities, from continuing education options to made-in-Yukon degree programs. More than \$1.2 million is being provided this year to support the growing staff, information, and equipment needs in this institution. Our government is proud to have helped establish the first university in Canada's north. We are committed to supporting its ongoing innovation and development as a hub of knowledge that supports the diverse learning needs of Yukon communities.

Through collaboration and strategic investments, we are making enhancements throughout our education system. Together with our partners, we are writing a new chapter on education in the Yukon and building a brighter future for the territory.

Our government is also building a stronger future for the territory by investing in resilient infrastructure to meet the needs of Yukon communities while moving us toward our climate action targets. Record capital spending on modern transportation, renewable energy, and community infrastructure is contributing to sustainable communities throughout our territory and supporting a diverse, resilient, and green economy.

Our actions are guided by *Our Clean Future*, Yukon's strategy for climate change, energy, and a green economy. This comprehensive 10-year strategy was developed in partnership with municipalities and First Nations across the Yukon.

For the first time in the territory's history, it identifies clear targets to reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions, ensure Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy, adapt to the impacts of climate change, and build a green economy. This year's budget contains more than \$80 million to address the Yukon's climate emergency through *Our Clean Future* initiatives.

Yukoners recognize the urgent need to tackle climate change and our government is taking action to meet Yukon's climate change goals. Last year, we mounted the largest flood mitigation effort in Yukon history. It was truly inspiring to see families, businesses, and organizations all coming together to support Yukoners in a time of need. This year's budget includes \$3.7 million for flood remediation and recovery in the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge areas. This will help Yukoners restore their properties, mitigate against future flooding events, and

prepare long-term plans to better prepare our communities and residents for future climate change events.

An additional \$3.1 million is budgeted for wildland fire management this year. After reaching an agreement with the White River First Nation last year, our government is proud that all 14 Yukon First Nations are now involved in keeping Yukon communities safe from wildfire. We continue to work with our partners across the territory to protect Yukoners from the increased threats of climate change.

We continue to support the Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year renewable electricity plan. This plan complements *Our Clean Future* and sets the Yukon on track to be a national leader in sustainable electricity by 2030 in collaboration with First Nations and development corporations. It has been endorsed by all parties of the Legislative Assembly. This year's budget includes more than \$35 million for renewable energy projects; \$15 million will go toward the Atlin hydro expansion project. Earlier this year, Yukon Energy Corporation signed an electricity purchase agreement with the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership that will increase the supply of dependable, renewable electricity in Yukon. This is an exciting opportunity; it is an exciting opportunity for Yukoners to expand renewable energy capacity in partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation while reducing the territory's emissions and ensuring that energy remains affordable for Yukoners.

More than \$7.7 million will advance additional energy system upgrades, including the new grid-scale battery storage project in Whitehorse. This seven-megawatt battery will be a first in Canada's north and will replace the need for four rental diesel generators each winter. Under the Arctic energy fund, \$12 million will advance a range of exciting community-driven projects such as the Haeckel Hill wind project, the Dome Road solar project, and the Kluane wind project. An additional \$2.5 million is budgeted for the innovative renewable energy initiative to support more renewable energy projects in Yukon communities.

These are the most substantial investments in renewable energy in the Yukon in more than a decade and mark significant steps forward in meeting the territory's climate change targets.

More than \$13.9 million is dedicated to upgrades to help existing community buildings conserve energy, including the Beaver Creek grader station, the Mayo administration building, Copper Ridge Place, Elijah Smith Elementary School, Yukon University, and the Yukon Justice Centre.

The amount of \$16.5 million will support a range of community infrastructure projects, such as: the Faro public works building and fire hall; the arena and public works building in Carmacks; a new public works facility in Old Crow; the fire hall, municipal centre, and public works facility in Teslin; the Teslin Tlingit Council's public building; and the City Hall and services building in Whitehorse.

A total of \$19 million will allow for the installation of solar energy systems at off-grid grader stations over the next five years. This will contribute approximately 10 percent toward our greenhouse gas reduction targets for government buildings.

Our Clean Future is a Yukon-wide strategy to tackle climate change that involves all levels of government, businesses, organizations, and individuals. Our government is leading by example, and we continue to support efforts that empower Yukoners and Yukon businesses to advance the territory's climate change goals.

This year, we are spending more than \$1.5 million toward the electrification of our transportation network. This includes expanding Yukon's network of electric vehicle chargers in communities along the highways that connect them. A total of 19 fast chargers will be installed by the end of this year to enable electric vehicle travel to all of our road-accessible communities.

We are expanding our good energy rebate program to help more First Nations, municipalities, and businesses to install electric vehicle chargers as well.

More than \$1.7 million will help to enhance public transportation in Whitehorse to increase options for commuters.

More than \$3.7 million of this year's budget will help retrofit homes throughout the territory to make them more energy efficient. We are also working with municipalities to create the better buildings program. This innovative program will provide Yukoners with up to \$50,000 to retrofit their homes and up to \$100,000 to retrofit their buildings at the lowest interest rate in the country. Making it more affordable for Yukoners to upgrade their homes and businesses will save Yukoners money on heating costs while reducing the territory's greenhouse gas emissions. It will also increase economic and employment opportunities in Yukon's green economy.

We continue to implement *Cultivating Our Future*, the Yukon's 10-year agricultural strategy developed together with Yukon's fast-growing agricultural industry. Nearly \$1.5 million will provide support throughout the territory for community gardens and markets, as well as farm business plans, building farm infrastructure, and funding specialized equipment. By working together, we are fostering the growth of Yukon's agricultural society while increasing our food security.

Our territory's strong economic growth and record-low unemployment rate has led to jobs being created at a faster rate than they can be filled. Nearly \$6.5 million is included in this year's budget to support the development of Yukon's labour market. A strategic restructuring will see services from the Department of Education establish a new labour market unit with the Department of Economic Development. With sharper focus on economic development, the labour market unit will make support more easily accessible and will help Yukon employers and business owners find new opportunities for growth and development. We also continue to adapt the Yukon nominee program to meet the needs of employers as work continues on the Yukon's new immigration strategy.

More than \$150 million will advance resilient infrastructure projects to support our territory's growing economy. This includes nearly \$43 million for improvements to the north Klondike Highway. This is part of the over \$330 million that we have secured to enhance one of the most

critical transportation links in our territory. The amount of \$10.8 million is included for Resource Gateway projects to support Yukon's mineral resource development sector while creating economic opportunities and partnerships with Yukon First Nations.

More than \$27 million is included for improvements to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport runway, which is set to welcome international flights again this summer. With over \$51 million in the budget, our government continues to make historic investments in the Yukon's airports and aerodromes to support our aviation industry, tourism, and increased economic opportunities throughout our territory. A further \$69 million will support a wide variety of community infrastructure projects in and around Yukon communities.

A total of \$27 million in this year's budget will advance the Dempster fibre line. Construction is underway on this long-awaited project that will make northern information technology infrastructure more resilient while bolstering the growth of our nationally recognized knowledge and tech sector.

Our government's continued focus on developing this sector has contributed to the diversification of Yukon's economy. Building on the momentum of NorthLight Innovation, the first innovation hub in the north, we will be launching an innovation strategy this year to continue stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship in the territory.

Fostering our creative and cultural industry sector is another way that our government is building a strong, diverse, and resilient economy. Nearly \$500,000 is included to continue implementation of creative potential, advancing the Yukon's creative and cultural industries — the territory's first-ever creative and cultural industries strategy. The Yukon's creative and cultural industries sector will play an important role in the recovery of Yukon's economy and promoting well-being throughout our territory.

An additional \$310,000 will enable us to co-host the 2022 Arctic Arts Summit with the Canada Council for the Arts. This will be the first time that the summit has ever been held in Canada and it will provide a unique opportunity to showcase the Yukon's arts and cultural sectors while strengthening and promoting circumpolar collaboration.

Last fall, our government supported the Yukon Film Society to reopen the iconic Yukon Theatre as a community space for screening films and for performing arts, lectures, and concerts. The Yukon Theatre was the focal point as the Yukon Film Society hosted the 20th anniversary of the Available Light Film Festival last month.

In addition to devoted film lovers, the Yukon is home to exceptionally creative and unique film and digital creators. This year, our government launched four new film, television, and digital media funding programs to support local media content creators with projects at every stage of development. We have included more than \$1.2 million for these new programs that will support the territory's internationally recognized media sector, help Yukon creators bring their ideas to the screen, and contribute to the diversification of our economy.

In addition to a flourishing arts and cultural scene, the Yukon is home to thousands of priceless and globally

significant archaeological artifacts and paleontological specimens. There is \$850,000 set aside for planning and designing a new arts heritage collection facility together with First Nations to meet the storage needs for these treasures now and into the future. An additional \$450,000 is included for the Yukon's Beringia exhibit to create a more hands-on, exploratory, and immersive experience for visitors from across the country and around the world.

The Yukon is also gaining an international reputation for world-class recreation infrastructure that helps elite athletes gain a competitive edge. This year's budget includes significant investment to enhance recreation facilities that encourage active living and supports, and it supports the development of Yukon athletes. In recent years, Mount Sima has established itself as the premier early season training ground for Canada's best skiers and snowboarders. Max Parrot — who won the gold medal for Canada in snowboard slopestyle at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics — has trained at Mount Sima in recent years, along with Mark McMorris, who won bronze. More than \$3 million in upgrades will enable the electrification of Mount Sima's hill operations, leading to a significantly smaller carbon footprint. This will improve the reliability of seasonal snowmaking operations at Mount Sima so that they continue to provide early season training opportunities for amateur and professional athletic teams. The installation of LED lighting will also conserve energy and expand operating hours and recreational opportunities for Yukoners.

The Yukon is well-established as a breeding ground for top-level cross-country skiers. Dahria Beatty competed in several solo and team cross-country skiing competitions in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics where she recorded new personal bests. She joins Knute Johnsgaard and Emily Nishikawa, who have each participated in Olympic competitions in the last decade, along with Graham Nishikawa, who will be returning to the Winter Paralympics this year as a guide. Yukon's biathletes are also starting to make their mark. Nadia Moser is a Canada Winter Games medallist who was named the 2019 Female Athlete of the Year in Biathlon Canada.

Over \$230,000 is included in this year's budget to begin developing a new space for Biathlon Yukon. This will support athlete preparation, hosting activities, storage, and the future growth of the sport. This investment will ensure that the Yukon continues to enjoy world-class cross-country ski and biathlon facilities to support the next generation of Yukon Olympians.

More than \$8.85 million will support the construction of a new gymnastics gym and climbing facility. This new multi-use sport complex will support the growth of the Polarettes Gymnastics Club and the Climb Yukon Association.

Last year, Bianca Berko-Malvasio, Maude Molgat, and Lily Witten were the first members of the Polarettes club to compete in Canada's nationals in 20 years.

In addition to growing the sport of climbing in the territory, Climb Yukon has been actively working toward getting a dedicated climbing facility for years, and we are pleased to be supporting them in making that a reality.

Mr. Speaker, under our government's stewardship, the Yukon is truly emerging as a leader in Canada.

While our territory was not immune to COVID-19, we led the country's vaccination efforts and worked with our partners to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response that prevented the most severe health impacts. We introduced Canada's best economic support programs and have continued to adapt them to support local businesses and organizations to move along the path to recovery. Our government's strong leadership has guided the territory through the pandemic and kept our economy growing.

Our record capital investments have kept Yukoners working while continuing to enhance community infrastructure throughout the territory. Historic investments have been made in the Yukon's early learning and childcare — the best in the country — while making life more affordable for Yukon families.

Our efforts to diversify our economy have placed us at the forefront of entrepreneurship while growing our agricultural industry and fostering the development of Yukon's beloved arts and culture sectors.

Our collaborative approach to tackling climate change is increasing community resilience throughout the territory while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating opportunities in the green economy. The Yukon already has one of the greenest energy systems in Canada, with 93 percent of our electricity coming from renewable sources. By working with partners and making strategic investments, we will ensure that we continue to set the standard for green energy.

Our commitment to strong government-to-government relationships with First Nations has ensured that Yukon continues to be a national leader in reconciliation. From revitalizing the Yukon Forum to establishing the National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday to finalizing the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and working in partnership to develop a Yukon-wide strategy in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, we have charted a new respectful and collaborative path for the benefit of all Yukoners.

The establishment of the Yukon First Nation School Board is yet another milestone that honours the vision of past First Nation leaders while building a brighter future for the next generation.

This budget will make sure that Yukoners benefit from our territory's historic economic growth. We are improving access to housing through strategic investments and innovative partnerships. We are prioritizing health and safety as we create more effective and sustainable health and social support systems to better meet the needs of all Yukoners. We are empowering the next generation by making life more affordable for families and modernizing Yukon's education system. We are creating a diverse, resilient, and green economy that will contribute to healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities right across the territory.

Our territory's population growth is the strongest in Canada, which has seen the strongest population growth of all

of the Group of Seven countries. The more that we tell the story of the Yukon, the more people want to listen and be a part of it.

We will continue to work together with our partners to write the next chapter of our territory, one that ensures prosperity for all Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, mahsi' cho, günilischish.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Dixon: I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 204 agreed to

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 3:31 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled March 3, 2022:

35-1-38

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (March 3, 2022) (Speaker Harper)

35-1-39

Third Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (December 15, 2021) (Clarke, N.)

The following legislative returns were tabled March 3, 2022:

35-1-33

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* — NGO vaccination rates (McLean)

35-1-34

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* — supported child care worker program (McLean)

35-1-35

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — early learning framework (McLean)

35-1-36

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — supported child care worker program (McLean)

35-1-37

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: French immersion programming and capital plan for schools (McLean)

35-1-38

Response to Written Question No. 3 re: development schedule for Whistle Bend (Mostyn)

35-1-39

Response to Written Question No. 13 re: clearance times at the Fraser border crossing (Clarke, N.)

The following documents were filed March 3, 2022:

35-1-42

Report of Amanda Rogers, Independent Reviewer, in the matter of an independent review undertaken by the Government of Yukon, Department of Education, Re: Government Response to Allegation of Sexual Abuse Committed by Educational Assistant William Auclair-Bellemare at Hidden Valley Elementary School — January 31, 2022 (McLean)

35-1-43

Action Plan for the Hidden Valley Elementary School Report — February 18, 2022 (McLean)

35-1-44

Russian invasion of Ukraine, letter re (dated March 3, 2022) from Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, Yukon, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Premier Northwest Territories, and Hon. P.J. Akeagok, Premier, Nunavut, to Hon. John Horgan, Chair, Council of the Federation (Silver)

35-1-45

Making Work Safe — A Summary on the Engagement on Paid Sick Leave (Tredger)

Written notice was given of the following motions March 3, 2022:

Motion No. 294

Re: member participation in sittings of the House via video conference due to COVID-19 during the 2022 Spring Sitting (Streicker)

Motion No. 295

Re: authorization for the Assembly to meet via video conference during the 2022 Spring Sitting (Streicker)

Motion No. 296

Re: pairing arrangements for the 2022 Spring Sitting (Streicker)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 44

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, March 7, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 7, 2022 — 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 artwork in the
Legislative Assembly**

Speaker: Before we proceed to the Daily Routine, the Chair would like to inform the members of the new artwork being displayed in the Assembly, beginning to my right and moving counter-clockwise around the room.

First, we have beaver mitts made by Pearl Keenan in 2012. Pearl Keenan was a respected Tlingit elder of the Daklaweidi clan. Her Tlingit name was T'aakú Tláa, which means "Mother of the Taku River". She made these hand-sewn mitts in 2012 from beaver fur and moosehide that she tanned herself using the methods taught to her by her mother. They feature embroideries on the wrists in traditional Tlingit designs that are not often seen today.

Pearl created many kinds of sewing, using traditional patterns and techniques passed down to her from the women in her family. She was dedicated to the continuation and the sharing of these techniques for younger generations.

Pearl sat on many boards and committees, including the Yukon First Nations elders council, First Nations Education Commission, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, and the Yukon College elders advisory council, and she was the vice-president of First Nation programs and services.

Second, we have the *Landscapes of Gold* bowl from 2019 by Monika Käte Steputh. This ceramic bowl was created by Haines Junction-based artist Monika Steputh. Originally from Germany, she has made the Yukon her home since 2013. Monika forms her pieces intuitively and applies glazes to represent the layers and formations of landscapes and weather phenomena as seen on this bowl. Touches of gold represent awareness and connections between people and nature in the land or in the sky as stars. Monika finds constant inspiration in the open spaces of the north and loves to create ceramic works based on the impressions of her journeys through majestic landscapes. Her work reflects her aesthetic of simplicity and elegance and a philosophy of interconnectedness between people and the land.

Third, we have *Hunter with Shape Shifter* by Alex Dickson from 2005. Alex Dickson was a respected and prolific Tlingit artist, working in wood and many other materials. This mask was carved from red alder. The features of the face are accentuated with paint in red, black, and a light turquoise wash, as well as abalone inlays in the eyes. Animal imagery is incorporated into the eyebrows, and horsehair adorns the top. In addition to masks, Alex created paddles, headdresses, totem poles, mammoth ivory sculptures, pendants, and rings. His carvings were made in the Tlingit tradition that was passed down to him. He created designs based on this tradition and

developed with his own unique style, inspired by stories he was told during his childhood. He was also recognized for his knowledge of traditional medicines and outdoor skills.

Fourth, we have *@totokaelo* by Alannah Whachell from 2017. Alannah Whachell is a Whitehorse-based artist who creates sculptures in a range of materials, including concrete, plaster, resin, beaded cloth, glitter, cardboard, and ceramics. In this piece, the composition of beads recreates a pixelated screenshot of a luxury online clothing store's Instagram account, created from a pattern generator. The grid that anchors the beadwork references minimalism in its repetition of simple forms. Through her carefully constructed works, Alannah seeks to instill everyday materials with intimacy. Her practice explores relationships between surfaces and form, desire and capitalism, fashion, semiotics, time, and uncertainty.

Finally, we have *Arrival of the Dog Team* from 2017 by Shirley Adamson. Shirley Adamson is an elder of the Tagish Nation and belongs to the Wolf clan. She created this intricately beaded dog blanket for the Yukon First Nation dog blanket project in 2017. It is one of a set of 10 traditional blankets that were created to be showcased at the Yukon Quest that year and were worn by a ceremonial dog team for the start of the race. Shirley is an artist, language teacher, and storyteller and honours the history of her ancestors through the sharing of traditional stories and revitalization of language. She learned to sew and bead from her grandmother and now also creates photography, paintings, textiles, and sculptures using natural and found materials.

Artwork is an important part of Yukon's heritage, and I congratulate all of the artists in the placement of these important works.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to help me recognize some folks here who are joining us for the Indigenous Community Safety Partnership program tribute. We have Vikram Govindasamy with us; we have Chantal Genier, MJ Donald, Lana Selby — I think that's it; no, that's not it. We also have the legendary Gina Nagano with us as well.

Applause

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to be able to introduce a very special person in the gallery today — not only the parent of one Olympian, but the parent of two Olympians. So, we have Joan Stanton joining us today to celebrate the accomplishments of one of her children.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of 2022 Olympics Yukon representatives Dahria Beattie, Graham Nishikawa, and Wayne Vallevand

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we pay tribute to three exceptional Yukoners: Dahria Beattie, Graham Nishikawa, and Wayne Vallevand. This February, Dahria Beattie represented Canada in cross-country skiing at the 2022 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing. Dahria exemplifies the Yukon spirit of determination. For years, she has consistently achieved top-20 results in international and World Cup competitions. In 2018, she made her Olympic debut in PyeongChang, South Korea. At the Beijing Olympics, she added to her list of accomplishments. Dahria competed in six events and achieved a personal best in the individual 10-kilometre classic ski race. Congratulations, Dahria.

On March 4, the 2022 Paralympics began in Beijing, and our own Graham Nishikawa is there. Graham is an amazing cross-country skier in his own right. He has also achieved international success as a guide for Brian McKeever. Brian McKeever is a visually impaired skier who has won 17 gold medals over his distinguished career, and Graham has been there alongside him for many of those. When competing, Graham leads Brian around the race course, managing corners, lines, and tactics on the track. I understand that this will be Brian McKeever's last Paralympics, and I know that all Yukoners are excited to see what Graham and Brian will achieve in Beijing.

Last but definitely not least, I am incredibly proud to stand here today to honour Wayne Vallevand. Wayne was also at the Beijing Olympics this year; however, he wasn't speeding down a bobsledding track or getting big air while freestyle skiing — at least as far as I know. Instead, he represented the Yukon as a camera operator for CBC Sports. For about three weeks, Wayne was based there where all the skiing and snow sports were held. He was also selected to be part of CBC's team for the Tokyo summer games. At both of these games, Wayne made it possible for Canadian athletes to share their stories with Canadians back home. Wayne did an amazing job of not only the camera work but also making the athletes feel welcome to share their stories.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of these three Yukoners — each of them representing our small but mighty territory, sharing their passion and dedication with the world. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to two of Yukon's finest cross-country skiing talents, Dahria Beatty and Graham Nishikawa. It's an incredible achievement in any sport to represent your country on a world scale. Lately, it appears that cross-country skiing has been where we shine here in the Yukon — a testament to the outstanding training and world-class trails at the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club.

We have seen a lot of action lately in a number of international competitions, including the Winter Olympics —

homegrown talent straight from the Whitehorse ski trails racing against the world's best. Dahria joins Team Yukon again this year, representing our country in Beijing, China for cross-country skiing. She bested previous scores from the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang and we were excited to cheer her along from her hometown. Dahria ranks among the top skiers in the country and certainly shone with grace, endurance, and skill in each of the events.

Graham is once again representing Team Canada as a guide for Canadian Paralympian Brian McKeever, who received a gold medal for the 10- and 20-kilometre races and bronze in the 4- by 2.5-kilometre relay in PyeongChang with Graham as his guide. Graham will be one of two guides accompanying Brian on his quest for gold at the 2022 Paralympics.

We would like to congratulate Dahria on some pretty spectacular skiing and offer our best wishes to Brian, Graham, and also to Russell Kennedy, who is Brian's second guide. We understand that Brian has already received a gold medal in men's long-distance classic, so congratulations to Brian and Russell on their first triumph yesterday.

Dahria and Graham, your dedication to your sport has brought you to a place that many athletes dream of. Thank you for bringing a little bit of Yukon to the Olympics, for giving Yukoners some excitement back home, and for giving our young skiers an incredible goal to aspire to.

Applause

Ms. White: It is a great pleasure to rise again on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Yukon athletes Dahria Beatty and Graham Nishikawa. It is not the first time that we have had this privilege to recognize Yukoners who have represented Canada at the Olympics, and it is not Dahria's first Olympics, nor Graham's first time at the Paralympics. Dahria has had an amazing season, both at the Olympics and continued on to Europe to participate in the World Cup events. She had some of her personal best times in China, along with her teammates. Not stopping there, Dahria continued on to participate in the World Cup events. Now she is just waiting to compete in the nationals later this month, and hopefully then she will get a well-deserved rest.

Graham, meanwhile, is in China as one of the guides, as we heard, for cross-country skier Brian McKeever. The two of them have skied together at three Paralympics so far. In 2014 at the Sochi Paralympics, Graham guided Brian to a gold in the sprints, and in 2018, Graham was the guide for two golds and a bronze race in PyeongChang. Last night, Brian won his 14th Paralympics gold while being guided by his other guide, Russell Kennedy, and we can expect to see Graham in the upcoming race later this week. Just to note that, when guiding Brian to a medal win, the guide who comes across the finish line also wins a medal, so Graham has quite the collection, and here's hoping for more from these games.

Yukoners are proud of these amazing athletes, and a big thanks to them, to their coaches, and especially to their friends and families who support them along the way.

Applause

In recognition of Arctic Inspiration Prize winners

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is my pleasure to rise today and pay tribute to the Indigenous Community Safety Partnership program, which was awarded an Arctic Inspiration Prize. The virtual award ceremony took place on Friday evening. The Arctic Inspiration Prize, as you know, is the largest award program in the country dedicated to the Arctic and Canada's north.

This year was the prize's 10th anniversary. More than \$3 million was awarded to eight organizations across the north, and this year, the Government of Yukon has contributed \$50,000 toward the Arctic Inspiration Prize as well.

The prize is designated to enable breakthrough northern initiatives, and I could not be more proud of this year's laureates, including the winning groups from Yukon.

In the Yukon, the Indigenous Community Safety Partnership program was awarded a \$500,000 prize. The program offers a transformative approach to community safety, emergency preparedness, and justice through the revitalization of traditional law. It is a first-of-its-kind indigenous-led training, certification, and mentorship program designed to help Yukon First Nations address the root causes of intergenerational trauma, violence, and vulnerability. This program helps First Nation governments own, implement, and sustain community safety, emergency preparedness, and justice initiatives.

I want to congratulate everyone who is involved in this incredible program, including team leader Gina Nagano.

I also want to take this time to congratulate the Indigenous Youth River Guide Training program, which was awarded a \$100,000 prize in the youth category. This project will teach Yukon and Northwest Territories youth to remove barriers and create opportunities to learn land-based skills, improve self-esteem, leadership, and self-determination, and expose them to potential career opportunities while centering in indigenous languages, knowledge, and bodies.

I would also like to recognize the Collective Action for Nature-based Active Play and Youth Empowerment — CANAPY — project, which was a Yukon finalist for the \$1-million category.

Congratulations to all of the 2022 prizewinners and also the finalists. A big thank you to all of the organizers and the partners for all that they've done to support and celebrate northern achievements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to an organization that's very dear to me, the Arctic Inspiration Prize, as it celebrates its 10th anniversary.

From its inception, the AIP has been increasingly successful in helping communities and groups across northern Canada. By providing seed money for new projects that solve challenges identified by northerners, the prize gives communities pride and hope.

Prior to the Rideau Hall Foundation taking the award under its wing under the leadership of Governor General David Johnston, I was part of the selection committee for four

years, and I had an amazing experience with the founders — Arnold Witzig and Sima Sharifi — and the team learning how to make their dream come true.

Since year one, the projects have given insights into the magnitude of our north and the possibilities — endless. This year, eight teams were awarded a total of \$3 million. Kudos to all who submitted entries and the effort to champion various projects for their regions.

Canadians were able to watch on CBC and APTN from coast to coast to coast. The ceremonies showcase talent, art, and, of course, the AIP recipients. \$500,000 was awarded to Yukon's Indigenous Community Safety Partnership program. The program is for certification and mentoring designed to help Yukon First Nations address root causes of intergenerational trauma, violence, and vulnerability. Indigenous Youth River Guide Training was awarded \$100,000 to teach Yukon and Northwest Territories youth land-based skills along flat and whitewater canoeing and learn about wilderness medicines and rescue skills. I too would like to send a special shout-out to the CANAPY project, or the Collective Action for Nature-based Active Play and Youth Empowerment, from Whitehorse. As an ambassador, I was proud to sponsor this submission and it made it to the finalist list. Well done.

It's exciting to see the interest and continuing growth of this prize. So, Yukoners, get your thinking hats on and figure out a project from a variety of themes. Check out the webpage for all the specifics on how to enter. My final words: Become part of the solution, become part of a team, and work toward the prize of the north and the Arctic Inspiration Prize.

Applause

Ms. White: It is wonderful to be able to honour the recipients of this year's Arctic Inspiration Prize on behalf of the Yukon NDP. For 10 years, this organization has provided nearly \$20 million to 50 different organizations across the Canadian Arctic. Those are 50 different organizations making a difference in their communities and improving the lives of those involved. A special congratulations goes out to the team and team leader Gina Nagano of Yukon's Indigenous Community Safety Partnership program. Congratulations also to Bobbi Rose and her team for the Indigenous Youth River Guide Training and the Treaty Talks team for their application.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that these two organizations are just two of many that are changing the face of Canadians' north. We thank them for their dedication and forward thinking, because without organizations like this, we would just be stuck in the past, so we look forward to seeing what they do.

Applause

Speaker: Are there returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be presented?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 12: *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendment Act, (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to

Bill No. 302: *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)* — Introduction and first reading

Mr. Cathers: I move that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 302 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to assist teachers in becoming clinical counsellors by:

- (1) allowing up to three years' leave for teachers pursuing a master's degree in clinical counselling;
- (2) developing a grant for Yukon teachers pursuing a post-secondary degree in clinical counselling; and
- (3) providing financial support to teachers currently enrolled in clinical counselling degrees up to five years retroactively.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that every Yukon school employs at least one full-time clinical counsellor.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand access to mental health supports in response to the ongoing substance use emergency by:

- (1) providing clinical counselling, including grief counselling, in communities across the Yukon;
- (2) hiring clinical counsellors for Yukon schools; and
- (3) subsidizing the cost of private mental health services for non-insured individuals.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to complete the regulations for online sales and delivery of cannabis.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House:

(1) commends the City of Whitehorse for its work on a request for proposals for a master plan to develop the tank farm property; and

(2) supports a partnership between the Government of Yukon, the City of Whitehorse, and the private sector to develop this property in order to increase the amount of housing available in the capital city.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coffee Gold project

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to speak about the Coffee Gold project as it continues to move forward.

The Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada have recently come to a joint decision to accept the recommendation of the executive committee of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board that the Coffee Gold project be allowed to proceed. The Coffee Gold project, proposed by Newmont Corporation, will consist of four open-pit gold mines located about 130 kilometres south of Dawson City. The project is expected to have a construction period of 30 months, followed by a 10-year operation phase and an 11-year closure phase. I can inform this House that this project is expected to provide upwards of 700 jobs for Yukoners over its life cycle.

This is an example of the effectiveness of the Yukon's environmental and socio-economic assessment process that upholds responsible development in the territory. Our government supports responsible mineral resource development and remains committed to finding efficiencies in the assessment and regulatory review of projects.

The Government of Yukon engaged closely with the federal decision bodies — Natural Resources Canada and Transport Canada — to ensure a timely decision-making process. Prior to issuing a decision, the Government of Yukon consulted with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government, Selkirk First Nation, White River First Nation, and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. We recognize that Newmont has entered into impacts and benefits agreements with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government and the White River First Nation to ensure a cooperative, collaborative, and mutually beneficial relationship between the company and First Nations. Our government supports Newmont's approach to develop the Coffee project in collaboration with First Nations and Newmont's commitment to address concerns and ensure that opportunities and benefits reach Yukon's communities.

One of the next steps will be for the company to apply for a quartz mining licence. That application will include a series of management plans for the mine's operations, including

reclamation and closure. The Yukon government will then review these plans and consult with affected First Nations before it makes a decision to issue a licence. The company will also need to obtain a water licence from the Yukon Water Board, along with required federal approvals.

We look forward to further engagement and consultation with First Nation governments as regulatory approvals related to the project are considered. We are also committed to working with First Nations to develop approaches to addressing cumulative effects that go beyond the scope of the Coffee project.

As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I would like to acknowledge the work of the department to carefully assess the merits of this project and for fulfilling our obligation to consult. We are committed to ensuring that this project is carried out in an environmentally responsible way, addressing socio-economic impacts while providing benefits to Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this very good news. As we all know, the mining and exploration industry plays a crucial role in our economy and is the biggest private-sector driver of the economy.

As important as it is to have operating mines, it's also important to have a healthy project pipeline that contains the next big projects. The Coffee project has been in the pipeline for some time, and many Yukoners are familiar with it. The announcement last week of the acceptance of the YESAB executive committee's recommendation that Coffee Gold be allowed to proceed is good news for the future of the Yukon.

As the Premier noted, this concludes the environmental and socio-economic assessment of the project under YESAA. I would like to begin by congratulating the team that has worked on the Coffee project over the past number of years. Obviously, there has been considerable turnover in the corporate ownership of Coffee, from Kaminak to Gold Corporation and now Newmont. For the most part, there has been a steady team at the helm of this project that has done an exceptional job at advancing it. Of course, we would be remiss if we didn't recognize Shawn Ryan who was named 2009 Prospector of the Year by the British Columbia mineral industry, in part due to his role in the discovery.

On behalf of the Yukon Party, I want to offer our sincere congratulations to the team at Coffee Gold — now that this successful step is the result of a lot of hard work and perseverance. It's also great news for the Yukon mining industry and our economy. The jobs and economic activity that a project like Coffee create will be a great boost to our private sector. I would like to add my congratulations to the First Nation governments that have been involved in this process and thank them for their contributions.

While this joint decision was made within the regulatory timeline period, it is important to point out that this is an exception to a troubling trend that the industry has begun to notice and raise concerns about. Over the course of the week at Roundup, my colleagues and I had several meetings with businesses and organizations that are active in our mining industry. These groups watch our assessment process very

closely. They noted to us their concern about the trend of the Yukon government ignoring legislative timelines and, more specifically, the timelines for decision documents under the YESAA process. BMC's Kudz Ze Kayah project is an unfortunate example of this. That project is approaching the one-year anniversary of the legislative timeline for issuance of a decision document and, from what we can tell, the government has not said when we can accept a resolution.

While we are happy that the Coffee project has advanced, we are concerned about the overall trend of this Liberal government ignoring its legislative obligations regarding timelines. Nevertheless, I do want to conclude by thanking all those involved, and I do look forward to seeing this project advance to the next stages in permitting and hope to see this project come to development and eventually production in the near future.

Ms. White: I consider myself an optimist, and I will use my rose-coloured glasses to respond to today's ministerial statement.

We agree that mining is essential to a renewable future, but we also believe that we can't continue making the mistakes of the past. Yukoners have been told, over and over again, about the benefits of mining in job creation. We have seen the hype before, and we will see the hype again.

Yukoners have also seen what happens when things go wrong: communities left with contaminated water wells or an abandoned mine that will be on Yukon's books for the foreseeable future.

One thing the minister failed to highlight in his statement was that, through all of the consultations with affected First Nations, each of them raised concerns related to cumulative impacts, the northern access road, and how all of this will have impacts on asserted or established aboriginal treaty rights. The YESAB decision document lists a number of terms and conditions to try to address these concerns. Heap leaching and the risks to water continue to be of concern in the territory. Water is a precious resource, and Yukoners expect that it should be valued as such by their government.

Although the Yukon government has been slow to change, that hasn't been the case with mining companies. I believe that Newmont will continue to honour the relationships that they have built, will learn from the mistakes and successes of others and help plot a new course for mining in the territory. We look forward to watching how this government will ensure that this project is carried out in an environmentally responsible way while protecting Yukon waters, all the while addressing socio-economic impacts and providing real benefits to Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To begin, I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. I certainly will pass on their thanks to the department and to our fellow governments and to the industry. I would also like to thank the Third Party for acknowledging the importance of mining in making our transition to a sustainable future.

The Yukon government is working closely with the federal government, Yukon First Nations, and stakeholders across the

territory to increase responsible mining opportunities in the Yukon that will create jobs for Yukoners and grow our economy responsibly.

Under our leadership, mining in the Yukon is flourishing and creating benefits and opportunities for communities across the territory. In 2015, the Yukon was in a recession. We had one mine operating in the territory. Since taking government in 2016, we have been able to make the Yukon home to three operating mines, with many more, such as Coffee Gold, beginning to develop.

Mineral production in the Yukon is expected to increase to more than \$1.1 billion this year — a record high — while staying above \$1 billion each year through to 2026. This is all at the same time that we have been accelerating land use planning.

Our goal is to build a mining industry in the Yukon that supports responsible mining practices, champions First Nations and community relationships, and respects our environment.

I did acknowledge the work that we will continue to do on cumulative effects. I thank the member opposite for her point on that issue.

In 2019, in partnership with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, our government restarted the Dawson Regional Land Use Planning Commission that has developed a draft plan to protect key protected and conservation areas and balances land, water, and wildlife with cultural and economic interests in the region. The planning process seeks to set out how responsible mining in the area can proceed in a way that achieves a healthy balance between our environment and economic interests. The commission is continuing their work in 2022 and is on track to release their recommended plan this year.

I am glad that the Member for Kluane has brought up the Kudz Ze Kayah mine project. The Yukon government is still actively working with the Kaska First Nation and the federal government to reach a decision on this project as soon as possible. Our goal with this project is to ensure that we reach a decision that is in line with our work to build strong relationships with First Nations in the territory.

I want to once again thank our First Nation governments, the Government of Canada, and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for actively working on the Coffee Gold project. Thanks to Newmont for their commitment to seeing this project through in a responsible way that champions environmental stewardship while continuing to make the Yukon a leader in mining in the country. I look forward to seeing this project advance to the next phase in the coming months.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Cost of living

Mr. Istchenko: The rising cost of living is quickly making life unaffordable for many Yukoners. One clear example of this is the skyrocketing price of gas. In Whitehorse, the cost is about \$1.80, and it is even higher in our communities.

The Yukon government has a range of policies, taxes, and regulatory tools that affect the price of gas.

Is the government doing anything to deal with the record-breaking high gas prices?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, of course. I think that the Premier, when he tabled the budget on Thursday, talked about \$80 million which is going toward *Our Clean Future*. The whole purpose of *Our Clean Future* is to work on the transition away from a dependency on fossil fuels. I have quite a list. I can certainly go into the list, but one of the things that I will say that we are not doing is building a diesel plant. We disagree with that direction. In fact, as anyone has noticed and as the member opposite noted, the price of gas is going up, including diesel, so we want to work to transition away from fossil fuels, and we have a whole strategy that is developed around that, and I look forward to further questions on this subject.

Mr. Istchenko: The question that I asked was about policy — whether it is tax or regulatory tools that affect the prices. I didn't get an answer.

Another part of the territory's inflation crisis is the soaring price of food. One of the main things impacting the price of food here is the actual cost of trucking. The Liberals have ruined relationships with the trucking industry and made their businesses more expensive. Despite this, the Yukon government does have a range of measures at their disposal that could reduce the cost of trucking and therefore the price of food.

What measures are in the Liberals' budget that will help reduce the rising cost of food?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I think that on Thursday, as the House opened, we had that ability to recognize one of our local entrepreneurs and Farmer of the Year. What a great example of government teaming up with a local entrepreneur to create, first of all, local food sources. I think that most Yukoners know that, as we move forward, it is going to be very important to not just rely on a supply chain that comes into the Yukon but to be growing our food here. We have seen the growth in our agriculture sector — a very significant growth — over the last number of years and, of course, we continue to support that.

I think that it is also important to note that, when we talk about policy points and taxation, in the Yukon, we actually have the lowest gas tax in the entire country. As well, when you look at inflation across the country right now, the Yukon again is positioned — we have, up to date, the lowest growth in inflation. We know that this is a global problem. We know that this is going to be an ongoing conversation throughout the Sitting. We are welcoming that debate, and, again, I think that the Yukon is well-positioned — and, of course, our programs have well supported the private sector to be in a good position as we move out of COVID.

Mr. Istchenko: I was just looking for some measures in the Liberals' budget that would help reduce the cost of food.

Another thing is that the inflation crisis is hitting Yukoners in their wallets and in their bank accounts. Life has quickly become unaffordable for many. This winter, many Yukoners were shocked by extremely high electricity bills. It has become

clear to many that the Liberal government's energy choices and policies have had consequences for Yukoners.

Does the Liberals' budget contain any single measure to reduce the soaring cost of electricity bills?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again. Of course, it is important that we keep our electricity rates low, and that's what we're doing. We're investing in a renewable future. For example, we're investing in a grid battery project that will eliminate the need for four diesel gensets. That's what we're doing.

The previous government built an LNG plant and then didn't put it to rate. So, what that did — and the way that my colleague has referred to it — is that it ran up the credit card. You do have to pay that off at some point.

I sat down with the chamber of commerce recently and they said, "Please don't do what happened in the past." So, what's going on is we're looking to make our rates smooth because we're working to break our dependence on fossil fuels. That would be the wrong direction to go. Building a diesel plant here in the Yukon would commit us to a fossil-fuel future, which we do not want. That would be the mistake.

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. Clarke: While Yukoners have certainly realized that housing has become unaffordable for many, the budget document tabled by the Liberals last week laid the issue here bare. To quote directly from the budget package, the increasing prices have made owning a single detached home out of reach for many Yukoners. That is directly from the budget — an acknowledgement that, over the last several years under the Liberals, housing has become unaffordable for many Yukoners.

So, having acknowledged this massive problem, what specific steps is the government taking to tackle housing affordability in Yukon this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it's important to correct the record and to take a look at the history of the activity at Yukon Housing. First and foremost, the member opposite would know and should have a good discussion with her colleagues sitting next to her and talk about where we got into a deficit on affordable housing. That really goes back to a transfer agreement of millions and millions — tens of millions of dollars — that was going to lead to affordable housing options that were cancelled at the last minute for political reasons.

Why is that important? It's important because, if you trend out the population growth over the last half a decade, what you will see is — over at least the last five years — that our population growth was at about 12.1 percent, and the residential unit growth was at 12.9 percent. Although opposition members don't like us to go back into history, it's very important to dig in and do the due diligence to find out where the challenge was. First, we had these programs cancelled, and secondly, there was a bit of back-and-forth on who would take on lot development in the city, and it ended up where we missed the season, really, of lot development. So, those are the two key things.

Going forward, we are seeing record-breaking investment in affordable housing. I just had our team at Yukon Housing

pull some data. We are going to talk about this a lot in session. What we are going to see is that, under the Yukon Party, they were spending more on O&M than capital, and we are investing in affordable housing.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the history lesson. Yukoners need an answer to this massive problem.

The average price of a home at the end of last year was \$657,000, to quote directly from the Liberals' budget. As of the third quarter of 2021, a household would need to earn 2.3 times more than the average Yukon worker to responsibly finance the mortgage on a \$657,000 home at the posted five-year fixed mortgage rate. The Liberals can point to money that they are investing in land development, but that can take years, and under their government, we have seen that these investments have not kept pace with demand and are often delayed.

Can the Liberals point to a single thing they are doing that will help those who can no longer afford a mortgage for the average home?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, this is a long-term approach. We have short-term measures, which are announcements on lots that are available here in the Yukon. We will continue to make sure that we work with the private sector to increase the opportunity for lots. What we are hearing from subject matter experts across the country is that "supply, supply, supply" is key. This is, again, not a unique problem. Anybody who is watching the conversations that are happening from coast to coast to coast will know that there has been a challenge in the fact that housing prices have gone up. The things that we are doing are a multitude. We are excited to discuss our budget at Yukon Housing as well as other initiatives.

In the interim, again — a big investment into affordable housing, our Canada-Yukon housing benefit, which no longer has a wait-list. There are just over 200 people receiving that. Again, we are giving them that opportunity to have a safe home while they can put money in their pocket for investment into housing options.

Again, speaking with people out in our communities, they ask that we increase the amount of money available for them to leverage to build in our communities because of the extra costs. That is something that we have committed to and that we are providing.

Again, I am looking forward to a number of conversations on this subject over the next two months.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate that the Liberal government has a lot to say about housing supply, but their own budget clearly states that what they are doing is not working. In fact, the budget makes it clear that things have been getting worse under the Liberals. The following is a quote directly from their own budget documents tabled last week — and I quote: "The demand for new housing outstripped new building for several years prior to 2020 resulting in the current housing shortage." It is clear that more of the same won't work.

What new programs or policies does the Liberal government have in this budget to address this? Please and thank you.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, this is a complex conversation. Over the last five years, we have seen record growth in the Yukon and, of course, that puts on pressure. What I hear at the doorstep and from my constituents is that they want their families to come home. It is expensive. We need to have more lots. We are investing in it, but what we don't want to have is a recession where those young individuals who have gone off to university or received their post-secondary here have no future here because there are no opportunities.

What we saw was a commitment to the economy. We see one of the strongest economies in the country. We see some of the strongest growth in the G7, which many people would think is a positive measure. Again, what we are going to do is continue to invest in supply. We are going to continue to look at innovative ways, such as our land trust, working with development corporations, and working with the private sector on things like the tank farm.

Again, there are other announcements that we are going to be talking about in the next couple of weeks. We are looking at a basket of tools to help with this particular challenge. I think that we want to be in a strong economic position, and that gives us another set of tools that we can use and an incentive for the private sector to invest. That is why we have seen record-breaking building permits announced almost every month over the last year.

Question re: Electricity rates

Ms. Tredger: This winter, Yukoners opened their bills to find record-high charges for electricity. Where is that money going? The Yukon Utilities Board allows ATCO Electric to earn a nine-percent profit in exchange for providing electricity to our homes and businesses, but the thing is, since 2016, they have been making far more than that. Since 2016, ATCO has exceeded their allowed profits by more than \$7 million and then by more than \$2 million in 2020 alone. Those are millions of dollars above and beyond the nine-percent profits that they are allowed to make, and those millions of dollars came straight from Yukoners' electricity bills.

Why has the minister allowed ATCO to earn millions of dollars in excess profits for years while Yukoners struggle with their bills?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will certainly pass the member's comments across to the Yukon Utilities Board, which is the board that reviews all rate applications and considers them. I am happy to do that.

What I will say is that we haven't had a rate increase over this winter. There was an issue that I saw, from speaking with ATCO, where they adjusted their billing period and it ended up happening right at the same time that we had people home for the holidays and a very deep cold here for the territory, so bills were higher.

What I can say is that the rates have not increased, and what I have already stood and said today — and will continue to say — is that we continue to invest in ways here in the territory to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels so that we can make sure our future is sustainable — whether that is Atlin, whether that is the battery project, whether that is Old Crow

solar, or whether that is solar up in Dawson. We are working on many, many projects here in the territory, and we will do that in order to make sure that our future is more sustainable because, ultimately, the great thing about renewables is that the cost of the energy is cheap once you have invested in the renewable.

Ms. Tredger: As the minister knows, the Utilities Board does set the rates, but only the government can force ATCO to come back for a rate review. Electricity bills are on the rise in the Yukon, and the government can change that. The minister could order ATCO to do a rate review, which would mean fairer electricity bills for Yukoners.

Will the minister commit to making electricity bills fairer for everyone by ordering ATCO to review their rates?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When I was speaking earlier, I mentioned that I had been in conversation with the chamber of commerce, and they came and proposed the same suggestion. The Minister of Justice and I sat down with them and promised to get back to them, so I will make that same promise to the member opposite here — that we took that question and we are looking into it.

What I will say is that we continue to look for ways in which to make sure that the territory has a sustainable energy future. I mentioned last week that our grid is an islanded grid — it's not connected outside — so it's really important that we invest in our energy infrastructure here, that we do our best to protect ratepayers, and that we have a way to break our dependence on fossil fuels.

So, that's our overall goal. I would like to thank both Yukon Energy and ATCO and all of the First Nation governments and other partners that are working to invest in renewables right now, because it's making a more sustainable future for our energy here in the territory.

Ms. Tredger: I'm glad that the minister mentioned sustainable energy, because this whole situation is a bit of a puzzle. Yukoners are paying ever-higher power bills and yet Yukon Energy struggles to find funding for green energy projects. So, where is all that money going? How can we have record high power bills and still not have the money to fund green projects? Well, the answer is: All that money is disappearing into profits for ATCO — a Province of Alberta corporation — off the backs of Yukoners, and they will keep doing it until the government orders them to review their rates.

So, I want to know: When? When is the government going to start protecting Yukoners? When will this government order a new general rate application for ATCO?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's my understanding that we have the lowest energy rates in the north. I would be careful — I will not disparage a company that is working to supply our electricity around the territory. I did say that the Minister of Justice and I have taken this question under advisement. I thank the member opposite for posing the question.

We just tabled a budget, and in that budget is an investment in the Atlin hydro project because, that way, we don't put it on ratepayers. What we do then is bring it as a piece of infrastructure. In fact, I hope to bring forward a ministerial statement about that here in the Legislative Assembly.

What I'm saying is: We worked to shield our ratepayers — the folks who pay the electricity bills — to try to invest like we invest in roads, for example — to make sure that we have a sustainable future. Yes, it is expensive to provide electricity across the territory, but we're happy to make that investment. I will take the question from the member opposite to consider it. I would like to thank ATCO for their work here in the north.

Question re: Mine closure security

Ms. White: So, history has a way of repeating itself. A mine operation goes bankrupt and abandons the site, and the federal government picks up the tab. But that changed with devolution, and since then, it is Yukoners who will be spending the tens of millions of dollars to take over abandoned mines.

Recently, Yukoners were given the unsurprising news that they are now on the hook for the Wolverine mine. Now that we get to keep that mess all to ourselves, it is Yukoners who will be spending the money on the maintenance and remediation.

What is the projected cost to Yukoners to maintain the abandoned Wolverine mine this year, and how many more years can Yukoners be expecting to pay this bill?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will look up the specific number for the member opposite, but I will begin by saying that the Wolverine mine is our responsibility, and we will take on that responsibility. The site does need long-term remedial planning. We did attempt to see if there was an interest among the private sector to purchase the mine; there was not. So, we are in discussions with PriceWaterhouseCoopers on the future transfer of care and maintenance responsibilities to us over the coming months.

I will say that Wolverine is a clear example of what we should not be doing. Unfortunately, as a government, we took over in a situation where the previous government had not retained appropriate security for the mine. Then, when the mine went into receivership, the Yukon public is left on the hook. The member opposite is correct; it is going to cost Yukoners money, and it is not how we wish to do mining in the future. It is an example of what we do not want to do. I am happy to say that I have had this very conversation with our security assessment, and I am happy to answer further questions today.

Ms. White: So, maintaining the environmental safety of a mine site for years and years costs a lot of money. Just to help out the minister, this budget alone projects almost \$12 million this year, and that is just to keep the contamination from spreading. When we talk about remediation, the situation becomes much more bleak.

At this time last year, the minister anticipated the sale of the Wolverine mine and didn't want to — and I'm quoting: "... speculate on what happens should the mine not sell..." Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are.

Will the minister tell Yukoners what his plan is, moving forward, for the remediation and closure of the Wolverine mine?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for the question. As she notes, the anticipated expenditures in this fiscal year are \$11.9 million. I am happy to give a breakdown if the House wishes.

I think I just answered in my previous response that what we are doing right is working on the long-term remedial planning.

We are working with PriceWaterhouseCoopers — the receivers who were brought in place to take over the responsibility and to work through what it is going to cost to remediate the mine, the site. It is important that we protect our environment. It is important for all Yukoners that we do the right thing here and, yes, it is going to cost money. Unfortunately, the reason that we are in this situation is because we did not — and this is under the previous government — collect the appropriate amount of security, even when it was understood that we needed to collect that security.

So, that is the challenge, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to take the high road on this and do the appropriate work to make sure that Wolverine is cleaned up over time.

Ms. White: I don't actually think that it is the high road; I actually think that it is the only road.

So, although mining is essential to a renewable future, it is just one piece of Yukon's economy; again, it is just one piece of that economy.

Currently, the government promotes the Yukon as an ideal place to mine, but it is also the government's responsibility to ensure that the Yukon we love is still here for many generations to come. The minister is right: We need to learn from past mistakes. So, when will this government recognize that they can't be both the promoter and the regulator of an industry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will answer the question in two ways. The first way was that we decided that Economic Development would do the work about promoting mining and that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources would do the regulatory work. So, that is where we made that division.

We are also doing a host of work in order to improve the environmental, socio-economic, and governance models of mining. Every time we sit down with a mine, we talk to them about the way of the future. I will give you one example and that is successor legislation. So, we have taken the initiative to say that it is time to modernize our legislation so that our mining industry is working in concert with our final agreements, with the way we believe *Our Clean Future* needs to work, and with moving to a sustainable future.

So, all of these are the ways in which we are working. We agree that the way of the past was not appropriate — I completely agree with the member opposite — and we are working diligently to allow mining to flourish here in the territory in a way in which it is responsible — environmentally and socio-economically and in respect of our communities and First Nations.

Question re: Property crime in Whitehorse

Ms. Van Bibber: Over the past several months, there has been a wave of crime throughout Whitehorse. Small businesses have been particularly hard hit and have faced break-ins, theft, property crime, and vandalism.

In some cases, businesses have been targeted multiple times and have faced multiple break-ins. Small businesses are getting frustrated and want to see increased action to stop

criminal activity and ensure that they can operate their businesses safely.

What steps is the government taking to ensure that businesses have the safety and security they need to operate and that the RCMP has the resources they need to combat crime?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is my pleasure to rise today to address this really important issue for the community — I see that the question is aimed at the community of Whitehorse in particular. I can indicate that the Department of Justice has in the past met with not only the RCMP, but with businesses and associations representing those businesses in downtown Whitehorse to speak about these issues.

I can also indicate that the policing priorities set by the Police Council and the Department of Justice that proceed from the Minister of Justice's office to the RCMP indicate that these kinds of community relations are incredibly important and a priority for our work going forward.

I can also indicate that, in the budget tabled by the Premier on Thursday, there are additional funds designated toward the RCMP and the priorities set, as well as the opportunity to meet with the chambers of commerce and other community organizations, including the City of Whitehorse, to indicate that this is a priority for our community and should be for the RCMP as well.

Ms. Van Bibber: Crime has been on the rise for the past three years, and this increased criminal activity is becoming more and more problematic for our capital city. While there have been many impacts from this, one has seen the pall that has been cast over small businesses that are already suffering. Some businesses are looking to relocate and some are even considering closing down altogether. If we want our downtown to be a safe and secure place to live, let alone operate a business, we need to see some change.

Will the Government of Yukon make dealing with property crime that has become commonplace in Whitehorse the top priority in their annual issuance of policing authorities to the RCMP?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Justice works to ensure the provision of a professional, accountable, and appropriately funded territorial police service here in the territory that is responsive to the priorities of Yukon citizens and worthy of the public trust.

Our government funds significant and ongoing investments in police resources through the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* with the RCMP, and the Yukon has one of the highest police:capita ratios in Canada, averaging approximately one RCMP officer for every 337 residents here in the territory. The RCMP forecasts its anticipated human resources operational funding and capital investment needs to the Government of Yukon through an annual financial planning process, and that financial planning process has been built into our Yukon government budgeting process, as noted in the budget that was presented by the Premier on Thursday.

These issues raised by the member opposite are incredibly important for the RCMP, for the community of the City of Whitehorse, and for individuals running businesses and their

homes and the safety therein and are a policing priority for the RCMP and the Department of Justice together.

Ms. Van Bibber: Combatting crime has become a key priority for the business community in Whitehorse. If we have not addressed this growing issue of crime in the community by the time tourism returns to full swing, this will have a negative impact on our economy. Whitehorse prides itself on being a welcoming place for tourism, and growing amounts of property crime could unfortunately tarnish this image if not addressed soon.

How will the minister include the voice of small business and the tourism community in the setting of Yukon's policing priorities for the RCMP?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I have addressed that question already. Again, I recognize that it is a very important issue that has been brought forward by the member opposite, but it is in fact a priority for the RCMP with respect to their priority setting — with the work that is done by the Yukon Police Council, the RCMP, and the Department of Justice to recommend and to set RCMP policing priorities and with respect to the work and the relationships that the RCMP builds here in our community, particularly in downtown Whitehorse.

I appreciate and recognize that it is an issue — that it is a priority for the RCMP. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but I can speak about how we set those priorities together and those are reflective of the community and the community's wishes.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 294

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 294.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 294.

Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 294

Clerk: Motion No. 294, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, for the duration of the 2022 Spring Sitting, any Member of the Legislative Assembly who is unable to attend sittings of the House in person due to COVID-19 symptoms, illness or protocols may participate in the sittings of the House

by video conference, notwithstanding Standing Order 8 or any other Standing Order, and by video conference shall:

(1) be recognized to speak in debate, notwithstanding Standing Order 17;

(2) be permitted to vote, notwithstanding Standing Order 25;

(3) be permitted to participate in counts in Committee of the Whole, notwithstanding Standing Order 44 and Standing Order 44.1;

(4) contribute to constituting quorum in the Legislative Assembly, under Standing Order 3 and the *Yukon Act*; and

(5) be considered to have attended the sitting of the Legislative Assembly, with no deduction of indemnity required under subsection 39(5) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be very, very brief. This motion and the following two are the motions that we have done at the start of each of our last several Sittings, and they are to help us with making sure that the House can continue to do its business during the pandemic

I note that this is just subtly different from the previous forms of this motion where we are allowing members to participate in a count in Committee of the Whole if they are not here but are participating remotely. I am looking forward to debate on the motion.

Mr. Cathers: I would just note that, as the Government House Leader noted, this motion is very similar to ones that have been in place at the start of every session since the COVID pandemic emerged. We do not have any concerns with it and will be supporting it.

Ms. Tredger: We are happy to support this motion as we have in the past and want to add our congratulations to the Legislative Assembly Office for upgrading to video conferencing so that we have that change in place for this Sitting.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion No. 294 agreed to

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 295

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 295.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 295.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 295

Clerk: Motion No. 295, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, for the duration of the 2022 Spring Sitting, if the Legislative Assembly stands adjourned for an indefinite period of time, the Government House Leader and at least one of the other House Leaders together may request that the Legislative Assembly meet virtually by video conference, with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to participate remotely, notwithstanding any current Standing Orders regarding members' physical presence in the Chamber.

Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 295 agreed to

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 296

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 296.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 296.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 296

Clerk: Motion No. 296, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, for the duration of the 2022 Spring Sitting:

(1) the Clerk shall keep a daily list of paired members, in which any member of the Government and any member of an opposition party may have their names entered together by noon on that date to indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division in the Legislative Assembly held on that date; and

(2) following each such division held, the names of any members entered on the list of paired members for that date shall be printed in Hansard and in the Votes and Proceedings.

Are you prepared for the question?

Motion 296 agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 204: First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 204, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Dixon.

Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise today at second reading to address this year's 2022-23 budget.

Of course, as those listening and members will realize, this is the first time that a budget has been fully debated since the last election and for this particular Legislature.

It's also the first time that a budget will be fully debated throughout a full Spring Sitting since back in 2019. That's

something that I think is worth noting, of course, for Yukoners — that over the last two springs, the Legislature has either been interrupted or caused to adjourn for various reasons, and the result of that has been that the budget has gone without what I believe to be a sufficient amount of scrutiny and oversight in the Legislature.

In 2019, that was the last time the budget was fully debated. In 2022, of course, there was the interruption of the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which, of course, disrupted the Legislature's proceedings and then remained out of the Chamber until quite some time later.

Then, of course, last year, the budget was tabled by the government and then, just a few days later, the Legislature was interrupted by an election call, which, of course, was something that was contrary to the fixed election date that the government had just passed in the Sitting before. So, this is an important time for legislators to do their work as it's the first time that this has happened in several years.

I'm optimistic about the proceeding of this budget through the Legislature in terms of debate and discussion. I think that the SCREP — the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — has agreed to a number of changes that will affect the way that we debate this budget as well, and I'm happy to see some of those come forward. I think that the shortened response time for ministers and opposition members to make their points, ask their questions, and provide their responses will certainly facilitate an improved cadence of debate in the Legislature, so I think that's a very positive step forward. I think that, once we get into Committee, we'll really notice that improved system.

It is also important for me, Mr. Speaker, of course, as this is my first opportunity for a full Spring Sitting as the Leader of the Official Opposition. It's a role that I take with a great deal of pride and take very seriously and one that I hope to discharge on behalf of not only my constituents but all Yukoners. As the Official Opposition, of course, we have a duty to Yukoners to scrutinize the budget, to dig into it, to ask questions about it, and to raise the concerns of our constituents across the territory.

That is to say that we necessarily have to ask a variety of questions across the departments that we will review. Sometimes it puts us in the position of having to ask questions about issues that we perhaps already support or don't have issues with, but because questions are put to us by constituents, by organizations, or by other Yukoners, we have a duty to bring those forward and to raise them on behalf of Yukoners. That is an important step, Mr. Speaker, because it underpins sort of the foundational role that we have as legislators, which is to provide scrutiny on the role and the functioning of the executive.

The Premier and his ministers, of course, have a job to play as well, but here in the Legislature, our job as opposition is to provide that scrutiny, and it is something that we take very seriously and it something that I look forward to over the next few weeks and months.

Before I dig into my discussion about the budget itself, I did want to note that, having been a minister in the past, I know how much work goes into the development of a budget, so I

wanted to begin by acknowledging and thanking those officials from the various departments who have put this budget together. While we disagree sometimes at the political level about certain decisions, we always try to recognize the hard work of government officials in putting these documents together. I don't think that anybody can look at the stack of budget documents and not acknowledge the fact that a great deal of work has gone into this budget. So, whether those officials are in the Department of Finance or any of the respective finance branches in the departments, I am certainly aware of the great effort that goes into this package of documents and certainly appreciate the work that has been done.

This particular budget is obviously a very large one. We are just shy of \$2 billion. I remember back when Premier Fentie tabled the first \$1-billion budget and that doesn't seem like that long ago, but, of course, times have changed fairly rapidly and the state of the territory's finances have changed with that time as well. Now we are on the precipice of a \$2-billion budget, which I think, based on the rate of increase from the federal transfers, we will certainly eclipse in next year's budget, if not before — that as a result of supplementary spending later this year.

So, having recognized the staff who have put their time and effort into the budget, I also wanted to note a few changes for the record in the Office of the Official Opposition. Of course, this is the first Sitting of the Legislature with our new chief of staff, Danny Macdonald, who took over just a few months ago. This is the first time that Mr. Macdonald is taking on the role of chief of staff, so we are very excited to see him fill that role. Danny is a long-time friend of mine. We both began in the Cabinet offices upstairs under Premier Fentie. It's nice to see Danny take the next step there. Of course, both Tim Kucharuk and Robin Boss continue to provide support in our office as well. When we look at the proceedings of the Legislature on a daily basis, we see their fingerprints on just about everything that comes out of the mouths of the eight Yukon Party MLAs.

This will be the first Spring Sitting without Ted Laking as a member of our staff formally. Mr. Laking was elected last year to Whitehorse City Council and is now pursuing a range of other opportunities, but being the political animal that he is, he remains involved in our office, and we rely on him continuously for support in a variety of ways as well.

There will be plenty of opportunity for us to get into the details of the budget, and that is what we are very much looking forward to. At second reading, I think that it is worthwhile to make a few observations about the larger picture of the budget. I will leave some of my more specific questions, criticisms, and thoughts about the budget to those debates in Committee.

There are, however, a number of broader themes that I would like to discuss. When I was preparing for the Legislature over the past number of weeks, the way I approached the creation of my thinking on the budget was around a number of particular themes that I thought were important for Yukon in the current moment.

The first thing that I was interested in when thinking about what I wanted to see in the budget was the general issue of

affordability that faces so many Yukoners. There isn't a Yukoner out there who hasn't been affected by the rising cost of just about everything as a result of inflation and the resulting changes in price and cost of living here in the territory. We have seen that across a range of areas.

Of course, earlier today in Question Period, we discussed some of those things, whether it's questions that we have around measures that the government is taking with regard to the price of gasoline and diesel at the pumps around the Yukon — I think, for many Yukoners, looking at the gas price here in Whitehorse at around \$1.80 — and in rural Yukon, much higher, and, in some cases, \$2 — it is certainly very shocking for a lot of Yukoners. That really creates a lot of challenges for not just individual Yukoners but businesses, organizations, and many Yukoners of a variety of backgrounds and places.

The impact of that — I don't think it can be underestimated. As my colleague, the Member for Kluane, raised in Question Period today, the government of course has a range of policy tools with which they can take action and affect the price of gas in the territory. There are policies; there are tax rates; there is a range of measures that influence that. My colleague asked a question about that as well.

Beyond gas, of course, we've seen ever-increasing prices with regard to the food that comes into the territory. When my colleague, the Member for Kluane, asked about that earlier today, the Minister of Economic Development noted that we've seen an increase in local food production. I certainly am happy to see that and very much appreciate the local food production, but last time I checked, the local food production amounted to just about one percent of Yukon's total food consumption. So, what that means is that around 99 percent — and I could be off on the exact number, but it's in that neighbourhood of 98.5 to 99 percent — of the food that's consumed in the Yukon comes up the highway by way of truck, normally. Of course, therefore, the price of trucking influences greatly the cost of food. Now, the cost of food increasing is not an issue that's unique to the Yukon; we've seen that across the country as inflation pushes the price of food up across Canada; however, as we all know, the Yukon, given its geographical position, is particularly vulnerable to price increases in food because of the transportation networks that provide that food to us. So, we've seen the impacts of government policy on the trucking industry influence food pricing here as well.

Electricity prices are up as well. I think that's clearly the case when you see the reaction of Yukoners to their most recent power bills over the winter. My colleague from Haines Junction as well as colleagues from the NDP have raised this as well today. Then, of course, I would be remiss if I didn't note the considerable increase in the cost of housing here in the Yukon as well.

When it comes to housing, I found it quite remarkable — the discussion on the affordability issue related to housing in the budget documents themselves, in particular in the economic forecast for the territory, which I thought really laid out well the challenge of housing affordability for the territory. To quote from that document — it's on page 15 of the "Fiscal and Economic Outlook". It notes that, of course, first of all:

"Consecutive records for the price of a single detached house in Whitehorse were reported for the second and third quarters of 2021, with an average sale price in the third quarter of nearly \$657,000, up almost \$88,000 from the third quarter of 2020."

So, that makes it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the price of housing is increasing dramatically here in the Yukon. That, of course, plays a role in the ability of Yukoners to stay in the territory or new Yukoners to come to the territory. As my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek Centre, noted in her question, a direct quote from the economic outlook as well was that — and I quote: "As of the third quarter of 2021, a household would need to earn 2.3 times more than the average Yukon worker to responsibly finance the mortgage on a \$657,000 home at the posted five-year fixed mortgage rate."

So, what that means, Mr. Speaker, is that the rate of income for many Yukoners does not match the ability to buy a house and get into the housing market. That's truly unfortunate, and it's a real challenge that I think that the government needs to take very seriously.

The budget documents also note that this is not a new issue and it has been happening for the last two or three years. So, that's where the acknowledgement, I think, needs to come with regard to the need for some change.

Looking across the board — whether it's gas, whether it's food, whether it's electricity or housing — it is pretty clear to me that affordability remains a considerable issue for a lot of Yukoners.

It was a bit surprising to see that not more fully addressed in the budget itself — in the budget speech, certainly — or in any of the government priorities that we have seen. That was something I was looking for in this budget, and I was surprised to not see it.

The second piece that I was looking for in this budget, Mr. Speaker, was the response to what many in the small business community feel to be an attack on the private sector. We have seen the economy ebb and flow over the years, but over the last several years since COVID has been in place, we have seen our private sector — particularly our small businesses — struggle mightily throughout the last two years.

I think, for many of us when we look at the planned removal of the remaining COVID-19 public health restrictions, there is reason for optimism around our economy and the outlook for small businesses. I believe, truly, that more needs to be done. I think one of the organizations that put it very well was the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Shortly after the tabling of the budget, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business put out a release with regard to the budget. The headline of that release was "Yukon budget provides little relief for struggling small businesses". To quote from that release — and I quote: "The Yukon budget provides little for small businesses hoping to see measures to reduce costs and help with recovery, says the Canadian Federation of Independent Business."

"CFIB appreciates the Yukon government did not introduce new tax increases or additional costs. However, small businesses are still feeling the impact of two years of pandemic

restrictions along with cost increases due to inflation, supply chain disruptions, and rising payroll costs.

“Many small businesses are still in survival mode,” said Kathleen Cook, CFIB director for Yukon. “We are coming up to two years of the pandemic and only 34% of Canadian small businesses are back to normal sales. Consumer confidence remains low even as restrictions are being lifted, and businesses are carrying an average of \$158,000 in pandemic-related debt. The budget was a missed opportunity to help businesses through the current and ongoing crisis with cost relief measures and a plan to help them recover in the long term.”

Mr. Speaker, as you see, I think the business community would generally agree that there was an opportunity here to chart a new path to allow our business community to renew and grow, coming out of the COVID pandemic, but that appears to be — at least in the view of some businesses and the business community — a missed opportunity.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has also noted in their response to the budget — and I will quote again: “CFIB remains very concerned the government may mandate permanent employer-paid sick leave later this year when the Yukon Paid Sick Leave Rebate program expires. ‘This would be a significant additional cost for small businesses at a time when they can least afford it,’ said Cook. ‘Measures to offset these costs and provide pandemic recovery assistance were absent from today’s budget.’”

To that point, Mr. Speaker, I really think that this is a missed opportunity.

While we focus on the impacts of COVID — I think that those are certainly apparent and important to recognize, but I also think that they have been — the impacts of COVID have been compounded by government policy as well. I think that the imposition of a number of the policies and programs by the government in recent years, while well-intentioned, have unfortunately degraded the overall business climate and created a situation where businesses are really feeling under attack. Earlier this year, on February 3, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce took the opportunity to write a letter to the Yukon government, specifically to the Premier, and noted what they felt was a perfect storm in terms of the business climate. I will quote from that letter: “We are writing you to lodge concern with the ‘perfect storm’ that is being experienced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Yukon with a focus on the actions, policies, and proposals by the Government of Yukon (YG) that are crippling business at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has already eroded sales and evaporated profits for many SMEs in Yukon.”

“At a time when support, austerity and common sense is required from our government, we are experiencing actions that are completely insensitive to businesses and the economy.”

The letter then proceeds to list a range of policies and programs that the government is either considering or has underway that the chamber feels is negatively impacting the business community. Those policies include, as I mentioned, the proposed paid sick leave program, which was of course the result of some work done under the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberal Party and the NDP. As I

understand it, it is now on the desk of Cabinet as they consider the recommendations from the Making Work Safe Panel, which provided recommendations for a program of this nature. The release of those recommendations provoked a fairly stern reaction from the business community. I don’t know about other members, but I certainly received a number of unsolicited responses to that from the business community. I heard from businesses that I haven’t heard from before, actually, so we certainly know that the business community is paying attention and is deeply concerned about proposals that will make life less affordable for these businesses and will impact their ability to continue to operate.

The second issue that the Yukon Chamber of Commerce raised in their letter is one that I am very much concerned about as well, and that is the growth of the public sector. I think that the growth of the Yukon government’s public service has been unchecked for quite some time now. It certainly started as early as the first and second Fentie governments. It carried on certainly in our time in office under the Pasloski government, but really what we have seen over the past few years is that the growth has eclipsed anything from before. We have seen fairly unprecedented growth of the public service over the past number of years. That has negative implications for the territory.

While it is always easy to hire new public servants to do some sort of new program, I think that is oftentimes the first answer and it is not always the best answer. What we are seeing now, at least according to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, are negative implications of unchecked government growth over the years. To that end, I had hoped that the government might provide some path forward for the territory that did not include a massive increase in the public sector and would instead look to the private sector to provide growth and opportunities for Yukoners.

Another issue that was raised by the Chamber of Commerce was the minimum wage increase that occurred last year as a result of the confidence and supply agreement. That’s fairly self-evident. They also noted a number of policies related to the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the cannabis corporation which have, in their view, been holding back the hospitality sector. Among the list, of course, is electricity rates. This was something that came up in Question Period earlier today, as the Yukon Chamber of Commerce suggests — and I quote: “The current rate application and Yukon Utilities Board governance model has enabled over-earning by utilities and lack of predictability in costs for SMEs.”

While I may not agree entirely with the end goal taken by the NDP in Question Period today, I think it’s certainly an issue that deserves discussion and debate, and according to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, it’s certainly something that is impacting the ability of our business community to remain viable.

The chamber also notes a range of impacts from federal legislation. I won’t go into those today, Mr. Speaker, because that’s not in the purview of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. But I do think it’s worth noting that the business community does feel under siege from a number of federal angles as well.

So, when you combine the impacts of COVID-19 and the public health restrictions, when you combine the impacts of Yukon government's policies and measures that have been deleterious to the business community, and then layer on of course federal impacts, we can understand increasingly why the Chamber of Commerce and the business community feel targeted.

I'll quote from the summary of the letter, because it certainly sums up the issue quite well: "SMEs in Yukon who are already facing lost revenues, struggling to stay open, with many facing bankruptcy, are feeling under siege from their government."

I think that's a fairly good summation of the viewpoint of the business community these days with regard to how they view the government. They feel under siege from their government, according to the Yukon chamber. That is truly unfortunate. I had hoped that the Premier would use the budget — either the Budget Address, the budget document itself, or any of the policy measures and programs that are created by the budget — to begin to address some of the significant challenges that are faced by our private sector here in Yukon.

I think that we all know that the private sector will be absolutely critical to the recovery of the Yukon Territory following the pandemic and we need to put the growth of the private sector at the top of our list in terms of priorities with regard to the next year and beyond.

I touched on the issue related to the growth of government. I think that, while we often get fixated on the number of government employees, oftentimes the growth of the government is more complex than that. The growth of government can include the imposition of red tape — of policies and procedures that inhibit the opportunity and growth for small businesses — and I think that what is needed at this time is a real clear plan to reduce red tape and get the government out of the way of the business community to allow them to thrive.

The last theme that I had identified as something that I wanted to see in this budget was a general sense of leadership. I had hoped to see leadership from the government with regard to emerging from the pandemic, leadership with regard to the issuance and communication of its priorities. Unfortunately, that is not what I took away from either the budget speech or the budget itself. We know that, over the last number of months, as a number of COVID-related public health restriction issues have swirled around, we have seen a real lack of leadership from the Liberal government, in my view.

As public health restrictions were imposed throughout the winter, often we would hear from the businesses, groups, or individuals who felt that the restrictions were imposed without proper consultation and without proper communication. I think that is very much true. Over the last few months, the Yukon Party caucus has begun to try to target some of those specific areas. While it is easy enough for groups out there to say that public health restrictions are getting in the way, it was more useful for us, as the Official Opposition, to raise specific concerns that we had with particular areas. I would note the areas of sport and recreation, the imposition on faith-based

organizations, and the imposition of public health restrictions on the hospitality industry, which, overall on the whole, felt fairly incoherent, poorly explained, and certainly poorly understood by Yukoners.

I remember the day that some of the new sport restrictions had been imposed, and the executive director for Sport Yukon was on the radio raising some concerns, and shortly after that, the Minister of Health and Social Services appeared on the show just a few minutes or hours afterwards and was generally unable to answer any of the questions that were raised by Sport Yukon. The minister went on to commit to a technical briefing which she wasn't sure would happen later that day or the next day. Well, it actually turned out to be over a week or two before that technical briefing actually happened. When it did, the sports organizations that attended felt that they left the briefing with more questions than they went into it with. I think it is really unfortunate that these groups were faced with government decision-making that did not take into account the impacts on those groups at all.

It is fair enough for groups to just disagree with the imposition of certain rules, but I think that it is entirely unacceptable that the government imposed these rules and is not able to even explain them. That was particularly difficult for a lot of the sports organizations. Likewise was the case for the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry felt particularly targeted by this government in the imposition of public health restrictions. Some of the more incoherent public health restrictions related to the ban on barstools — which apparently were more dangerous than regular stools — the imposition of a curfew of 10:00 p.m. — which apparently was intended to protect patrons from COVID that would be higher at 10:01 p.m. than at 9:59 p.m. — and a range of other measures that the industry felt were unfair and incoherent.

I think that a lot of them could have been assuaged if they had a proper explanation of what those measures were meant to achieve. Unfortunately, government ministers were unable to provide such an explanation and businesses, groups, and others were left wondering, feeling frustrated, and left ignored.

There was also the issue of faith-based organizations. My colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, raised the impacts of restrictions on faith-based organizations as a particular issue that was impacting Yukoners. It seemed to us and to the faith community that Yukon had by far the most strict imposition of restrictions on faith-based organizations in the entire country, which didn't seem to fit with the profile of the transmission of the virus here in the Yukon. Again, that left many Yukoners in the faith community feeling that they were being targeted for some reason, and because of the poor communication out of the Cabinet office, that feeling persists.

When you look at that poor communication over the last number of months, I think that speaks to a failure of leadership. So, again, I would hope to see an improvement in that communicated in the budget.

Furthermore, an important part of leadership is responsibility and accountability. That is something we have talked about a lot over the past few months, as we have contemplated the reaction of government to the incidents at the

Hidden Valley school and the response of the government to the Rogers report, which outlined government's entirely inadequate response to that issue. We will have time to dig more into that over the course of the Legislature, but the unwillingness of the current government to accept responsibility, accept accountability, and offer anything in the way of responsibility or accountability to Yukoners for that, I think, is fairly appalling. To my mind, it is certainly an example of poor leadership.

Those three issues — affordability, the attack on small businesses, and the lack of leadership — were some of the concerns that I had going into the budget being tabled. Unfortunately, I don't believe that the government was able to respond to any of those, so I remain concerned with the government. As we all know, the vote on the budget is a confidence motion and an expression of confidence in the government. I think it goes without saying that, because we do not have confidence in this government, we won't be supporting the budget. That is an important function, I think, of non-government members of the Legislature to consider — their confidence in the government.

All that being said, I do think it is worth noting that the budget is filled with a number of projects that we do indeed support. It is heartening to see the focus put on recreational infrastructure and the investments made in a number of what I think are really excellent projects here in the Yukon in the recreation field. I note the improvements at Mount Sima, the improvements to the biathlon facility, and, of course, the gymnastics gym which will be contained in this budget and will hopefully begin construction this summer. These are all part of an investment in recreation infrastructure that I think is really important and I am happy to see.

I am also pleased to see that the budget includes funding for the Whistle Bend school. I know that this will be the first new elementary school constructed in Whitehorse in a significant number of years. I don't remember the actual number, but it has been quite some time since we have seen the construction of a new elementary school. It is very much needed and very deserved by the community. I am pleased to see that development happen. I should note that these investments in recreation infrastructure — or many of them — as well as the school were features of our party's platform in the last election, so they certainly have our support.

I won't go through in detail and list the projects that we do support or don't support or anything like that. I think it is important for us to get into the debate in Committee of the Whole and proceed department by department to discuss these issues in more detail, but I do want to note the simple fact that, while we won't be supporting the budget for the reasons that I have outlined — most specifically, that we don't have confidence in the current government — it doesn't mean that we don't support a number of the projects that are in this budget. Whether they are in Community Services, Highways and Public Works, Education, or any of the other departments, there is a lot of good in the budget and there are a lot of investments that are sound, but en masse, I don't feel that the budget addresses the sort of leadership that we need at this time

and doesn't address the issues that, as I have mentioned, are top of mind for me and what I believe are top of mind for Yukoners.

With that, I will conclude my remarks today. I am sure that each minister will be using their time to outline the priorities in the budget for each of their respective portfolios and departments. I look forward to hearing more about some of the things that have been announced in this budget. I do have a lot of questions about a number of measures that are in the budget, so I do look forward to breaking into Committee of the Whole to discuss those in greater detail.

I also look forward to hearing from my colleagues on this side of the House to understand a few of their perspectives on the budget and, of course, I am interested as always in hearing from the NDP caucus about their views on the budget.

Oftentimes, I find myself disagreeing with some of the policy direction of the NDP, but I certainly appreciate their perspectives and their thoughts. I do enjoy hearing them raised in the Legislature as I think it's an important function for government to consider views from all sides of the spectrum. Of course, as we know, the confidence and supply agreement commitments feature prominently in this budget as well, and so I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the Third Party about whether they feel that the commitments made in the CASA document itself are truly met by the investments made in this budget and whether the amounts allocated to those specific projects, policies, and programs are sufficient to meet what was intended in the CASA. In particular, I note that the dental program is one that I have some interest in and look forward to hearing further debate about that particular line item. The amount of \$1.8 million doesn't sound like enough to fulfill the commitment that I saw in the CASA, but it's not a document to which I am a party, so I certainly have no say in that.

With that, again, I look forward to debate. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the budget now at second reading and look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the time today.

I was sitting here and was thinking about the first time that I responded to a budget back in 2011. You know, as we heard my colleague say — the Leader of the Yukon Party — he talked about how it was just about \$1.2 billion. Of course, at that point in time, he was a Cabinet minister, and, I tell you, I could go back in Hansard and bring back some doozies, but today my Hansard research is in another directions.

I want to start by thanking the folks in the riding of Takhini-Kopper King — actually, the folks in the entire territory in the same breath. I feel really fortunate to live where I do. As we talk about affordability issues and challenges in the territory more so — it's just a reminder that I'm very, very fortunate. In recent years, my neighbourhood has ballooned; it has grown. The infill is something else. In the Budget Address, the Premier mentioned that Normandy Manor was within walking distance of McIntyre Creek, and he said it with conviction, like that was going to be something — well, I would say that Normandy Manor is within walking distance of

McIntyre Creek like the Thomson Centre is within walking distance of the Canada Games Centre. I think it depends on your level of fitness.

In the case of Normandy Manor, you would have to walk up a road that doesn't have a designated walking track until you could get one, and then you would go down a dirt road, and you would need to go down a hill — anyway, it is not exactly quite as close as that. But, again, there has been lots of infill in my riding and more development in Raven's Ridge, more awkward development down the Fish Lake Road and lots of changes, but I think that is what we are seeing across the territory.

I can say that, in my riding, folks who rent are relieved about the rent cap that is in place. For the first time in many, many years, people in mobile homes are able to anticipate what is coming forward. We have seen the transition from Yukon College to Yukon University and that has been incredible — seeing that growth and change there. So, just like the rest of the territory, there have been changes in my neighbourhood.

One of the things that I wanted to do today is that — when you are here long enough, you start to hear repetition, and sometimes it's a fun game to play "Who said this when?" So, I thought I would bring out some quotes. I have this quote: "Under the leadership of our government, mining is flourishing in the Yukon..." That is a quote, and for anyone who is listening, that is in the recent Budget Address, so from this year. Here is another quote: "With three operating mines, the current mineral production value is estimated to be approximately \$420 million." That is from March 15, 2012 in a Budget Address when the budget was tabled. I am going to go on to quote from the same document: "Yukon now has three operating mines..." Does it sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? It should; it should sound familiar. The mines are different, though: "... Capstone's Minto mine, Alexco's Keno Hill Mines properties and Yukon Zinc's Wolverine mine."

Sometimes there is familiarity, because I can go down and I can look in the recent budget that was just tabled — and I quote: "Our territory now has three operating mines with a number of others under development." And it goes on. This is something that I don't think anyone in this Chamber is surprised about. It is called a "boom and bust economy". It is something that happens when you are dependent on mineral prices.

It is actually a bit shocking to know right now that, with Russia invading Ukraine, gold prices have gone over \$2,000 an ounce — gold has gone over \$2,000 an ounce — and it is because people are liquidating their funds and putting it into a resource like gold because they feel like it is safer. In the territory, we still collect 37.5 cents an ounce when the production now is being sold for \$2,000, so Yukon gets good return on our money there.

When we talk about mining, it's something that comes and goes, always.

Here is one. I am going to quote, and we can guess when it's from. I am quoting: "...bringing us a spirited defence of the status quo, a commitment to sit back and relax while commodities boom and a generous federal government does the work." If anyone is guessing along, that was from March 26,

2013, and that was our current Premier. The rest of the quote: "Instead, the same old Yukon Party is bringing us a spirited defence of the status quo..."

We talk about the commodities boom; we talk about a generous federal government transfer. It's interesting, because it goes on. This is another quote: "We need a budget that reduces our dependence on Ottawa. After 10 years in power, this government has doubled its dependence on the federal money. When the government came to power, approximately 80 percent of the expenses were paid by federal transfers. Now, Mr. Speaker, almost 87 percent of our expenses are paid with federal money.

"On behalf of Yukoners, I am calling on this government to plan to achieve a more dependable and less dependent source of revenue. While the government likes to brag about good financial management, the fact remains that Yukoners get more of our budget as a percentage from Ottawa than we did 10 years ago."

In case anyone is curious, that again is from March 26, 2013, and that was the Premier in response to the budget that had been tabled by the Yukon Party. It is super interesting, because, you know, we went from a budget that was just about \$1.2 billion, and in the 11 years I have been here, we are now at almost \$1.9 billion. Today, when I was at the Finance briefing, I asked — because, being around the table with a bunch of math-elites, or people who spend a lot of time and money — I asked them what percentage of our resources come from the federal government transfer. They said it was about 85 percent at this point — 85 percent — so that's from 2013 when the now Premier was saying that 87 percent was too high and that we needed to move off that dependency. When I was doing the back-of-the-napkin calculations, I thought we were at about 86.6 percent that is federal transfer money. Our population grows, more money comes, and that is something.

In the same breath, the Premier said that a budget is about priorities and putting money where you think the priorities are.

It is fascinating to me that we are still talking about the Dempster fibre optic line. I can't wait until it is actually completed and not included anymore. It was being thrown around here in 2014, but it's still in the budget. One noticeable absence in this budget compared to recent ones from the Liberal Party is that there is no mention of midwifery — no mention of midwifery. Its absence is notable, because when regulations — you know, as of April 15, 2021, we no longer had access to a midwife in the territory because regulations were going to come into place. We are just over a month away from the anniversary of a year since women and families don't have access to a midwife. Maybe that's why it wasn't included in this Budget Address as being successful.

We look at things like the government just declaring a substance use emergency. We see \$400,000 for mental health supports for schools — \$400,000. How does that get distributed through schools? How many bodies is that? There is a reason why today I put in a motion about clinical counsellors in schools. We need people with the professional background and understanding of how to deal with what is happening right now and the struggles people are going through. A while back, the

government declared a substance use crisis. We waited — Yukoners waited to see what that meant.

I made a comparison last week that wasn't well-received by the government. I made a comparison that, last summer, we had a flooding emergency and it was declared an emergency. We didn't hold a summit about it. We didn't have professionals come in and tell us that there was flooding happening, so here are some things we could do. We didn't wait. We acted on it right away. The minister told me that we were sparking conversation. I can say that in Mayo they are wanting more than conversations; they want support. I can tell you that in Faro they don't want any more conversations; they are looking for that support.

When we talk about budgets and we talk about them being priorities, I have to say that there was a point when I was sitting here on Thursday like everyone else, trying to follow along, and I was just waiting for the big excitement — “This is the vision”. Between 2016 and 2021, I told the government: “Stop blaming it on the past. Stop talking about the Yukon Party. You had one year of that and now you have to take responsibility. The path forward is yours. You get to choose. You get to choose how we go forward.”

I listen to my colleague and I can listen to his points and I think — well, you can talk about affordability and then disagree with increasing minimum wage and that's why we're different. There are a lot of differences between the NDP and the Yukon Party, which I don't think is a surprise.

When I look at this budget, I see the differences between the NDP and the Liberals. There is a reason why we are not a coalition government. There is a reason why I'm on this side of the room and the Liberals are on that side of the room so I can say what I think. I will vote in support of the budget because I made that commitment. I made that commitment for protection on rent increases. I made that commitment for the work on the successor resource legislation for an increase of minimum wage and for the research that was done for paid sick leave. You know, it's interesting. I can listen to my colleague from the Yukon Party talk about how this is what businesses are saying. I remember when they didn't want the holiday or vacation pay. I remember when — I can read; I don't remember; I wasn't old enough or around at that point — but we can go back to universal health care in Canada and we can see when doctors said that it was going to — people weren't going to be doctors because of it. But you adapt and you find ways to work it in and then it becomes part of the fabric of who you are.

If anything, we should have learned in the last two years how people deserve to be able to be sick. We should have learned that — I hope we've learned — that it's more important for an employee to recover from an illness than it is for them to go and make everyone around them unwell. That's what that report came out in saying. It said that paid sick days are important; it's the compassionate and empathetic way to deal with the people around you.

It's interesting because I was an employer. Mr. Speaker, you might not know this, but I owned a coffee shop for three years. I owned a coffee shop for three years, and when people were sick, we covered for each other. I covered a lot of shifts

when I needed to. But it was more important to me that my staff be able to work as opposed to the entire staff going off. I have to say, one time I went away — I wanted to do a snowbird trip for five days and the flu went around my shop, and let me tell you, the entire staff went down. That was a good example of why people needed to take the time off. It would have been better for us to just shut it down for that time. Honestly, it would have been better.

So, when I look at this budget and I think about what some of the goals are and some of the efforts, it's one of those things — it's great to know that the Whistle Bend school is going to start. Then I look at things like Takhini Elementary. This is an incredible school that does trauma-informed education. They said things like: “It would be really great if we could just like get a coat of paint on the inside, if we could just freshen it up”.

I think about the “new new” F.H. Collins, which is unfortunate, because really, the Liberal government inherited that from the Yukon Party government. I call it the “new new F.H. Collins” because there was the first promise, then that one was put aside, and then the new school came out. What we see next to it is this beautiful example of what education can look like, built under the Liberal government, so I am hopeful for the Whistle Bend school. I hope it's that leading and that forward thinking.

Then I think about places around the territory. I think about the Ross River School and the community. It goes a long time back — Tutlini. That was not where the community was. The community was across the river on a sunny corner. It got moved when everyone was out hunting. It was horrible story; it is a horrible story. The community want to move up the hill toward the sun and the first place they want to start with is the school. They want a new school in the sun. Imagine that. Imagine that change from the shadows into the sun.

When we look at education and we look around the territory, we know that there are needs. There are absolutely needs. We have Grey Mountain Primary, which is a school that has been in a temporary building for 50 years. I don't know at what point in time it stops being temporary, but it is not connected. It is not like a standard school because it was supposed to be temporary when it started.

I am relieved to see that there is money for housing for justice-involved women. In my first Budget Address ever in 2011, I had just come out of Corrections. I worked there for two years with women. The first thing I said is that we really need to make sure that there is a place for women to go when they leave the correctional facility. That's good to know. It has been 11 years, but sometimes I think we should have moved faster. I have questions about what that empty building is doing on the correctional property up there. It is the building that I worked in. It is the one with the funny roof. It had Takhini Haven as a group home for a number of years and then it stopped. It has been empty ever since. We are in the middle of a housing crisis and we have a five-bedroom building that has been empty for I think almost two years now. Which department owns that now? Is it Justice? Is it Health and Social Services? Is it under Property Management? Who knows? We will try to figure that out.

When we talk about this, a lot of things you will hear in our questions — we have written a lot of letters — I think about how different services are rendered in different communities. I will leave it to my colleague to talk more about it, but I think about the struggles in a community with water delivery in the Yukon. In Old Crow, I think about how that community deserves more certainty around their water — more certainty than they have — and it's not through any fault of the community. They work really hard and do the best they can, but they are understaffed and under-resourced. We talk about it over and over and over again, and it is still the same people doing all the work.

We can talk about the climate emergency that is declared in 2019. We can talk about how that could have been a whole new path forward. When I think about active transportation, I have to say that I am embarrassed to say that, after 10 years of working in this building, I finally started riding my actual bike to work and I think I didn't before because I was intimidated by Two Mile Hill. The good news is that it only takes me six more minutes to get up the hill than it does for me to get to work, so it is not a big deal, but I think about active transportation and I think about my other colleague sending letters to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, saying: "Hey, you know when it snows and you plow the highway and you fill up the separated paved path on the other side, it is really hard to pass." The response was kind of lacklustre and it said: "Well, we have to plow." No one disagrees, but if you are committed to climate action and you are committed to active transportation, then certainly we can work with the City of Whitehorse to figure that out.

In that same vein, I think about how — if anyone in this room has ever experienced this — trying to go on a bicycle, for example, across the Alaska Highway. There are times that there are berms higher than my waist that you have to go up and over. So, you have to go up a berm to get down to the highway surface and you cross the highway and then you have to go up a berm to get to the paved path on the other side. When you hear that folks are riding their bike from up there, then that is a commitment when they have to cross the Alaska Highway — or it is a commitment when they go down that path on the side of the highway when it has just been plowed because it is almost impassable.

Then I think about things like — it was brought to our attention that active transportation isn't just an environmental thing. It is a poverty thing and an addictions thing, because sometimes people can't afford to drive and sometimes people aren't able to drive. So, how do we make sure that it is inclusive of them?

Then I think about things like — you know, we did this amazing thing. We said hormone replacement therapy would be covered under Yukon Health for trans folks and then it took months and months and months and months for the Yukon government to let pharmacies and doctors know that. So, that entire time, doctors and pharmacies didn't mean to be a barrier to people, but they were a barrier because they were trying to follow the rules because no one had told them they had changed. They wonder how that was possible. How is it

possible that such an important change was made but we didn't communicate it outward? I think that, again, is another reflection of the last two years.

I mean, I'm going to say it in a different way than my colleague, but the one takeaway — no, there are lots of "one takeaways". Another takeaway from the last two years has been the value and the importance of communication in making sure it's clear and understandable. I have to say that this is reflected in all things. How do we make sure that we're saying what we mean and mean what we say and it's easy to understand?

Sometimes, going through — even just going through the budget document and trying to figure out what this means, what this looks like, what the future is becomes challenging.

In 2016, I told this government that this was their opportunity to lay out their vision for the future. It is, it was, it still is, and I look at this budget and I think — okay, well, these are the things that are missing and there's more. There are more things that are missing, and we'll talk about it in a department-by-department way. But when we look at a budget, we need to ask ourselves: How is this going to affect or benefit the people around us? How does this make things better? So, it's not about big, flashy line items; it's about the small things. It's about getting a social worker in a community or it's about having access to a mental health worker. It's about making sure that the partnerships that have been built continue to be expanded so there is more access to housing, and it's about making sure that we direct ATCO to a rate review, because there are actions that we can take.

When we talk about our own decisions and how they affect those around us, there are lots of questions about how we go forward. There are great things in the budget; there are. There are good things in the budget, but then there are the things that leave me wanting. Again, the reason why we're not a coalition government is because I can say these things. It's interesting. The take from the member for the Yukon Party is — he's new to the opposition, but typically, you just vote against. That's what you do in the opposition; you vote against the budget as a whole. There might be things you like in them, but you vote against it as a whole. The difference, of course, since last spring is that I now vote in favour of budgets. I have to remind myself occasionally because I don't want to fall back into old patterns and it's a bit stressful. There are things within the budget that we like, but there are things in the budget that leave me looking for more.

So, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues. I want to know the solutions to the problems that exist, because I think they do exist. I'm convinced that, in this Chamber, we have lots of people who care deeply and lots of people who can direct things in a different way. So, with that, Speaker, I will take my leave.

Mr. Istchenko: I would like to take this opportunity again to stand in the House and thank my family for all their support — and my friends and the constituents of the great riding of Kluane for their support.

It has been a busy winter. I have heard from many constituents across Kluane on a number of issues. Many of

those concerns I look forward to raising in the Legislature during this Sitting. As we move through 2022, I look forward to connecting with you, continuing to raise issues, and hopefully finding solutions to your concerns — and hopefully in person now that the restrictions are being lifted and we are heading back to some measure of normal.

I continue to hear from Yukoners about their concerns around the way the government has made decisions and imposed restrictions. Many feel that their concerns have not been heard by this government. Others feel that the government is not paying enough attention to areas that matter: affordability, housing, the shortage of teachers, highway maintenance, and the shortage of doctors.

The Official Opposition has continued to press the government on their plan to recruit more family doctors to the territory. We have continued to urge the government to work with the Yukon Medical Association to improve recruitment and make it more attractive for doctors to move to the Yukon. In addition, we have requested that the government reinstate the dedicated physician recruitment website that they cancelled several years ago. Family doctors do remain in short supply, and the Yukon government has failed to do enough to encourage doctors to move to the Yukon. We have seen the effects of this doctor shortage in Kluane. We still do not have a resident family doctor in the area, and I will continue to advocate for permanent physician services for our riding.

Mr. Speaker, as you may be aware, the Yukon Party Official Opposition has been advocating for a number of years — many years — to the territorial, federal, and US governments to have funding reinstated to continue work on the Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway, which runs from the Alaska Highway border at Beaver Creek to Haines Junction and from Haines Junction to Haines, Alaska. Last November, in 2021, the government passed the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, which authorizes funding for the reconstruction of the Shakwak portion of the highway — the Yukon portion. The Yukon government really needs to get working with their counterparts in Canada and the Alaska government to understand what steps need to be taken in order to get an agreement with the US and secure funding. It is noticeable in the road conditions on the north Alaska Highway. Since the 2016 election, there have been zero capital dollars invested, and you can sure see that.

Northwestel's three-year community project will see Internet upgrades to communities across the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. I am very, very happy and supportive of Northwestel for all the work that they are doing. I look forward to what this will mean for the residents across the riding and I look forward to this work commencing, coming up here in the spring. I have inquired, on behalf of residents of the Pine Lake agriculture subdivision and in Mendenhall, and it looks like Pine Lake is included in the scope of the project, and Northwestel has submitted a change request that Mendenhall be included. I am thankful for the relationship that I have with Northwestel.

I was pleased to take part recently, finally, in a Zoom meeting on the new Kluane Lake school, for which planning

was initiated back in 2015-16 by the previous government. We have seen budget dollars every year for it but not much done. I am disappointed that the project will not be completed until 2026. I am sure that many residents are also. I will continue to advocate for this timeline to be moved up and for construction to begin as soon as possible.

As many of you are also aware, the government is currently in the process of closing the Silver City landfill among a number of others across the territory. I will continue to push the government on behalf of the residents to create a regional agreement that works for the residents of this area to ensure that they are not left without access to solid-waste services.

I wrote to the Minister of Community Services in February to follow up on a review of the Yukon fire marshal's fire suppression and rescue resources distribution, and I am going to continue to advocate on behalf of constituents to ensure that the government moves forward with recommendations that emphasize meaningful consultations. I think that goes back to our regional landfills too. You can't go to a community and tell them what you're doing; you have to go to the community, Mr. Speaker, and you have to listen. You have to listen to those people and alleviate the ongoing issues.

So, the Yukon has experienced above-average snowfalls across the territory this winter and an increase in dangerous driving conditions between the communities. My colleagues and I have heard numerous concerns from constituents about the length of time between snow clearing on many highways and suggestions that maintenance was delayed due to the staffing shortages that were brought on by the vaccination mandate put in place by the government. I understand that the operational staff had a heavy workload and I would like to thank them for all the work that they do.

Yukoners have seen a sharp increase in prices across the territory. I have asked the question as fuel prices continue to rise. Prices at the pump and for home-heating fuel are at an all-time high, as well as the cost for electricity and for firewood. I am sure that we will have much more to say, whether it be in Question Period or when it comes to debate with the individual ministers.

The government doesn't seem to have any plans in place to deal with these increases, and there is no end in sight. I don't see anything in the budget. That's why I asked that question in Question Period today.

I don't believe that the Liberal government really understands how devastating the pandemic has been on our businesses in the Kluane riding, especially those in the tourism industry. It's going to take a few years for many of these businesses to rebound. I really want to recognize those businesses throughout the riding that have gone to great lengths to deliver these services to residents and travellers. I have had conversations throughout the winter about some of the programs. The programs are appreciated, but the late delivery on a lot of the programs is a huge issue with them. The increased costs — I asked in Question Period today — some of the businesses up and down the highway — if the tourism industry doesn't rebound, they are looking at maybe just shutting down for the winter. If we don't have a gas station in

a community, that's horrible. It has to be affordable for them to stay open.

I will switch gears a little bit to land development and land prices. That has turned out to be a huge issue here in the last little while. We have spoken about it and we have heard about it and we have read it in the Premier's budget. Even his budget says that everything costs too much. Lot prices have skyrocketed. I have written the minister. We have lots away from the community, seven- to 10-acre lots that were selling for \$35,000. Actually, I think one sold for \$35,000 this year. Right after that, the other seven applicants got a letter saying to accept \$130,000 to \$180,000 for these lots or you can appeal it. How did they go up that much with no explanation? That's not affordable for anyone. You get this lot, but you still have to figure out where you are going to get your water from and where you are going to get your sewer from. You have to hire someone to build a road in there. You have to connect to the grid. It's not affordable for anyone.

There is a shortage of lots — we have heard this across the Yukon, but in my riding too, there's a shortage of subdivisions. Our municipality and our First Nation governments are working hard to see this growth and availability through our official community plans and moving forward.

I could go on and on about the budget. I am sure we will have plenty of opportunity. Some of the issues are in my critic role in Environment, whether it be with rate-change proposals, whether it be with the cost of camping fees going up. People can barely afford the gas to go camping and then their fees are going up, and seniors are getting picked on too. They're not happy.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I did take the time to read through the Premier's budget in detail over the weekend, and I was showing it to a few of my constituents. One of my constituents said, "I thought they did that. I thought they did that." And I'm like, "No, it's just a reannouncement of another reannouncement." There's not much vision in this for the future of the Yukon. There's a lot of money being promised, but the question is: Will anything get done?

There are always good things in budgets — absolutely. The Leader of the Third Party said that. I won't be supporting this budget, but there are some good things in there.

I would just like to end with this: The Yukon is becoming a place where families cannot really afford to live. In this budget, I don't see any plans to address affordability. That's a major disappointment for those in my riding and across the territory.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today, Mr. Speaker, as I always do. I look forward to the rest of the Sitting when we can get into the budget more in detail and really address some of the concerns brought forward by Yukoners. So, I will not be supporting this budget, like I said earlier.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand up to speak about the 2022-23 budget. As critic for Health and Social Services for the Yukon NDP, I will be speaking to this department's budget today.

Just recently, I spent my time in my riding of Old Crow. While I was there, I heard many stories about the needs of our citizens, from programming for youth to ongoing independent living supports for elders and seniors to affording the rising cost of living in a small, isolated community. There is no shortage of gaps in the Yukon government's services. Since I came into this role, I have heard countless experiences each day about Yukoners who are not getting the services they need. They have expressed their concerns directly to me and to this government, but their concerns and experiences are not reflected in this budget. As we come out of the pandemic, Yukoners' needs have grown — in support for their mental health, in accessing treatment on the land and restoring family relationships, and in maintaining their general health.

This budget does not show clear goals that would help Yukoners. Our young people in the territory are at an even greater risk of facing complex struggles with overcoming the adverse challenges that are unique to youth in the territory. It is something that many of us in this Chamber may struggle to understand.

At a time when the Yukon is facing multiple emergencies, this government is cutting funding in essential areas of health and is not making any serious investments in the future of health care in the territory.

The first step of addressing crises like the substance use emergency is making sure people don't fall through the cracks of the health care system. There are so many ways that this government could have reached and supported Yukoners who use substances, but they are instead choosing to ignore the problem.

There are still thousands of Yukoners who do not have a family doctor. The territory's only public walk-in clinic closed last year, which means that the only place many Yukoners can get health care is at the Whitehorse General Hospital emergency department. This has a huge cost to hospital workers, to the hospital, and most of all to the people who have to wait for hours at the ER just for basic care. There is no clear strategy or new money in this budget to increase access to family doctors, nurse practitioners, or other health care practitioners.

We all know that equitable access to primary care physicians is the social determinant of health for Yukoners, especially for our new babies and the aging population. The *Putting People First* report said that primary care should follow Yukoners from birth until death, but this government is telling Yukoners they should give up on ever getting primary care.

There is no money devoted to the ongoing lack of midwifery in the territory. Right now, Yukoners who give birth are not able to access the services of midwives in the Yukon and there is no plan in place in this budget to close that gap. Yukoners want to give birth in the territory, close to their family and support systems. Expectant parents and matriarchs in our communities can only dream of their babies' first cry at birth to be within our traditional territories. This will not be possible for expecting parents who want a home delivery until midwifery becomes prioritized in the Yukon.

The aging population is also growing in the Yukon. This budget shows no plan to support our seniors and elders. Home care is losing almost \$850,000 and continuing care is losing a total of \$1.9 million compared to the 2021-22 budget. How will these cuts support aging in place, safe long-term care homes, and other elder supports?

After two years of isolation, high risk to COVID, and completely full long-term care homes, why is this government taking money away from seniors and elder care? If you live in the communities, support for seniors becomes even more limited, which is something we have been hearing directly from Yukon seniors and elders. Our seniors and elders deserve high-quality care that empowers them to live independently and in their traditional territory, should they choose to.

A major theme of this budget is the Yukon's communities losing out on health care. Community nursing is losing \$757,000 compared to last year's forecast. Community health services is losing \$200,000 compared to last year. These massive cuts will only make difficult situations in communities worse.

We know that nurses are the first responders to so many kinds of health issues in Yukon communities. They work long hours and often have very little support. Burnout is at an all-time high, after two years of the pandemic, especially for nurses in the communities. On top of more doctors, RNs, LPNs, nurse practitioners, and other health care workers are needed now more than ever at community health centres, but this year, they are going to lose out.

How will this government fill vacant positions if it is cutting funds and making a tough job even harder for front-line health workers? On top of this, many Yukoners who live in the communities continue to have to take trips down to Whitehorse for all extended health care. From optometry to dentistry to physiotherapy, folks who do not live in Whitehorse are forced to cram medical appointments, grocery shopping, and sometimes vet appointments all into one or two days of travel each month.

I represent the only fly-in community in the territory. Access to services is even more limited, as citizens and residents have to access services in Whitehorse. All forms of travel from Old Crow require planned coordination of securing house sitters, finding childcare, securing an escort to travel when required, filing leave from work, pet sitting, and securing extra funds for travel and for more. That's just the preparation. Once citizens are in Whitehorse, they have to rush from appointment to appointment, attend dental appointments with no vision from having their pupils dilated just an hour before, grocery shop while half their face is numb, and rushing to fill all the prescriptions they need before returning home.

There was a real opportunity for this government to invest in sending optometrists, dentists, physiotherapists, and more to the communities for regular checkups. Instead, the government is keeping important health care centralized in Whitehorse and is taking \$1 million away from medical travel subsidies.

In drafting this budget, the government had so many wonderful examples to look to for inspiration and ideas that work. Many Yukon First Nations have taken health care into

their own hands to fill the gap and health care services that the Yukon government won't address. For example, after years of the Yukon government stalling, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation responded to the addictions crisis and is now creating their own managed alcohol program. This government has known about the need for an alcohol treatment program for many years. So many Yukoners who have accessed the limited space and low support at the Sarah Steele Building have told this government directly what needs to change. This need will only continue to grow if the government does not create a managed alcohol program. Instead of applying for funding for programs like this, the budget shows that the Yukon is going to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars for substance use and addictions programming from the federal government. Why didn't this government apply for this important funding, especially during a substance use emergency?

This government has told Yukoners that they have devoted a big chunk of money toward the substance use emergency, but how much of that money is new? Why did it take so many years and such a crisis to act? By itself, the amount of money for this emergency looks great, but in practice and in the budget, it is business as usual. With cuts across important health care services and an increase in mental wellness and substance use that is less than even \$1 million, how does this government expect to truly help Yukoners? We are facing a real emergency. Lives are being lost and this government is not doing enough. The only major budget changes we are seeing are cuts in vital health care services and a few small increases here and there. It is unclear what this promised money will include. Given that nothing has really changed since the government declared the emergency, how is this budget any different from previous years?

Another responsibility that this government continues to ignore is the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. The shelter is nowhere in this budget. Workers at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter are burned out and overworked. Shelter clients often talk about not feeling safe and not feeling supported. Many of them are struggling with complex grief from substance use and mental health concerns, but the government is making no major investments to support vulnerable Yukoners who access the shelter. This government has to accept that the shelter is their responsibility. By avoiding investing in this space and these critical services, Yukoners who need the most help will continue to struggle without support.

I continue to hear from Yukoners throughout the territory about the lack of support that they feel when they reach out for help. It is time that this government listens and truly hears what Yukoners are asking for.

I want to close by reminding the members opposite that health care should not be political. It is unfortunate that the government will not make the important decisions and investments to keep Yukoners healthy until they face so much political pressure that they have no choice but to respond. This was the case with dental care. It was the case with the supervised consumption site. It was, and still is, the case with safe supply. It is the case with the drug poisoning crisis and it

is the case with mental health. This government has not responded to Yukoners' needs for right now and for the future.

We are at a pivotal point in time where we can implement change that enhances the quality of life for all Yukoners by improving access to services and supports and shaping service delivery to meet people where they are at. Yukoners want to feel heard, they want to feel listened to, and they want to feel supported, no matter where they live in the Yukon.

When we work to meet the immediate and long-term needs of the people and uphold commitments, great change happens.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Mr. Hassard: This is outside of the normal timeline for introducing visitors and guests in the Legislature. I will ask all members to join me in welcoming someone who certainly wasn't a stranger to this Assembly — Elaine Taylor. With her today is her son, Will. I would like to ask everyone to thank them.

Applause

Speaker's statement

Speaker: For future points of order, I would ask that members please just pass me a note and then I will make an announcement.

We'll continue proceeding with the Minister of Community Services.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Today I rise to talk about our government's 2022-23 budget. Mr. Speaker, remarks in this Legislature do not roll off the tongue in a vacuum. They are shaped by our environment, by our joys, our triumphs, and what ails us. It's not surprising that these remarks have undergone dramatic changes since the first draft 10 days or so ago. I am, of course, incredibly moved by the stoicism and selflessness of my constituents over the last couple of years. They have sacrificed so much for their friends and neighbours and their families and, at considerable effort, allowed the Yukon to weather the pandemic better than most places in the country. I thank them for that from the bottom of my heart. I am forever grateful for their support.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the historic times we seem to be living through are not done with us yet. If you thought we would become inured to change over the last couple of years, think again. Yes, our way of life was uprooted in the face of the COVID-19 virus in early 2020. Happily, we are transitioning into a new era where most of us can resume our social life, work, and travels with good sense and caution instead of inconvenience, trepidation, and, for many, fear. I believe that confidence and our resumption of a social society will grow as we move into the summer. Remarkably, the whole world-altering affair can now be summarized in very few words. COVID-19 snuck up on societies in the way that global disease does and started killing people exponentially in a frightening way that forced us to fundamentally change our way of life. Scientists set about decoding and understanding this new threat.

Society developed countermeasures and safety processes. Most of us found the discipline to wear masks and follow the century-old practice of quarantine or keeping our distance with an eye toward protecting those of us most vulnerable to the disease and its effects.

We waited for the arrival of wondrous new medicine, which, thanks to science, technology, and the exhaustive efforts of medical professionals and scientists, showed up in record time.

As survivors, we are now moving into a new era. As joyful as this is, it is also bittersweet. Yesterday, Johns Hopkins University announced that the global death toll from COVID-19 has now eclipsed six million people. It behooves us to remember those who are not here sharing this moment with us.

As spring races toward us and communities around the western world shift to a resumption of social society, relief is palpable — or it was. As I have said many times during the pandemic, the only certainty these days is uncertainty. Vladimir Putin's sick, unprovoked, illegal, and world-altering invasion of Ukraine on February 24 sent us careening down a new path of anger, pain, fear, and loathing. My thoughts are with the people of Ukraine and its courageous president as war, once again, kindles in Europe.

I visited Odessa and Yalta in 1999, and I am heartsick at the possibility of the destruction of those remarkable cities that were so full of history, but, even more so, I am thinking of the residents I met there who were so full of optimism, hope, and energy in the early days of their nation's independence. Their lives have been turned upside-down by an unconscionable act of aggression that cannot be tolerated.

Surprisingly, in the face of a growing list of war crimes in the Ukraine, I find myself reflecting on some of the good that has come from the pandemic. We have seen the face of real tyranny. I believe that, in the face of that and also having come through the pandemic, we have all become more resilient, more appreciative of our family, our friends, our neighbours, and the free society that we have forged together.

I believe we are more willing to stand up for our collective values. That's going to be important in the coming weeks and months.

Navigating a pandemic, a battered supply chain, the fallout from war in Europe, and resulting unprecedented economic measures during a time of unprecedented territorial growth and infrastructure investment isn't going to be easy. It will require firm, consistent, and decisive leadership. Our government's mettle has been tested over the last couple of years. Through it all, we have learned some things, and that hard-won experience lies at the foundation of this budget.

The document that we're discussing this afternoon is about strengthening Yukon society. It is about supporting and widening our recovery as we shuck off the vestiges of this latest pandemic surge. It is about lessening our dependence on carbon fuels in the face of worsening global climate change.

Now, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because, just recently, we heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition. He started talking about actually subsidizing fuel prices,

echoing the sentiment of Alberta, which they hold in high esteem. I want to know: Is the Leader of the Official Opposition withdrawing his support for carbon pricing, a support he stated in the last election? I think it's an important question. Does he support carbon pricing or not?

We know that he wants to tie the territory to diesel through a new power plant for the next 30 years or more, at untold millions of dollars, and inhibit our ability to move to a green economy. So, we see again the Leader of the Official Opposition saying things — he supports the carbon pricing, but he also supports subsidizing gas prices. He can't have it both ways. Leadership requires making tough choices, doing what you say you're going to do. We're not seeing that. I would like to know where the Yukon Party stands on this. Now it's sort of in doubt, and I look forward to that explanation sometime in the future.

So, this budget is about lessening our dependence on carbon fuels in the face of worsening global climate change. It's also about building homes for Yukoners in the face of unprecedented population growth and economic expansion. It's about improving public health services for all Yukoners.

The goal is a brighter, greener, and more equitable future for all. We have avoided the worst economic and health impacts of COVID-19 when compared to other G7 countries. Our economic support is unprecedented in the country. We led the country, in terms of our support for small business, and we heard today that business feels under siege, and we certainly understand that. We have heard the same thing, and we're working very closely with our business community to make sure that we can navigate these waters, because there is lots of change happening.

We have had the most robust supports for small business, for Yukon businesses, throughout the pandemic. We spent tens of millions of dollars making sure that they will survive this unprecedented global crisis. We have provided more money per business than any other place in the country, and we are proud of that. We know how important small business is to this territory. We have also lowered business taxes and kept them low, as the Leader of the Official Opposition noted in his remarks. We have no intention of changing them.

Mr. Speaker, under our leadership, we have seen 12-percent growth in the territory, leading not only the nation but most of the G7 countries. That is because of the strong stewardship of our Finance minister and of the team here on these benches. We have made historic investments in infrastructure that supports small businesses — roads and bridges. We paved the Dawson airport. Not only that, we actually have invested in and expanded the number of registered airports in the territory. In this budget, there is a \$100-million investment in Whitehorse International Airport so that it actually serves the territory's business interests and its people better. That is unprecedented investment in air travel.

In technology and redundant fibre — fibre to the home — we worked very hard to make sure that we had coverage for satellite Internet throughout rural Yukon as well. We are not ignoring any of these things. We are working very, very hard to make sure that we serve Yukoners' interests.

We are also making investments in tourism, which is an industry that has been totally ravaged by the pandemic. I think that, with Condor coming back and seeing Air North flying to Toronto, we are starting to see green shoots in that industry as well. We hope it continues.

We have avoided the worst economic and health impacts of COVID-19 when compared to other territories, provinces, states, and actually G7 countries. As I said, our economic supports during the pandemic were the most generous in the country and were accessed by 500 Yukon businesses and organizations. I know that my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, will be able to expand on that exponentially. That cutting-edge support, leading the country again — another thing that the territory is leading in — has kept us in the game. In 2020, as noted, we had the strongest GDP growth in the country. We have the lowest unemployment rate. Tourism businesses have been affected around the world, as I noted. Ours have been sheltered and are set to ride the coming recovery. Northern Vision has enough confidence in the future that it is building the first Hyatt hotel in northern Canada.

Condor, as I said, is flying to the Yukon again from Germany, and it is going to do so eventually on a brand new runway that will be much more capable of handling jets and that will actually require less money to maintain over the long run. This isn't a stop-gap measure; this isn't kicking problems back down the street; this is tackling the hard problems that the territory faces and making our territory much more resilient and much less expensive to operate.

Of course, we know that we are not quite out of woods yet, despite the daylight cresting the horizon. Tourism will gradually improve, but it won't be an immediate return to pre-pandemic levels. It will take some time, and we are here to support industry as it makes that transition.

We continue to follow the advice of our health care professionals as we have done throughout the pandemic. I am sure that all members of this House are aware that the conservative Leader of the Opposition puts the opinions and conspiracies of the trucker freedom convoy ahead of the scientific medical advice of our chief medical officer of health and her resolute staff. We have heard it again and again — Question Period last week. His party and supporters have also backed a constitutional challenge to the state of emergency that kept Yukoners safe. That court challenge has cost the territory \$3 million so far, Mr. Speaker — money that could have been put to far better use during this crisis.

In line with the erratic “open, closed, open, closed” divisive approach taken by his fellow conservatives in Alberta, the opposition leader has recently demanded that we unilaterally lift all health protections and simply pretend that the pandemic is over, even as more Yukoners die from the virus. Well, we are not going to do that. We have adopted a very measured, methodical approach to implementing the restrictions, and we are now using a very measured and methodical approach to removing the restrictions that we have had in place. We have adopted a more rational and planned implementation withdrawal of the measures in the territory that have kept Yukoners safe. We are continuing that measured

approach as we move toward lifting all pandemic restrictions in the coming weeks. We will do so according to the advice of those who have spent their careers in health care. Should further difficulties arise, we have shown ourselves ready to take hard, decisive moves to protect Yukoners from the worst effects of the global pandemic, because that is the leadership that we have chosen to provide and we are going to continue to provide that leadership.

That approach has proven effective in protecting Yukoners and their businesses. The Yukon's record growth through the pandemic puts us miles ahead of the rest of the country. Strategic investments within this budget will help keep it that way, as will our partnerships with many Yukon First Nations and our productive relationship with the federal government.

Replacement of the Nisutlin Bay bridge in Teslin comes to mind, for example. It's an enormous project that has been long hoped for. It was delayed many, many years ago because the partnerships, the collaboration — the consultation just wasn't there. Today it's underway. We have worked with the First Nation in the community. We are optimistic that we'll get that project in place.

Overall, our government is building a stronger future for the territory by investing in resilient infrastructure to meet the needs of Yukon communities while moving forward toward our climate change action targets, which are measurable and reportable. We're making the most substantial investments in renewable energy in the Yukon in more than a decade. That's vision, Mr. Speaker — looking ahead to the future of energy. I would be remiss if I did not thank the Government of Canada for its Investing in Canada infrastructure program, which has funded many vital infrastructure and green energy projects.

I would also like to thank Yukon's past MP Larry Bagnell and current MP, Dr. Brendan Hanley, for continuing to lobby the government for such funding as well as for flexibility in its application. It has been absolutely critical in making up for the deficit in infrastructure that we've seen in the territory.

This budget contains funding for more solar projects, which will help smaller communities reduce the amount of diesel that they use for power generation. Our dark winters, of course, will limit solar during that season, but reducing diesel generation for the summer and some of the fall and spring is a worthy goal. Everything we can do to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels is essential for the territory going forward. It helps limit the impacts of inflation from these fossil fuels, which are a roller coaster of prices. I mean, if you just look to two years ago, they were about \$4 a barrel; now they're up to \$130 a barrel, and it's just going to continue to oscillate that way, so we have to protect ourselves from those oscillations and that's what this government is doing. That's the vision, the leadership, that we're providing. It's actually moving the entire Yukon economy away from diesel and making our already predominantly green grid more so. We are in a climate emergency, and every action to reduce fossil fuel helps, Mr. Speaker.

Before moving on, I would like to acknowledge the splendid work of Solvest, a local company at the forefront of

new solar technology and a key player in our fight against man-made climate change.

It is great to see innovators like this take root in our territory, and it's our collective shift toward green fuel sources that is opening up opportunities for these companies in the future. What makes their technology, such as biomass or solar, more economical for people? It's higher prices for fossil fuels brought about by carbon pricing. You can't have one — you can't have the innovation without the other.

Again, we're seeing increases in fossil fuel prices. The oscillation that I talked about this time is a part of the fallout from the war in Europe. The work we're doing to shift away from fossil fuels is essential to protect ourselves from the ravages of inflation. It is part of the elegance of the carbon tax that has finally been endorsed by the Yukon Party, the Conservative Party of Canada, and indeed all federal parties — or at least I had thought it had. Today I have questions; I would like to see answers.

The most important part of our current green energy investments is the Atlin hydro project, which will add enough clean energy to power thousands of homes. We're fully aware that this is not a silver bullet and many other green energy projects are needed, but it's a critical investment and key to the implementation of *Our Clean Future*.

I'm sure that my colleague, the Minister responsible for Yukon Energy Corporation, will delve into more of the green energy generation projects they have coming, but this government is also pushing a green agenda in many other ways, all of which are outlined in *Our Clean Future*, which can be found online.

I encourage everyone to have a look at this document, which is another Yukon initiative. It is an acknowledged leader in the country. Once again, we're seeing the Yukon lead the country in the work we're doing here. It's absolutely extraordinary what this tiny little territory, from reconciliation to green energy, housing, childcare — this territory is leading the nation. It led the nation in terms of this vaccination program, something we should be proud of.

So, I encourage everyone to have a look at this document, which, as I said, is another Yukon initiative that is an acknowledged leader in the country. You will notice a focus on transitioning our internal combustion vehicles to electric vehicles, and, true to form, we're in the process of transitioning Yukon government's fleet as we speak. We have also just put electric charging stations in place along the Klondike Highway to facilitate further private sector adoption of this quickly evolving technology.

Over time, we will add more charging stations to the mix. The goal is electrifying all of our highways throughout the territory and hoping that our neighbours in BC and the NWT will do likewise, thus linking us to the rest of the country.

We also have obtained universal support for the better building program among Yukon municipalities. The low-interest home and commercial property renovation program that has been talked about for years will now come into being shortly after the needed tax amendment passes this House during this Sitting. This program, which is another critical

component of *Our Clean Future*, will make it cheaper for Yukoners to run their homes and commercial buildings and will lessen the pressure on our hydro grid, free up green energy, and actually make Yukoners less susceptible to inflation from high fuel prices.

It offers low-interest loans of up \$50,000 for private residences and \$100,000 for commercial properties. I committed to work through the implementation challenges with municipal governments and have done so over the past few months. Last weekend, the Association of Yukon Communities endorsed our approach. I am very grateful for the work that they did on this with me. The collaboration has been very fruitful, and I really appreciate all of the work that the committee did in coming to an arrangement with us. Our hope is that we will be able to launch that program later in 2022. We were hoping to get it done sooner, but we will get there. I am really happy with the progress we have made.

Some of the effects of climate change that we are witnessing in the Yukon will unfortunately have a negative impact on this budget and others for years to come. There is the problem of melting permafrost playing havoc with our highways and buildings. Last year's unprecedented flooding, and the largest flood mitigation in the territory's history that I launched to deal with it, was expensive. As I have said throughout my years as a minister in this government, man-made climate global warming is real, and it has real costs, and I have the receipts to prove it. These costs are still ticking up as we continue our flood recovery and mitigation efforts with affected communities. We don't yet know the full cost of the recovery and mitigation effort, but we do know that the 2022-23 budget will be affected.

There is also the very real possibility that we will see some flooding again this year. While initial estimates suggest that it will not reach last year's level, we stand prepared to respond to protect Yukoners and property —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please.

The member is making a statement. Please be respectful and mindful when a member is speaking and has the floor. Thank you.

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

As I was saying, there is also the very real possibility that we will see some flooding again this year. While initial estimates suggest it will not reach last year's levels, that could change, of course, and we stand prepared to respond to protect Yukoners and property, much as we did last year so successfully.

I will also note that the Government of Yukon is preparing a request for financial assistance from Canada's disaster financial assistance arrangement, which we hope will offset some of the costs of responding to this natural disaster.

We also have the threat of wildfires, which we have seen ravage the Pacific Northwest over the last few years, exacerbated by changes wrought by man-made global

warming. Devastating fires have, so far, bypassed the Yukon, but we need only look slightly south of the border to Telegraph Creek, in 2018, for a reminder of what can happen. As the global temperature ticks upward, so do the odds of having a destructive fire. Luckily, the incredibly capable team of civil servants at the Protective Services branch are ready to deploy quickly to any flood or fire disaster we face.

We also have a freshly signed agreement with Yukon First Nations Wildfire that adds to our capacity to respond to natural disasters. This new agreement with all 14 Yukon First Nations — a first for the territory — provides certainty for both the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations Wildfire for guaranteed work, unit crew availability, structure around the services provided, and commitments for training. I am sure that all elected members of this House would agree that we owe the folks in Protective Services, as well as Yukon First Nations Wildfire, a debt of gratitude for their work.

I was especially concerned by the floods last year, because we are in the grips of a housing crisis. The territory can't afford to lose any housing to natural disasters. Fortunately, our quick action and the incredible support received from the Canadian Armed Forces and other jurisdictions, combined with the stupendous efforts of local volunteers, prevented catastrophe. We didn't lose a single home.

I just met with Brigadier-General Godbout last week. We were discussing the situation this year. The communication lines are open, so we are ready to have those conversations, if and when we need them.

When it comes to housing, we committed to building more lots for future housing. Since 2016, we have averaged about 100 lots a year. Last year, our residential construction hit \$267 million, shattering the previous record, set in 2020, of \$200 million. That's a lot, but with our economy growing at record levels and our population growth pegged at 12.1 percent, we must do even better. In the coming five years, we are on track to build an average of 150 lots every year. Over that time, we will spend \$255 million on housing development.

We are about to put 77 lots out to market in the next couple of weeks. This release of lots includes 38 single-family and 32 townhouse lots in Whistle Bend. It also includes four single-family infill lots in Logan subdivision and three residential lots in Mayo. Releasing these lots will allow the new owners to advance work on properties in the 2022 building season. When complete, Whistle Bend will be home to up to 10,000 people. In the coming year, we will build 97 lots in Whistle Bend, and we are proceeding with lots in rural Yukon as well. In total, we are spending more than \$30 million on lot development in the Yukon this year. About \$27 million will be spent by the Yukon government, split evenly between Whitehorse and rural communities. We are also supporting development of the Kwanlin Dün expansion in Copper Ridge with more than \$11 million.

We are moving ahead with Yukon's bid to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games, along with our partner, the City of Whitehorse. These games will provide an opportunity to further add to our housing development and to expand our recreational

facilities to meet the increased demand that we are seeing across the board.

A committee has been struck, chaired by former Yukon Premier Piers McDonald, and is currently exploring the housing and venue needs for the games. They are doing a remarkable job, and I really want to thank Piers and his team for all the work that they have done on this so far.

There will be costs required for the bid development of the 2022-23 budget, but the amount is still being worked on and refined. It is up to the Bid Committee to develop and propose a budget. We are looking to dramatically improve the city's recreational facilities through this event, setting the territory up to be even better equipped for active living than it is now. This is going to be an exciting event for the Yukon, and the legacy of the facilities and housing that it brings to the territory will be felt for decades to come. Having the eyes of Canada on Yukon and thousands of people to shop at our local businesses and to eat at our restaurants is an opportunity for our growing territory.

Over the last five years, we have earned a reputation as a national leader in reconciliation, education, green energy, land use planning, and technological innovation. The games will provide the draw that will let us showcase all of the incredible things that we are doing to the rest of the country.

We are advancing our waste management modernization plan for our communities, which includes the user-pay model and supervised, controlled waste management facilities throughout the territory. Once regional landfill facilities are in place, we will continue to work with residents within the affected catchment area to make the transition to find ways to support this change.

Waste-generation rates in Canada and the Yukon are among the highest in the world. Waste-generation rates have climbed to roughly 900 kilograms for every person in the Yukon — 900 kilograms per person. As well, methane from landfills is a potent greenhouse gas that can be reduced by separating and composting organics properly. For example, according to its latest emission inventory, the City of Whitehorse landfill emissions are estimated to be greater than all of the city's corporate fossil fuel emissions combined. So, modernizing and improving the way we do our landfills is absolutely critical for the territory. We're going to close the loopholes so that people can't just go dumping their garbage in landfills without any supervision, and that's critical for the whole plan to work. So, despite calls from the opposition for government to back off and allow this environmental damage to continue, Yukoners can rest assured that we have no intention of doing so.

We're going to continue to provide the leadership that we have had over the last five years, and we're going to continue to do it in the future. We do what we say we're going to do. We do that because we owe it to ourselves and to our children to make the tough but necessary decisions for the benefit of the territory and its citizens.

So, I'm going to turn now quickly to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to highlight its work. A safe and healthy workplace is vital to a healthy society in general, and the recent rewriting of the workers' compensation

legislation during the Fall Sitting will go a long way toward strengthening protections for our working population. New legislation ranks among the most progressive workplace health and compensation legislation in the country — again, another example of the territory leading the country. It not only clarifies the roles of business and labour in workplace safety, but it also corrects some historic inconsistencies between compensation and occupational health and safety roles of the board and, by doing so, makes things clearer for workers and business, reducing some of the administrative burden and also improving services to injured workers.

I want to thank the board president and civil servants for developing this new legislation and for the work they do, every day, to ensure that Yukoners are safe on the job and that they're safely protected.

Before closing, I want to briefly acknowledge what many have referred to as the "shadow pandemic". The substance use health emergency has claimed far too many lives, and it is not something we can afford to shy away from. We need to work together to address substance use and make our communities healthy and safer. Our government has taken the most progressive steps toward substance use harm reduction in the history of the Yukon.

We are increasing the hours that Emergency Medical Services serves at Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. That initiative has increased responsiveness to those in need and reduced call volume from the bases, so improving the service in the face of the substance use health emergency made total sense.

We are also training and deploying Emergency Medical Services staff to check individuals' drugs where they are using to determine if they are laced with fentanyl and other dangerous additives. Staff will not seize the drugs. This isn't enforcement; this is really just a handout, help to make sure that people are using safely and that they know what they're getting into. This service will better inform addicts about what is in the drugs that they are using and try to encourage them to use them in the company of people who can help them if they overdose — to make good choices in the face of their addictions. This new service layers on our safe supply efforts, our safe injection site, and our recovery and mental health programs that are expanding to deal with this emergency. These programs were listed in *Putting People First* when we launched it in 2018. The former Health and Social Services minister worked very, very hard to get a safe injection site in place and actually had the place rented long before the last election. We are happy to be providing that service to Yukoners. It is part of many that we are doing to make sure that we change — to lead. Once again, we are leading the country in this regard, and we are continuing to provide services that keep Yukoners safe, which is a position that we have taken from the very beginning of the pandemic.

Our work will not stop there. We all can and must do more. I have every confidence in my colleague's — Minister McPhee's — expanding efforts to address this tragic situation we find ourselves in. With that, I will take my seat and thank everybody for their indulgence this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It is an absolute honour today to have an opportunity to address the Assembly. Before I delve into some of the key points addressing this year's 2022-23 budget, I would like to just reflect on a couple of current events that are happening and to share that with the Legislative Assembly.

First, I think it would be appropriate to thank the departments that I have responsibility for. We have asked a lot of the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Tourism and Culture, the Yukon Housing Corporation, as well as the Yukon Liquor Corporation — which has responsibilities as well for cannabis — and the Yukon Lottery Corporation — and just really thinking about the tremendous work that they've done preparing for this budget — but as a part of a team, how we've tried to work tirelessly to support Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

As well, as my colleague just touched on, I think it is important to recognize the current situation in Ukraine but moreover the impact on the Ukrainian diaspora here and what they're going through. I will just leave the Assembly with a little tale from our story from Friday night. We were at the Yukon Forum on Friday, and then I came into Whitehorse with the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, and there was a meeting that was called together with the Ukrainian community as well as a number of NGOs, including Yukon Cares and I'AFY. The idea was to give an update to the community concerning supports that we were working to put in place and to give an update on the current information that we were receiving from the Government of Canada concerning processes for refugees. What occurred, and was not planned, was that Chief Smith from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Chief Doris Bill from Kwanlin Dün First Nation, renowned Elder Judy Gingell, as well as Grand Chief Peter Johnston stopped into that meeting. In a very moving display of support, Chief Smith said a prayer and then made a commitment from Champagne and Aishihik First Nations that they would be giving \$5,000 to the Red Cross in support of humanitarian efforts.

Then Chief Doris Bill reflected on the long history between the Ukrainian people and the First Nation people — not just here in the Yukon but across Canada — and also reflected on what many would call the “granny hanky” and how that came to be, and it was something that came from Ukrainian culture, and in an extremely moving show of support, the Grand Chief and Elder Gingell, on her way to speak with the Ukrainian diaspora, purchased granny hankies for each one of the community and walked around and handed off to each individual and spoke about that connection. In the story, as well, Elder Gingell was wearing a jacket that has built into it her mother's favourite granny hanky, and she spoke about that connection. I don't know of many other days that I could have been prouder to be a Yukoner and to see that, knowing that our First Nation communities are going through lots of challenges, trials, and tribulations, but again, to open up their communities with open arms and to show that support was extremely moving. I just want to thank them for attending and for sending that message. I could tell by the emotion from the individuals in the Ukrainian community just how much that meant. There

was also a commitment that was made at the Yukon Forum from almost every First Nation leader who was there that they would be going back to their chief and council and looking at ways to support.

It's an honour to rise here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly again on the traditional territory of the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation as the Member for Porter Creek South. I'm thankful for the ongoing conversations with residents who provide insight into the issues that we must address here in the Yukon. There are many people from the riding deserving recognition for their efforts and contributions to the territory — first, Mr. Dave Mossop, who was the 2021 recipient of the Order of Yukon for his work in the area of conservation and environment in the Yukon, which led to the recovery of the peregrine falcon in this territory.

I would also like to say thank you to Mr. Harris Cox, who has been grooming winter trails around Whitehorse and contributing to the Braeburn Summer Camp for well over 20 years. I would also like to recognize Mr. Akhil Mohan, who received a letter of appreciation for his quick actions to save a man's life when he fell into the Yukon River and was recognized this past year.

Again, the Porter Creek Community Association board members — Taelor Mason, Susan Guatto, Randi Lopushinsky, Sarah Hougén, Julie Clarke, and Zara Soukoroff — who dedicate many hours to making our community a wonderful place.

Again, the Friends of McIntyre Creek board members, with the leadership of Dorothy Bradley, as they continue to tirelessly work for the important wildlife corridor here in our city.

The pandemic brought about unprecedented pressures for people, businesses, health care systems, and governments here in the Yukon, our country, and around the world. Despite the trials and tribulations spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, these individuals have made a difference, and they have forged ahead, just as our Liberal government has. Through the pandemic, we have monitored and adapted our supports to meet Yukoners' changing needs from immediate relief to adaptation and investment.

The actions that we have taken have guided our territory through the pandemic and kept our economy going. The Yukon is leading the nation as we witness unprecedented growth of our territory's population and economy. As the public health measures continue to lift, our government is turning its attention to recovery.

The \$1.97-billion budget outlines our government's plans to guide the next year of spending and contemplates our current realities and pressures. Of the budget, \$546 million is allocated to capital expenditures — a 26-percent increase over the 2020-21 budget. Here in the Yukon, we have seen extremely strong growth across the board. With population growth over the last five years at 12.1 percent, this is not only the highest in the country, but also the highest of all the G7 countries.

At the same time, our government has been investing at record levels in lot development. In this year's budget, we have included \$30 million to help meet the increasing demand for

residential lots. We are seeing the impact of our previous investments in lot development with the record-breaking residential building over the past two years, with \$200 million in residential building permits in 2020 and \$267 million in 2021.

Despite these record residential investments, the supply of housing in the territory has been playing catch-up. On a quarterly basis, the sales:new listings ratio — a measure of resale market tightness — has been above 60 since the second quarter of 2016. This is an indicator of the sellers' market, where homes are sold quickly after listing. The increase in price has made affordability a major concern for those looking to purchase, and we know that there is more to be done in order to meet the housing needs of Yukoners across the housing continuum. The solutions lie across multiple departments and through partnerships with First Nations, municipal and federal governments, NGOs, and the private sector.

We also know that these solutions need to be innovative. The team with Yukon Housing Corporation has been working extremely hard to implement the mandate items, as laid out by the Premier. This year, we will see a number of projects reach completion. Triplexes in Whitehorse, Mayo, and Watson Lake will see nine homes reach tenancy later this spring. In Whitehorse, the 47-unit mixed-use housing project at Fourth Avenue and Jeckell Street, and the Challenge Disability Resource Group's 45-unit Cornerstone development, are all set to welcome residents home this summer. The 84-unit Normandy seniors assisted-living facility is expected to reach completion this fall. Another 87 units will welcome people through the Boreal Commons development. In fact, tenants have begun to move into the first of three buildings. These projects are in addition to a number of other projects that have already come online over the past year, including Da Daghay Development Corporation's River Bend development. I would like to thank everyone involved in turning these projects into homes for Yukoners.

As we look ahead to the upcoming fiscal year, the Yukon Housing Corporation budget is almost \$67 million, almost \$46.8 million of which is capital. The capital expenditures will go to a number of loan and grant programs, construction projects, and renovations. The money will make life more affordable for Yukoners in need of support. It will help fill the gaps in the housing continuum. It will support communities across our territory through new housing developments, retrofits, and renovations of existing infrastructure. It will assist those who find themselves in need during extraordinary times, requiring emergency repairs.

New to this year's budget is \$2 million for the flood relief program, which will support those impacted by the unprecedented flooding last summer. A multi-department flood recovery working group has been working to identify the needs and develop a flood relief program for implementation. I think that there has also been over 50 site visits and analyses done, as we prepare to roll out that funding. This team has also been preparing for potential flooding into the future, because we know that the likelihood of these events is becoming more common as a result of climate change.

Our government declared a climate change emergency in the fall of 2019. Just under a year later, we launched *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. In the spring of 2021, we accelerated our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent to 45 percent by 2030. I believe that this is true leadership. We have put plans and strategies together. We have spoken to Yukoners at the grassroots level, municipalities, and First Nation governments. We have taken all of that information together, we've put it into a strong blueprint and plan, and now we're funding it. So, I would argue the fact that there is not a vision from this budget. This is another step in making that plan a reality, and this is one of the key challenges and issues of our time.

The Yukon Housing Corporation is continuing to invest in community housing stock retrofits to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Combined over 2019-20 and 2020-21, the project has resulted in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 52.7 tonnes and 42.61 percent in 24 units — significantly higher than the original 30-percent targeted reduction.

We are nearing completion on 10 more energy retrofits in the 2021-22 fiscal year and are targeting energy upgrades for an additional 10 units in 2022-23 and 2023-24. This year, we have allocated just over \$2.1 million to do this work. In addition, we are continuing to work with Yukon First Nations to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through \$1.6 million for the First Nation energy efficiency program. Since the program's inception, six First Nations have accessed this program. Renovations of existing Yukon housing stock is an ongoing process, as is the replacement of aged-out units. Combined, the Yukon Housing Corporation has set aside \$6.8 million to do this work. So, I think for anybody who is listening today, they will understand that this is a significant investment in housing and counters the narrative that is being brought forward by the opposition.

This is important work in ensuring our housing supply is kept updated and continues to be available, whether it be for those needing affordable housing or for employees in our communities. It is essential to support our communities through staff housing to ensure the essential services offered through the Yukon government continue to be available.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that, over the last year, I have made a point of meeting with development corporations and municipalities and the private sector throughout our communities and have offered up our support of the Yukon Housing Corporation to ensure that we can de-risk the financing of more housing stock — and whether that be to support professionals from Yukon government in those communities, staff who may be needed for First Nation governments or municipalities — so, these are the offers. We are looking at more partners, and we have more partners than the Housing Corporation has ever had.

That's why the work we are doing to incentivize the private sector investment in rural housing is necessary. A number of loan and grant programs are available to support the development of new rental and home ownership options in all communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the work that is being done in each community.

In Old Crow, work is set to begin on our Old Crow mixed-housing use housing project, which will see 10 homes become available in late 2022. A community housing needs assessment was completed in Dawson City in 2021. This assessment highlighted the need for rental housing. It identified a shortage of home ownership opportunities and showed the need for housing for vulnerable individuals. We set aside money in this year's budget to construct a duplex and to complete design work on a multi-family building on the old Korbo site, with the goal of beginning construction in the next fiscal year.

We are also supporting Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation in the construction of a men's shelter and a transition housing project with construction completion expected this year. In addition to the triplex previously mentioned in Mayo, which will be coming online this year, the Yukon Housing Corporation has provided funding to Yukon Soaps Company through the housing initiatives fund for the construction of two affordable homes. These units are also nearing completion. I can say that we have also reached out to the entrepreneur who has completed that project and have asked to begin conversations on the next projects that the group would like to undertake.

A duplex previously damaged as a result of a fire is also slated for replacement this fiscal year.

As part of the five-year capital plan, we will begin work with Selkirk First Nation to plan for the construction of a duplex in Pelly next year. Over the last three years, we have supported Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to build three new fourplexes, and we are set to replace a duplex, which has reached its end of life this year.

We also have demolition of units slated for Faro and Ross River, with replacements planned for this year and the following year in the respective communities. Again, we are looking for partnership with the private sector and First Nation development corporations.

The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations have taken on a number of projects over the last several years to ensure citizens are housed, with 18 homes completed and another six homes nearing completion, and there is an agreement in place to build an additional 20 homes, 10 of which will be affordable. Planning work will begin this year for a sixplex in Carcross and Teslin, with construction targeted for next year.

In Watson Lake, we have been engaged with the Town of Watson Lake and Liard First Nation on a supportive housing project. We are planning to begin construction this year on the old Lakeview Apartments site. These projects will provide a range of options across the housing continuum, and the Yukon Housing Corporation has been placing emphasis on the need to increase affordable housing for Yukoners.

While building new homes is part of the solution, we also recognize that the current availability is not meeting the need. That is why programs like the Canada-Yukon Housing benefit are so important. Since the program first launched in 2020, we have helped over 200 households, and as of December 2021, we are supporting 193 Yukon households in market rental

housing. As of January, there are no clients on our wait-list. Again, this program is supported through a cost-matching partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the fiscal year, and we are increasing the program funding by \$369,000 to just over \$1 million.

We continue to incentivize the building of affordable housing, and we have increased the funds available for the developer-build loan program, created the community housing development program, and we will continue to support projects through an increase to the amount available through the housing initiatives fund. Through these funds, we will support Kwanlin Dün First Nation to realize their goals and to build on their land. This will see over 180 lots in Copper Ridge development, and I would like to thank the team at Kwanlin Dün for the work that they have been able to do with us. Of course, right now, what we are looking at is we are investing with them into horizontal services. This will offset some of the capital costs on phase 1 and phase 2, with the opportunity of up to 180 lots.

We will also release Fifth and Rogers, and the Macaulay Lodge properties, in the near term for development. Again, Fifth and Rogers has the opportunity for over 300 units that can be brought to market.

There is a substantial amount of work being done by the team at Yukon Housing Corporation, and these strategic investments and partnerships will ensure that we have stable and affordable housing to support our territory's growing population now and into the future.

I look forward to the budget debate on this, because what I have been able to reflect on and illustrate is that some of the largest, if not the largest, investment in Yukon history in capital projects is the Yukon Housing Corporation. We are seeing fantastic lot development coming out of Community Services and Energy, Mines and Resources, but also now Yukon Housing Corporation. We are asking for more from the folks there, and they are delivering, as illustrated here again, on more projects and in partnerships that will help us deal with the immense growth that we are realizing.

As we emerge from the latest wave of COVID-19 and restrictions lift, we can begin to look ahead to recovery.

When we reflect on the past two years, I must take a moment again to recognize the immense efforts of the teams of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism and Culture. The programs delivered through these departments have supported our local businesses and our economy through unprecedented times.

Earlier today, we had some comments again from the opposition, and they reflected on — I think they were quoting the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Of course, within a political debate, each party picks comments, I would say, that support their position.

I would ask the support of the House to take a second to also quote the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, when we think about the work of this government. It's a letter we also received a short while ago. The Federation of Independent Business appreciates the Yukon government again in this work — did not introduce any new tax increases or

additional costs, however, we're seeing the impact from the pandemic, again, over the last two years. Of course, the reason I bring that up is because, when we talk about taxation and policy measures, it's important for folks to realize — when we talk about small tax or small business tax, we eliminate — we completely eliminated the small business tax in the previous mandate. So, again, you know, some of the strongest items that you can bring in to help, when it comes to the work of these folks.

Again, there were some comments that were made earlier by the opposition that spoke to some of the work that was done by the chamber. I would like to touch on that — again, you know, talked about the fact that our budget was predictable, and I think that is something that's strong and the Yukon chamber touched on that. They talked about the fact that our COVID supports for business and health care — almost \$10 million of COVID contingency — which, of course, if you go back to some of the comments made from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business — they must have missed that. These are key items for us that we have in place. Again, we're monitoring and adapting. So, we're looking to see where things are, and we can deploy this \$10 million again for health or for the business sector again, if needed.

They speak to the \$10-million COVID contingency that carries on this government's support programs for businesses that have not only led the country but, more importantly, have provided a lifeline for many Yukon businesses whose doors would have closed without the support — and remain in the budget as well.

Then the next line talks about how the budget, again — we have sustained our funding for the Economic Development department and the Tourism department — again, how important that was.

The next point from the Yukon chamber talked about moving the immigration unit to Economic Development, maintaining its budget, and carrying on. I just want to set the record straight: The Yukon chamber thanked us for that a couple of years ago when we did it. What we just did was move the labour market. We moved the labour market because we had been sitting and listening to what we heard from the business sector around ensuring that they have the capacity coming out of recovery. I have worked with my colleague, Minister McLean, and we have come up with a strategy where, on one side, we have the supply side still —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Porter Creek South just contravened the Standing Orders by referring to one of his colleagues by name, instead of by title or riding. I would ask you to remind him of the Standing Orders.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: It is not a Standing Order, but for members to refer to other members by last name is not a common practice in the House.

Please continue.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for Lake Laberge, because that gave me time to pull up another letter of endorsement for our actions, which I will read in a second.

Again, this particular industry remains extremely concerned about government employment and growth and government competition for jobs. As we said, that was part of the reason that we ensured that we brought the labour market into the Department of Economic Development. We will be able to debate that later on in this session.

As I stated, I will pull up another letter from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that wasn't reflected earlier. Again, I will just quote: "Dear Premier Silver,

"On behalf of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) and our members in the Yukon, we are writing to formally introduce ourselves..." Of course, this is the CFIB director, Kathleen Cook, who was quoted earlier.

And then, next paragraph: "We are pleased to see that the Yukon Government has recognized the recent challenges small business owners have been facing over the course of the pandemic by introducing supports such as the Regional Relief Loan Program (RRLP); the Yukon Emergency Relief Program; the Paid Sick Leave Rebate program; the Vaccine Verification Rebate; retail liquor discounts..." which, of course, we heard some comments earlier about some of the challenges. Of course, that liquor discount was in place as an emergency measure, and then we went back and then reduced, permanently, the cost of liquor, in a dialogue.

And I will say yes, there are some businesses that wanted the cost of liquor to be less. Again, over here, we're balancing our social lens on this particular issue, and I think we all know that we're spending time — all three parties — talking about challenges around substance use, and, of course, we believe that this is a good balance.

Again, within that go: "... supports for the tourism sector through the Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan; and the reduction of the small business tax to zero. Not only do these actions demonstrate your government's commitment to supporting small businesses, but they will go a long way to help business owners navigate the pandemic. As you know, small businesses will have a crucial role to play in the Yukon's economic recovery. CFIB shares your government's vision to help small businesses pave a way forward towards greater prosperity, innovation, and diversity."

So, with that, that paragraph was left out in some of the dialogue earlier, and once again, that shows that one of the most critical groups sometimes to the government in this country certainly shared some very kind words with us.

When we talk about our business climate, I think it's important to talk about where we are right now. As a group, we always have to listen and learn from the private sector.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the Premier and I sat with leaders from across a number of communities, and we talked about the challenges they were having. We talked about the things that they felt we needed to work on. They talked about

some of the concerns they have. I think we've demonstrated that, when we talk about housing, this is something we've invested in. When we talk about the capacity that's required, those are the steps that we're taking when you look at our labour market. I will touch on the sick-leave provisions.

As you saw, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business was applauding us for the interim measures that are in place until September of this year around sick leave.

I just want to set the record straight again. I commend the work that was done around a concept for having this safety net in place in perpetuity, but I think it is important to touch on the fact that we have had a number of business leaders in our community reach out to us and tell us that there was mass confusion. There were members of the opposition who were directly calling business owners and telling them that a decision had been made and that the full cost of putting a sick-leave provision in place — I believe up to 10 days — had been made and they would have to shoulder that. Of course, when we met with business leaders, we said that there are recommendations that are in place and that there is a dialogue that has to happen. We understand where you are, coming out of the pressures of the last two years.

I just want to again set the record straight. That confusion, which then led to, I think, a misunderstanding, which then led to letters to the editor or conversations — we have done our best. Of course, this happens in the political realm. Each party is out there, but I would urge folks to please present your philosophical argument, but the facts about where we are in the process are important.

I think it's also important for us to look at the overall state of the economy. It was touched on by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. I think I have heard it from the opposition. I will paraphrase: Don't hang your hat on GDP. I agree. I think what we have to look at is — let's go into the Yukon and take a look at, first of all, immense growth from 2015 to 2020 when we look at retail sales. I think you can also go back — feel free. Anyone who looks in Hansard can look at Yukon's Bureau of Statistics. They do an incredible job. I want to say hi to Mr. Gary Brown, who I get to e-mail every month, early in the morning when the numbers come out, concerning unemployment. Of course, those numbers of late have shown that we are leading the country when it comes to the unemployment rate.

I think it's important for individuals to take a look at where we are in wholesale sales. I think it's important for individuals to look at the investment last year and this year when it comes to residential investment of hundreds of millions of dollars. I think it's important to look at construction numbers. I think it's important to look at mining output. I think it's important to look at growth in almost every category that an economist would look at. So, I think we shouldn't just look at GDP. I think we should look at all of those other statistical pieces of information.

I think that you should look at the sales of bars and restaurants, and if one takes a look at those numbers and looks at where we were in the months leading up to the pandemic and then we take a look at where we are now, I think they will see

some extremely strong numbers. In some cases, month by month, you will see that, when we look at received value in the bar and restaurant industry, we will see that we are in a stronger position now on those sales than we were leading up to the pandemic.

Although I will always listen to our business community — and I think that there is a lot for them to share and lots for us to learn — they are the business people and we are making policy. But from my time in the private sector, I think that many business people in this country would love to be doing business in the Yukon, they would love to see the growth that is in front of us, and they would love to see the opportunity. Yes, it is challenging when it comes to staffing, and we are working with the business community and our immigration unit on that and making sure that Yukoners can skill up from the work that was done through our previous Education minister and our current Education minister, but I think that overall, when it comes to this economy, we are in a great spot.

I will reflect as we go through, as well, around tourism. I have testimonials that are just from the last month around tourism from entrepreneurs from our communities who are talking about the fact that they have not seen bookings like this previously. I will talk a little bit about Air North and their flights now to Toronto and Ottawa and the growth that they are seeing in their market and their optimism as they see those bookings. Of course, it was reflected on earlier that we have Condor coming back — another great sign. I think that there is work to be done, and I think that we will discuss that. We are not there yet when it comes to ensuring that we have folks coming back to the Yukon through the cruise industry, and it is extremely important that the right measures are put in place by other levels of government to ensure that is there. I want to be respectful to my colleagues in opposition. This is something that both parties have touched on.

Again, I think that the business community is in a great environment to recover. I know that we'll monitor what's happening, as we move through. As we have done from the start, we will adapt when need be. If we have to build programs, we'll build programs, and our departments will pivot in a fashion that's required to ensure that we have that stability.

There is so much ahead of us in the next year. I will just do a quick overview to finish up. We'll be talking about our innovation plan. We use subject matter experts from across Canada, globally, and from home to make sure that we had a proper blueprint to go forward and to not only invest in our tech sector, but to find other areas of value and places where we should invest.

Our immigration strategy will be a document that we'll be able to see come to fruition this year, and it will also be important, as we move forward. The work by the previous Minister of Tourism and Culture — lots of work that was done, and now we have the opportunity to bring that work to reality, and that is the creative potential — advancing Yukon's creative and cultural industries. There is tremendous excitement from our gig economy and from others. You will see investment and work that we've done in the revitalization of programs around

film and around sound. There's so much work that has been undertaken.

On a very positive note — and to my colleagues here — I want to just touch on one of our other very exciting things that will happen this year, even though there's a tremendous amount of angst in our world right now. We will be looking forward to showcasing what the Yukon has to offer to the world stage this summer as we welcome the third international Arctic Arts Summit to the territory. The previous Minister of Tourism and Culture did a tremendous amount of work on this. The team at Tourism and Culture has been very excited and has been so passionate about this. This summit aims to strengthen arts and culture in the north and develop circumpolar cooperation to stimulate collaboration in the arts and creative industries. That conversation is more important than ever, if we look at what's happening around our circumpolar world.

We have identified just over \$300,000 in this year's budget that we will use to host this international, in-person event. It was first hosted in Norway, then Finland, and this is the first time that Canada will host. We will have individuals from around the world who will come to the Yukon. As we continue to welcome guests back to the territory, I would like to highlight some of the efforts we have made to ensure that we are prepared.

We are forging ahead again to implement our work with the Yukon tourism strategy, and this fiscal year, we will continue to support our Yukon Tourism Advisory Board and our Yukon First Nation Tourism and Culture Association.

With that, I will look to conclude my remarks. I think that we are pretty excited to be able to debate our budgets from these multiple departments. That will give us a chance to really reflect on the funds that we are putting in place that we believe are going to help us to look at a full recovery in these departments. I think that for some of our sectors, like tourism and culture, there will be a bit of a lag compared to others — but if one looks at all the numbers, if one looks at the data and the situation that we are currently in when it comes to this economy, we are in a very promising place. I think we are the envy of a lot of provinces and territories, and I want to commend the work of our departments and the work of the private sector. If I think back to April of 2020, in those first weeks, the conversations were really difficult. It is nice to see the spring coming, the sun out, and have the opportunity to properly recover and have the Yukon's economy back to where it belongs.

Ms. Clarke: I am happy to rise today to speak to the 2022-23 Yukon budget. I have a few comments for budget debate. My constituents in Porter Creek Centre continue to reach out to me to raise issues important to them. I hope that we will see some of their concerns addressed as we debate the budget over the coming weeks. Many of these issues are municipal issues, so on the record, I would like to thank the members of the Whitehorse City Council for assisting me on those issues, like the Whistle Bend pond, snow removal this winter, and traffic concerns.

Porter Creek Centre is a combination of an older, well-established neighbourhood and the fastest growing part of Whitehorse in Whistle Bend. I hope to see budget items that help both neighbourhoods. I am pleased to see work finally begin on the Whistle Bend school. This long-promised project will be a welcome addition in the neighbourhood for families and the 400-plus students who are expected to start school there in the fall of 2024. I will be asking questions this Sitting about the cost and timeline for completion of this school.

As we know, the expected completion date was already delayed due to the election last year. Housing affordability is an issue, and I am interested to see what money has been set aside in the budget for lot development, particularly in Whistle Bend. I noted that the government announced late last week the new land lottery for 42 phase 6 lots in Whistle Bend, which is good to finally see. It is important to remember that the minister cancelled the lottery for those lots last spring, and the lots were rescheduled to be released before the end of last year.

I will also be looking for plans for Whistle Bend phase 8 development. Government documents indicated that Whistle Bend phases 7 and 8 would be tendered around the same time, in December or January. Of course, we are now in March, and only phase 7 has been tendered. The government had planned phase 9 to be tendered in early summer of this year. Housing availability is very important. I am hoping to see that these timelines will not be delayed further.

Traffic is increasingly becoming an issue in Whistle Bend, so I also hope to see the government planning to address it in the coming phases of development.

During the election last spring, we supported the construction of a new gymnastics facility, so I am happy to see that project in the budget. I am looking forward to hearing more details on the project. As I understand, it may be planned for Whistle Bend.

I am also pleased to see money in the budget for the first Pride Centre in the Yukon, which was another Yukon Party platform commitment.

My constituents in Porter Creek are interested in proposed upgrades to the Alaska Highway planned in the Porter Creek corridor. Many of them use the highway as their major commuter route. I am interested to hear what the updated capital plan is for that section of the Alaska Highway corridor project.

I also know that the Department of Education has been working on adapting to COVID, so I am interested to hear what upgrades have been completed at Holy Family School, Jack Hulland Elementary School, and Porter Creek Secondary School.

I wanted to note that housing affordability and availability remains a massive issue for all Yukoners. I have many questions about the budget for the Yukon Housing Corporation. It is important that we increase the housing and rental availability for Yukoners. I will save those questions for when we get into the housing debate in Committee of the Whole. I look forward to the debate.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am pleased to rise to respond to the budget speech delivered by the Premier for the upcoming fiscal year 2022-23. This is our government's second budget. I am proud of the hard work that has occurred within our respective departments that made it possible for us to be here today in order to support Yukoners.

I will start today, Mr. Speaker, by mentioning how grateful I am to be able to debate the annual allocation of funds within this Chamber in a respectful and peaceful manner. War is raging in Ukraine. The situation is terrible, and it appears to be escalating. Authoritarianism and fascism are unfortunately and tragically ascendant in the world. In many countries, elections are pro-forma, and legislators are just a rubber stamp. It is the rule of the strongman where graft, corruption, and intimidation are the order of the day.

I would certainly confirm that we are extremely fortunate to live in a prosperous, functioning, and liberal democracy.

I will turn to the budget discussion. As the Premier mentioned in his speech, the budget is fundamentally the most important decision and function of a democratically elected government year after year. These decisions are ultimately choices that we are making on behalf of Yukoners for the next fiscal year and into the future. The choices reflect the values and priorities that this Yukon Liberal government wishes to highlight, values such as adapting to the impacts of climate change, reducing our emissions, and making the future of a changing Yukon more resilient.

I am particularly proud of the work of my departments, the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment. Overall, the 2022-23 budget includes an estimated \$1.97 billion in spending. Of this sum, operation and maintenance expenditures amount to a total of \$1.42 billion. That leaves \$546 million in capital expenditures. This corresponds to almost double the capital budget from five years ago. In fact, it represents a 26-percent increase from last year.

In 2016, we were left with an infrastructure deficit. Our government has worked tirelessly and continues to work hard to resolve this deficit and its long-term implications on Yukoners young and old. It is clear from studies that, when economies are slower, interest rates remain low. For every dollar that we invest in infrastructure, more than one dollar of economic activity is generated. All Yukoners benefit when infrastructure is improved. New roads and bridges allow us to get around the territory more efficiently and reach our destinations safely. The benefits of building new schools in a rapidly growing urban centre don't even need to be stated. These are worthwhile investments that will provide benefits to Yukoners for many years to come. I will speak of several of those during my speech today.

Mr. Speaker, one of the principles that guides me in my daily work is responsible fiscal management. Government has navigated and continues to navigate the COVID-19 storm in a fiscally responsible manner. I am proud of the resilience and level-headed decision-making that characterize our Liberal government team year after year.

Moving into my departments, I will provide a snapshot of the Department of Environment budget for this year. Totalling approximately \$51.9 million, it is slightly higher than the previous estimate, with 1.2-percent growth. Out of the \$51.9 million, the capital estimate is approximately \$4 million, of which \$1.2 million is recoverable. The operation and maintenance portion represents \$47.9 million, with a slight increase of \$93,000 from the previous estimate. Unlike my other department, the Department of Highways and Public Works, the Department of Environment does not have a large capital component.

I spoke earlier of values and priorities for this government as reflected through the budget. The importance and prioritization of *Our Clean Future* is clear in this budget. This is year 2 of implementation, and we have added a little over \$500,000 in operation and maintenance related to the *Our Clean Future* initiative. This government recognizes that we are in a climate emergency and that the time to act is now.

This is why we are working to reduce our emissions, adapt, and mitigate the impacts of climate change and chart what the hopeful future for the Yukon might look like. One element is dealing with our waste, which is a huge element of this project. This budget allocates \$131,000 for extended producer responsibility. The extended producer responsibility program is a waste-management approach that shifts the responsibility for end-of-life management of product and packaging waste from municipalities, government, and taxpayers to the producers and the consumers.

Extended producer responsibility is part of *Our Clean Future*. The commitment is to implement extended producer responsibility in the Yukon by 2025 as part of an effort to increase waste diversion to 40 percent by 2030.

Priority product categories to be managed through extended producer responsibility are packaging and printed paper, household hazardous waste, and automotive waste, such as used oil and antifreeze. We recognize that the existing recycling system in the Yukon is in a challenging financial position and that transitioning to extended producer responsibility is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the recycling programs that Yukoners expect. This year, we will be putting the extended producer responsibility program forward to Yukoners for public engagement.

Another clean future commitment is to upgrade the *Our Clean Future* website at yukon.ca/en/our-clean-future. For this, we are allocating \$100,000. This will assist us to share more knowledge about climate risks and impacts, build community resilience, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and demonstrate progress toward our goals. The new version of the website aims to have content being provided all the time from an internal database. I am a strong proponent that good data makes for good decision-making whether we are talking about moose surveys, climate change research, modelling, or flood mapping. To that end, we are allocating \$150,000 in climate change research and modelling in a partnership with Yukon University.

Climate change also, of course, impacts our waters and glaciers. We saw this in 2016 and 2017 when the Slims River, which once continued to the Bering Sea, now flows east into

the Kaskawulsh River and then south to the Alsek River and to the Gulf of Alaska. This was a rare geomorphological phenomenon called “river piracy” or “stream capture” that was caused by the retreat of the Kaskawulsh Glacier. This in turn is already having an impact on Yukon’s largest lake, Kluane Lake, as well as a significant impact on migrating chum salmon.

Last year, we also witnessed record flooding in the Yukon. We know that climate change affects evaporation, precipitation, surface water, snow pack, groundwater, recharge, and demand. This work is fundamental if we are to understand what changes are occurring.

To this end, the Water Resources branch was allocated a \$224,000 increase in the budget that is before you today. The branch is adapting its already existing water monitoring, whether it be for surface water or groundwater, to understand water quality and quantity trends. As part of this, we are also developing flood maps for flood-prone communities and critical transportation corridors to understand where to focus our efforts when dealing with highwater events. All of this will help to produce reliable flood forecasts.

The Fish and Wildlife branch continues to monitor the species of wildlife present in the Yukon, whether it is polar bears in the North Slope or muskox, wolves, deer, bison, sheep, fish, or non-harvested species such as pika, bats, and ground squirrels. Most importantly, the branch monitors and informs our decision-making on the most harvested species, such as moose and caribou.

Specifically for caribou, we continue to collect and analyze data for the various caribou herds, such as the Porcupine, Fortymile, Hart River, Coal River, and Wolf Lake herds. This work includes collaring to inform us on the overall health and condition of these resilient and majestic animals. It is important to state that the department prioritizes which areas to survey based on harvest levels, access, community concerns, land use planning, data needs, date of last survey, and the volume of human activity in the area. All of this is to say that we invest in our data collection and analysis that in turn informs our solid, data-based decision-making. This allows us to identify management goals and to set priorities that support evidence-based decision-making.

This specific species and habitat work amounts to approximately \$1 million in operation and maintenance. This also includes a new allocation of \$40,000 in elk monitoring.

Speaking of priorities, we know that enjoying nature is a huge part of Yukoners’ lives. The best way and most successful way to enjoy nature is to go out and experience our extensive parks infrastructure. We know that many Yukoners share this sentiment, as we heard in the *Yukon Parks Strategy*. In this budget, we have allocated \$2.6 million for capital improvements. This will include improvements such as boat-launch maintenance and replacement at numerous campgrounds, enhanced trails, paddle-in and hike-in campsites, a new booking system, and more campsites at existing campgrounds.

The past two years have been challenging, and I think that we can all agree that opportunities to recreate in nature are

invaluable to Yukoners’ mental and physical health and resilience. We know that Yukoners love their campgrounds — the value provided — and they certainly appreciate the abundant firewood provided. As was the case last year, this camping season will start in April and go until October so that we can all enjoy the Yukon’s world-class outdoors for another extended season. We have allocated \$52,000 for early work to expand camping opportunities in the vicinity of Whitehorse.

Again, our government is guided by public engagement, and we will prioritize what is important for Yukoners.

On another topic in the Department of Environment, there are also significant environmental liabilities that we have allocated funds to remediate. The department is responsible for enforcing the *Environment Act*. Under that, dumping and spills have the potential to cause long-lasting environmental damage that needs to be cleaned up. This year, we are investing approximately \$4.2 million toward remediation of various sites throughout the Yukon — sites such as the Wellgreen mill and tailings pond north of Burwash Landing, the old fire hall in Ross River, the Carcross library, and the Marwell tar pit in Whitehorse, which is now in post-remedial monitoring and assessment. This ongoing work is integral to protecting our land, water, and air and sometimes creating new development options for those remediated sites.

The department engages in a wide array of agreements with management and stewardship partners every year. We work closely with First Nations, renewable resources councils, and local Yukoners. We foster these long-lasting relationships and build upon them to create a collaborative atmosphere to achieve results that Yukoners can be proud of.

In addition, the year-round, ongoing, and extremely valuable work that our conservation officers and our Animal Health unit do in the Yukon is greatly appreciated. In the Department of Environment, I am delighted to be leading this hard-working, motivated, energetic, enthusiastic group of people.

An aspect of my work is to combine, where possible, the work of my two departments. One promising area of synergy is transportation. We know that Yukon’s road transportation sector is our largest greenhouse gas emitter, which accounts for approximately 54 percent of our territory’s greenhouse gas emissions. My colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, is responsible for spearheading the significantly subscribed rebate programs for zero emission electric vehicles and plug-in electric vehicles. We know that this has received significant uptake over the course of the last year to 18 months.

Our government has committed to making all roads accessible in Yukon communities reachable by electric vehicles by 2027, and we will certainly endeavour to exceed that objective. On my end, the Department of Highways and Public Works will be assisting with the installation of an additional seven fast-charging stations by the end of the year. This will bring us to a total of 19 public fast-chargers for electric vehicles throughout the Yukon this summer. The price tag for those charging stations is approximately \$300,000 from the Highways and Public Works capital budget.

I would like to address the Highways and Public Works budget. The Highways and Public Works total budget is approximately \$436 million. Out of \$436 million, the capital estimate is approximately \$277 million, while the operation and maintenance portion represents \$158 million.

As the glue that binds it all together, the Highways and Public Works department is responsible for the coordination of all information technology, otherwise known as "IT". If it is IT-related, the Department of Highways and Public Works makes it happen. The department supports all related functions, whether it is e-services, data management, the personal vaccine credentials, geomatics, our financial systems, citizen engagement platforms, internal data portals, video conferencing, and more. For a large organization like the Yukon government, this is a major responsibility. In this budget, we have allocated a little over \$14 million in capital for the purposes of corporate information technology and systems.

I would like to now talk about the operation and maintenance portion. With a budget of approximately \$66 million, these are the dedicated Highways and Public Works employees who maintain our transportation infrastructure. These are the tireless individuals who run our ferries, clear our roads, provide our drivers' licences, manage the weigh scales, fix our culverts, and so much more. I would like to take this opportunity right now to thank them for their ongoing work and dedication.

Reviewing the capital portion of the Transportation division, it totals approximately \$154 million. A little more than \$6 million is allocated to facilities and equipment. This is to ensure the adequacy and availability of the facilities and equipment necessary for the delivery of the capital and operation and maintenance of the Transportation division.

For example, with these funds, we are scheduled to acquire paint machines for the Erik Nielsen International Airport, a loader and snow blower for the Old Crow Airport, a dump truck for Old Crow, and various other pieces of equipment. Out of the \$6 million, \$3 million is going into the revolving equipment replacement fund to ensure that the Transportation division is able to keep our infrastructure in top shape.

Remaining in the Transportation division, we have allocated approximately \$5.5 million in capital to projects on the Alaska Highway.

This includes significant multi-year work through key segments of the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse and specifically between the weigh scales —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30, this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 204 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 45

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, March 8, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

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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
Tuesday, March 8, 2022 — 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

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to ask all of us to please welcome — I believe it's Mary Tiessen. My sign language is a little rusty — if we could please welcome her to the Assembly.

Applause

Ms. White: Today we have joining us in the Assembly — we have Lahela Reid, Amanda Buffalo, and Marie Gallagher. They are joining us today for the tabling of a petition and in support of the strong women that they know.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Women's Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am proud to rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government in recognition of March 8, International Women's Day. The first International Women's Day was held in 1911 to recognize the economic, political, and social achievements of women and acknowledge the challenges that they continue to face in the quest for gender equality. The Canadian theme of this year's celebration is "Women Inspiring Women". On this International Women's Day, I am sure that many of my colleagues here today can think of the women in their lives who have helped them along the way.

Today, I will highlight Alice McGuire, who sadly passed away in December 2021. I recently reflected on her life and the impact that she made on my life and the contribution that she made to the Yukon. Alice McGuire was a trailblazer and a courageous leader in our territory. She was the first Yukon First Nation woman elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in 1978. She broke down a major barrier for all indigenous women in our territory. Why do I consider her courageous? During this time in our history — it was only five years after the tabling of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. It was a time when residential schools were still active in our territory. It was rare to have women elected as Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. Further, Ms. McGuire had only been granted the right to vote, as an indigenous person — indigenous woman — in this country, 17 years prior to being elected to this Assembly.

We are very fortunate to come from a territory with a rich history of strong and resilient women, particularly indigenous women and girls who have faced even greater adversity.

As the Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, I am proud to work closely with and support the many women's organizations in the Yukon.

I recognize the work of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, and the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society. Your advocacy, community building, and consistent work to hold up and honour indigenous women is truly inspiring. Organizations like the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Dawson Women's Shelter, and Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake provide not only the basics, but also offer advocacy, navigation, and community-building opportunities for all women and children.

Yukon Women in Trades and Technology encourages young women and gender-diverse people to see themselves in spaces that have excluded far too many of us for far too long. Les EssentiElles, Yukon Status of Women Council, and many more organizations are working every day to break down the barriers that still exist for women and gender-diverse Yukoners.

I encourage all of us to hold our hands up to those women who have inspired us to do better as we continue to strive for women's equality.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 8 as International Women's Day. Never before have the campaigns and voices of girls and women been so visible, so loud, in so many parts of the globe, shining a spotlight on this year's theme: "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow".

Today, we celebrate the many achievements and efforts made that have paved the way for women around the world. We have seen so many changes in our world over our lifetimes. Steps taken to break barriers around the world for women continue today as we highlight social, scientific, and political achievements and more — achievements by women and girls that together bring us steps closer to gender parity and equality for all.

The Yukon is a pretty incredible place, filled with equally incredible women. It is home to a number of organizations that work hard to ensure that women and girls are afforded equal education and opportunities. I would like to highlight a couple of these organizations. Yukon Women in Trades and Technology continues to do incredible work in our communities, inspiring young women to consider trades and tech as an option for them. They offer training, workshops, education grants, and more to help women and girls get into the trades and technology. Yukon Women in Mining is dedicated to the ongoing advancement of a diverse, inclusive, respectful, and progressive mineral sector that supports healthy and prosperous Yukon citizens and communities. In fact, that is their mission statement.

We are seeing a major shift in careers where men and women are stepping more confidently and with ease into

positions that may have historically been seen more as careers of the other gender. We are moving in a very positive direction with respect to inclusion and abolishing historically gender-specific roles in our society.

I would like to give a shout-out to two very important women in my life, my daughters, Rachel Ann Tan Clarke and Sabrina Ann Tan Clarke.

Women, today is our day. Let us celebrate and be thankful to the women who stood before us. We stand on their shoulders. Thank you, women.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to recognize International Women’s Day. We don’t have to look far today for examples of women fighting for their rights.

Yesterday, women and girls were in front of this Legislature protesting sexist and offensive dress codes in their schools — dress codes that led to harassment and humiliation of students in an effort to police their bodies.

Today at city hall, protestors were demanding the right to safe transportation in taxis. After years of stories and the tacit understanding that taxis are not a reliably safe place for women, they are demanding action. They are demanding that women can take a cab without fear of harassment and violence.

Across the world, women experience disproportionate levels of discrimination and violence. Across the world, women are fighting to change that.

One of the themes of International Women’s Day this year is “Women Inspiring Women”. These women near and far inspire me, but I hope we don’t stop at being inspired. Let’s make changes to make transportation safer for women. Let’s make changes so that girls feel safe in their classrooms. Let’s make changes so that next year when we give these tributes, the Yukon and the world are different, fairer, and safer places for women and girls.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 9

Ms. White: I have for tabling the following petition, which reads:

“THAT

“Wood Street School, and all Yukon schools should be a place where students can be themselves, be comfortable expressing themselves, and be safe in a non-hurtful and non-judgmental environment

“there is an oppressive and sexist dress code at Wood Street School

“students are being humiliated through the subjective and inconsistent enforcement of the sexist dress code

“through the enforcement of the dress code, students are being shamed for developing biological sex characteristics that are beyond the students’ individual control

“students do not feel safe in the classroom or in the school because of the enforcement of the dress code

“the dress code is being enforced outside school hours

“THEREFORE we request the following:

“that Wood Street School teachers and administration immediately cease and desist in enforcing the dress code

“that the MAD program teachers and administration at the Wood Street School issue an apology to the students for shaming, humiliating, and sexualizing them in their place of learning

“that the Wood Street School teachers and administration receive training respecting gender, sex, healthy body image, body dysmorphia and shame, consent, sexual harassment, and sexualized violence - and the impact of these on holistic health

“an immediate revocation of dress codes in Yukon schools, both formal and informal”

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented? Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 13: *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, as established by Motion No. 9, as amended, be amended by:

- (1) rescinding the appointment of Annie Blake; and
- (2) appointing Emily Tredger to the committee.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use its 2022-23 capital budget to proceed with major upgrades to Takhini River Road, including improving the roadbed, road surface, and ditches.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the organizations and authors of the *Taxi Safety Report* and follow up on recommendations in the report, including implementing the *National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence* recommendations relating to transportation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure all Yukon students are provided a safe learning environment in schools and educational facilities by:

(1) reviewing all policies on school attire and dress codes in Yukon schools, including the informal policies that are enforced by staff;

(2) engaging facilitators with experience in social justice, anti-oppression, and violence to work with students, teachers, and the community to ensure that any and all policies on school attire, including formal and informal, are anti-oppressive and inclusive; and

(3) ensuring that teaching and administrative staff in schools and in the Department of Education have training on the rights of children and youth as included in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and human rights legislation.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Atlin hydro expansion project

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am happy to rise today to provide an update on the Atlin hydro expansion project. The Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, or THELP, continues to lead the development of this project, which is expected to add 8.5 megawatts of dependable capacity to the Yukon's main grid, primarily in the winter when peak electrical demand occurs. From the outset of this project, it was clear that a combination of capital loans, grant funding, and proponent equity would be required to ensure the financial viability of the expansion. More recently, it was signalled by all major stakeholders that a financial contribution from the Government of Yukon in particular would support THELP's access to additional funding opportunities and bring this much-needed project a step closer to construction.

I am pleased to announce that a decision was made by our government to invest \$50 million to the Atlin project, starting in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

This year's budget includes \$15 million of the \$50 million for the project. Prior to transferring the funds to THELP, the Yukon Development Corporation and the Department of Finance will establish a funding agreement that stipulates funding deliverables and reporting requirements.

This is a significant investment. It indicates our commitment to address climate change, our effort to keep electricity rates low for Yukoners, and our due diligence as part of the investment decision to fully assess the cost and benefits of the project.

The Atlin hydro expansion project will make a substantial contribution toward reaching our renewable energy generation goal under *Our Clean Future*, which requires that 93 percent of the electricity on the main grid comes from renewable sources by 2030. The project is expected to generate 31 gigawatt hours of renewable electricity each winter and eliminate the need for four rental diesel generators, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 27,000 tonnes per year.

The project is an important milestone in Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity plan. The synergy between the Atlin project, the Moon Lake storage facility, and the expansion of the Southern Lakes transmission network is crucial to generating an ambitious 97 percent of the electricity on the main grid from renewable sources while delivering enough dependable power as the Yukon's demand grows now and into the future.

Our government's investment decision coincides with other positive developments for this project. In February, Yukon Energy announced that it had signed an agreement with THELP to purchase power from the Atlin project. This electricity purchase agreement is currently available for public review on the Yukon Utilities Board's website. We're also beginning to see positive indications from the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia that the remaining funding gap for the project can soon be addressed. Our commitment of financial resources to this project emphasizes the priority of clean energy to Yukoners, and I look forward to seeing the results of that investment take shape in the upcoming construction season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to provide this statement on how our government is working to help advance the Atlin project and meet the targets set out in *Our Clean Future*.

Mr. Cathers: First, we want to emphasize our strong support for hydroelectricity and other renewables. If done properly, hydro is one of the cleanest forms of energy and can be one of the cheapest, if not the cheapest, energy sources. Hydro has the potential to generate a large amount of energy very efficiently and at a much lower cost per megawatt. Of course, that's if it is done properly. With the Atlin hydro expansion, we have questions and a number of concerns.

We are already seeing significant cost overruns. In 2016, Yukon Energy Corporation conducted an assessment of the project and determined that it would cost \$120.7 million. In Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable energy strategy that they released in December 2020, they indicated that the estimated cost of the project was \$131 million. Then, in October last year, Yukon Energy told the Legislature that the project is now roughly going to cost \$200 million. So, in eight years, the project has gone \$80 million over the original estimate and shovels are not even close to hitting the ground.

Further, at a cost of \$200 million for just over eight megawatts, that means a cost of roughly \$25 million per megawatt. To put this in perspective, in 2018 and 2019, this Liberal government spent a significant amount of money on planning for a new LNG or diesel plant. This new plant was

going to create 20 megawatts for an estimated cost as low as just \$2 million per megawatt. This would have been considerably cheaper for Yukoners. Of course, with the Liberals, taxpayers' money is no object, so they flip-flopped on their planned 20-megawatt generation facility and took the more expensive option.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, we are not opposed to hydro. We are, in fact, strongly in favour of hydro, but, unlike the Liberals, we are also strongly in favour of being fiscally responsible with taxpayers' money. Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable energy plan even highlights that the extremely high cost of the project means that there is really no business case for the project without massive government subsidies. The plan states — and I quote: “Without federal funding, these projects are not considered cost-competitive and would most likely not be approved by the Yukon Utilities Board.”

I would like to move on to another area of concern that we have with the project, and I hope that the minister can explain this. With the project, \$200 million of taxpayers' money is being spent on a project in BC for an asset that will not be owned by Yukoners. That is concerning enough itself. However, a Québec-based engineering company will do a considerable amount of work on this project, and it has now been revealed that the design and engineering firm hired to lead this project is SNC-Lavalin. SNC-Lavalin is a massive engineering firm based in Montréal, and it became infamous as part of the SNC-Lavalin scandal in 2019 when *The Globe and Mail* revealed that Prime Minister Trudeau attempted to bully former Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould to intervene in criminal proceedings against the company. Of course, Wilson-Raybould resigned from Cabinet and was kicked out of caucus by Trudeau for refusing to cave and interfere in these criminal proceedings. The criminal proceedings related to the fact that SNC-Lavalin was accused of paying millions of dollars in bribes to former Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

So, it certainly raised some eyebrows and questions for us when we saw that \$200 million would potentially be leaving the Yukon for an economically questionable project that has gone significantly overbudget in a short period of time and a significant amount of the funding would be going to this southern Québec company that has been tied to very serious scandals.

So, I'm hoping that the minister, when he rises, can tell us how much of the \$50 million from Yukon taxpayers will be flowing toward SNC-Lavalin as part of the Liberal's Atlin deal.

Ms. Tredger: There is a lot to be excited about with this project. This project matches our energy needs rather perfectly, providing us with power in the winter when we need it most, when our demand is highest and our hydro production is lowest. Yukon Energy has come to an agreement that will secure power for Yukoners when we need it, without requiring us to purchase power when we don't need it. It's an agreement that is beneficial for Yukoners, and we congratulate Yukon Energy and the Tlingit Homeland Economic Limited Partnership on their work.

What's most important about the way this project is being funded is that ratepayers will not see increases to their bills. This is something that we've heard a lot about from Yukoners this winter.

When we build a highway, we don't put up a tollbooth. When we renovate a government office, we don't start selling tickets at the door. Energy projects are no different. Like highways and office buildings, they are public infrastructure, and we need to invest in them collectively to build a renewable energy future for the Yukon. This project is a good start, and we hope to see energy projects continue to be treated as collective, public infrastructure going forward.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. I'll make sure to pass on to the Taku River Tlingit that the members of the Yukon Party don't support the project and don't appreciate who they are working with; I'll make sure to pass that on.

I think what's important is that right now — let's talk about the price of this electricity for Yukoners and what it's going to cost, because that's what is in front of the Yukon Utilities Board right now. There will be an energy price and a capacity price, but the energy price — right now, we talk about 19 cents a kilowatt hour being the cost of diesel. Well, that's what it was — sorry — because diesel just went up to \$2 per litre and so prices likely go up, so we want to get to renewables because then we're not paying that.

What does the agreement that has been negotiated between THELP and Yukon Energy say? It says 13 cents a kilowatt hour for winter energy. If we get above what we have agreed to — 25 gigawatt hours — we will go down to seven cents a kilowatt hour, and that's in the first 10 years. In the subsequent 30 years, that's going from 11 cents in winter down to three cents when we do more.

So, we're somewhere between 13 cents and three cents a kilowatt hour compared to 19 cents a kilowatt hour, which is going up.

So, no, I don't think that we should build a diesel plant. That's the wrong thing to do.

What this investment will do is that it will reduce the need for four rental diesels. We will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, so I disagree with the members opposite. This project aligns with keeping bills low for Yukon families and transitions the territory to rely on more renewable energy sources. It aligns with Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity plan and sets out a pathway to reach our goal of generating renewable energy, displacing fossil fuels and reducing our emissions.

What is interesting to me is that, during the election one year ago here in the territory, all three parties at that time said that they also agree with this project. It's unfortunate now that the Yukon Party does not support this project, just when the average price of diesel has hit \$2 a litre. I will certainly let the Taku River Tlingit know that.

I will say to Yukoners that this is a great project for the Yukon, and it is going to get us very reasonably priced energy from a renewable source for the long term. I am looking very forward to this project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Cost of living

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, when we asked the government whether it was considering any measures at all to help Yukoners deal with rising prices at the pump, and despite the wide range of policy tools that the Yukon government has to influence fuel prices, the minister's answer was: Don't worry, the *Our Clean Future* strategy is helping transition us away from fossil fuels. That, of course, is cold comfort to Yukoners who are struggling to fill up their tanks this week or businesses whose biggest cost is fuel.

I will give the minister another chance to answer this: Does the budget contain any measures at all that will actually help Yukoners with the jaw-dropping price of fuel?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to correct the record, yesterday what we said was that these are measures. We didn't say, "Don't worry." Those are the words of the opposition.

What we are doing in this budget, first of all, are a number of measures. Our budget for 2022-23 invests in, first of all, housing supply, which is a key item right now and was discussed yesterday in Question Period. Again, universal childcare — we are a leader in the country to ensure — others might laugh at that, but when you have two children and you are paying \$900 per child for childcare, before this deal, certainly my constituents don't think that's a laughing matter.

We had paid sick leave in place, and thanks to our agreement and collaboration with the NDP, we are now looking at a territory-wide dental plan. We think that all of those things are going to make life more affordable for Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: Of course, my question was about fuel prices. This is one of the biggest issues in the country right now, and it's clear that it's not even remotely considered in the budget. We are not even a week into the legislative Sitting, and this budget is already stale and out of touch with the real challenges facing Yukoners.

Several other jurisdictions are considering real action. Alberta just announced that they are pausing the collection of their fuel tax, the Saskatchewan NDP are calling for something similar in Saskatchewan, and the Liberal government in Newfoundland says that they are reviewing their fuel tax in advance of their budget later in April.

Will the Liberal government here in Yukon consider pausing on the collection of the fuel tax to help Yukoners with the staggering cost of fuel?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, the question previously was about gas, but the other part of that question, as I heard it, was: Is there anything in your budget for measures around affordability?

What I would say is that I think that Yukoners need to know that, up until yesterday, we had the lowest gas tax in the country — just over six percent. Yes, there was an announcement by the Alberta government yesterday, and that was to eliminate the tax on gas in Alberta. I think that they are

in a favourable position. We have just seen the revenue in their budget almost double with the inflation of oil, and they also have a government that's under a lot of pressure, and there could be decisions being made for political reasons under the current circumstances.

What we will do, as we have done all along, is continue to monitor and adapt, as we have done. We believe — and the economists whom I have reached out to over the last number of days and who really support political thinking across the spectrum, are thinking that there are some moves this week that are more boutique items that are driven by political decisions, rather than good policy decisions, and that's why we're going to continue to monitor the situation.

Again, the budget for 2022-23 helps Yukoners mitigate the financial impact of fighting climate change, which is one of the big drivers, with green energy retrofits and making sure that those carbon rebates go back to Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: I'm shocked at the number of inaccuracies in the minister's comments there. The fuel tax in Yukon is not six percent; it's 6.2 cents for gasoline and 7.2 cents for diesel, so the minister was wrong on that. The member is wrong on a number of other points — about what our question is about — but, quite frankly, the question is: Will this government take this issue seriously and begin to take measures to reduce the cost of fuel for Yukoners?

The Premier likes to point out that the surplus gives the flexibility to respond to emerging issues. Well, this is certainly an emerging issue that is affecting just about each and every Yukoner. The government could waive the fuel tax for the year and make life just that much more affordable for Yukon citizens, and the government would still be comfortably in a surplus.

So, will the Government of Yukon consider dropping the fuel tax for the year to lighten the cost of living for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is interesting that the Yukon Party has finally woken up to inflation. We have seen rates that have concerned us since August, with no questions from the opposition all fall about inflation, and now it seems like political expedience has them finally to a place where they are actually concerned about this, so that is interesting.

Taking a look at gasoline taxes by region in Canada as far as cents per litre, it is 6.2 for Yukon — when compared to BC, which is 27 cents per litre, or compared to Alberta, which the member opposite is talking about, where it was 13 cents before their actions this week.

We have been saying for five years now — making sure that we keep prices low for Yukoners and making sure that we have quality of life up here. That has been a concern of ours for five years now. When the members opposite scoff about the initiatives in this budget — keeping those prices low for Yukoners — that is horrible. The early childhood care and learning investment is massive for keeping the price for Yukoners down low for the quality of life that they enjoy here. The retrofits programs that are in this budget are not things just for political reasons in the last month or couple of weeks now that these folks are back to work; it has been important to us for five years of budgeting.

I could go over the economic development and tourism and culture relief programs for businesses that have been renowned all over Canada, but there are too many to list in this short time frame.

Question re: Rent control

Ms. McLeod: Following the Liberal-NDP coalition agreement, the government brought in a poorly thought-out rent control policy. To quote directly from the CASA: “Residential rent increases will be capped at the rate of inflation...”

According to the Bureau of Statistics and the government’s own website on key economic indicators, inflation from January 2021 to January 2022 was 3.7 percent. Now the Liberals and the NDP have decided to cap rent increases at 3.3 percent this year, below the inflation rate presented on the government’s own website.

Given that the Liberal-NDP coalition agreement clearly states that rent increases will be capped at inflation, can the Minister of Community Services confirm why they have capped them lower than inflation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am glad to be on my feet this afternoon to address the issue of the rent index. We heard from Yukoners about the need to work together and we continue to respect the agreements made under the confidence and supply agreement. This includes having met our commitment to index rents to inflation as of May 15, 2021.

The rental index aims to offer stability in rent for Yukoners over the term of the confidence and supply agreement. Given the rate of inflation, we know that landlords may choose to increase rents as of May 15, 2022 by up to 3.3 percent, which is the rate of inflationary change measured by the consumer price index. This means an additional \$33 per month where rent is currently \$1,000.

Stable, affordable housing is fundamental to the health and well-being of all Yukoners. The rental index is one of the other initiatives being taken with the focus on housing in the territory, including working with our partners across governments to increase housing options for Yukoners. We are trying to make Yukon affordable for Yukoners. We are doing that in concert with our colleagues across the way, and we are happy to talk about this again.

Ms. McLeod: I would rather have an answer to the question.

One of the first things that the Minister of Community Services did, upon taking this portfolio, was to bring in this poorly thought-out rent control policy. As a result of this poor policy, people have been evicted. Landlords have exited and rental units have been removed from the market. In fact, it has become clear that, since this minister brought this policy in, the housing crisis has gotten even worse.

Can the minister point to a single example of how this policy has done anything but make the housing crisis worse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to rise again to talk about the rent index. I will note that the CASA has been endorsed by all three parties, including the rent index. We heard it loud and clear from the leader of the opposition last fall that he was actually in support of CASA and actually stood up and said that he was more than willing to endorse it, including the rent index.

This is actually something that all three parties have endorsed in this House. We know that this is the case.

This was a priority for the New Democratic Party, and we agreed to support their policy. We appreciate the NDP’s willingness to work together to address housing pressures in the territory. The Yukon Party’s only solution, in addition to endorsing the CASA’s rent index, was to develop land, which we are already doing and at a faster clip than the Yukon Party had ever done when they were in government.

We have shared our concerns about this policy with the NDP. If people are being evicted as a result of this policy, it is clearly not making affordable housing more accessible. Since 2016, our population has grown by 12.1 percent, and housing and construction has kept pace. The number of private dwellings has increased by 12.9 percent. \$267 million in residential construction in 2021 shattered the 2020 record of nearly \$200 million. This year’s budget includes more than \$60 million for housing initiatives across the territory. I am happy to talk about it more.

Ms. McLeod: It’s clear to anyone who bothers to look at the government’s own website with key economic indicators that inflation from January 2021 to January 2022 was 3.7 percent. Furthermore, it’s clear that, by setting the cap at 3.3 percent, the Liberal government is inconsistent with the CASA. Finally, as we’ve seen, this policy has done nothing but negatively impact the rental housing market and further contribute to the housing crisis.

Will the minister admit that this policy is a failure and commit to fixing it by repealing his misguided rent control policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We made a commitment through CASA, as did apparently the opposition itself, to follow the CAS agreement. We are following through with that, and we will follow the agreement until its expiry in January 2023.

We went into this with eyes wide open. We had identified some of the problems. We decided to proceed ahead with it because it was a pilot project — to see how it worked. We agreed to take a look at the inflation rate every single year in May and set the inflation target for the year. We have done that, as per our agreement, and we will continue to monitor how this policy affects the housing market. When it comes for renewal in January 2023, we will have another look at it.

Question re: Midwifery in Yukon

Ms. Blake: In April 2017, the current Premier said — and I quote: “Working with midwives, doctors and other medical professionals, the government anticipates licensing the practice of midwifery later next year.” It didn’t happen — not in 2018, in 2019, or in 2020. In 2021, we finally saw regulations for the practice of midwifery in the Yukon. In May 2021, the Premier said that they were — and I quote: “... working toward a fully funded program later this year.” It’s now 2022, and we have no midwives currently practising in the Yukon.

When will the Premier allow Yukon families to have access to midwives in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government remains deeply committed to making strides going forward with the integration

of publicly funded, accessible, and regulated midwifery services into Yukon's health care system. Our goal is to provide Yukoners with additional options within a range of health care services, which support healthy pregnancies, birthing experiences, and care after childbirth, without having to pay out-of-pocket for any of those services.

Our implementation plan and model of care for regulated and fully funded midwifery services is based on the recommendations of local and national experts, based on significant research and extensive public and stakeholder feedback gathered throughout the engagement process. It also aligns with Yukon's approach to midwifery care and the best practices and standards of most of the provinces and territories in Canada.

Ms. Blake: The midwifery regulations were approved early in 2021. This was a long-awaited day for midwives in the Yukon and for Yukon families. Finally, midwifery support would be a real option for all Yukon families, but here we are in 2022 — no midwife has been able to provide their essential and valuable services in the Yukon to any family wanting that support. Midwives have left the Yukon for better-paying jobs where their expertise and the importance of their work is respected.

What has this government done to ensure that midwives return to the Yukon to practise?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is a very important service for Yukoners, and they told us that it was important to them and that midwifery be regulated across the territory and that there be a very high standard of care. That is why we are working hard with our local and national partners to ensure that the midwifery program is fully integrated into our health system to offer the highest quality and consistent care for all Yukoners.

Change is never without its challenges, but it was time to regulate the profession. Before this, there was no minimum education or training requirements for people offering midwifery and midwifery-type services here in the territory. Our Liberal government is integrating midwifery into our health care system so that Yukoners have more options for care. Under our leadership, the Yukon's health care system is transforming into a national leader, and this is just one aspect of how that is happening.

I can indicate that recently, working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, I noted that they have changed their bylaws and their rules to integrate midwifery into that practice, and we are looking forward to services coming onstream very soon. We have regulated midwifery for the first time in Yukon history — an incredible challenge and opportunity for Yukoners and their health care.

Ms. Blake: A government committee was struck to consult and make recommendations on the implementation of midwifery in the Yukon. Two meetings were held before the Yukon Association for Birth Choices was invited. Recently, the same association was informed that their services on this committee were no longer required. The Yukon Association for Birth Choices has long been the voice of midwives and, even more importantly, the voice of Yukon families wanting to be able to choose the method of birth that they feel is best.

Will the minister explain this reluctance to work with midwives and families in creating an accessible birthing choice for Yukon families?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that the facts presented in this question are correct. I have personally looked into the makeup of the implementation committee. What I can indicate is that it is extremely hard work and important work to regulate and to build a framework for midwifery in the Yukon. It has involved extensive engagement, consultation, and research for the past four years. We have posted and attempted to hire midwives. We have had very interesting comments. We worked with the Public Service Commission to increase the rate of pay — something that was discussed here in the fall — for individual midwives being hired, and we have had challenges from the Yukon Employees' Union on that issue, and we are working through that with them, but certainly not something we expected in the process of achieving midwifery here in the territory.

In addition to seeking advice of the Midwifery Advisory Committee, made up of key health care partners, we also engaged Yukoners, midwives, physicians, and nurses. The regulations are in place, as noted, and our government is very pleased to welcome the first Yukon midwife to the territory. We are, of course, hiring a second midwife for the services so that they can be properly deployed and serve Yukon birthing mothers.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Ms. McLeod: Last week, a day and a half before the Legislature began sitting, the Premier announced that the remaining public health restrictions would be lifted over the course of the coming weeks. In particular, the Premier announced that he was abandoning the Liberal's vaccine mandate for government employees. According to his announcement, many of the employees who refused to share their vaccination status will be able to return to work on April 4. Mr. Speaker, this announcement was light on details.

My question is simple: How many of the hundreds of Yukon government employees placed on leave without pay will be able to return to work on April 4?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The public service has been working very hard. I would like to thank all of our public servants throughout this time. This was all about keeping Yukoners safe. We know that the policy has been very effective in reducing the impacts of COVID-19, so I want to thank everyone for all of their efforts, strong leadership, and work in guiding the territory through the pandemic.

We just finished our two large waves of COVID. At last count, when the public service gave me the numbers, it was 95 full-time Yukoners who were on leave without pay. The Premier announced last week, after working with the chief medical officer of health, that we are bringing back our employees. We are repatriating them. We are looking at the most vulnerable sectors, which are settings, for example, like long-term care facilities, and whether we need to maintain some vaccine requirements there. But by and large, the majority of

those workers who have been on leave without pay will be back working with us as of April 4, as long as the health stays positive for the territory.

Ms. McLeod: There are hundreds of Yukoners who have been placed on leave without pay because of this vaccine mandate the Liberals have imposed. This means that those families have been going on without a regular income for months now. Now they are hearing that they may be able to go back to work, but it's not clear which jobs or how many jobs.

Will the government at least commit to a date by which these people will get to know whether or not they get to go back to work?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, we are working with the union and the chief medical officer of health. We are just talking through what it is to make sure that we keep folks in our long-term care facilities safe. That is what we are working on right now. We will get that information out as soon as possible. What we've always done — and what the Premier has been doing often, as well as others — is that, as soon as we get the information, we go out and we indicate it publicly. We will make that commitment to do that again, as we have done all along. In fact, what we've been doing all along is asking for the advice of our chief medical officer of health.

I am just not sure now whether or not the members opposite think that is the right thing to do. I know that, last year, they said no, they would not follow that leadership, and now that this advice has come from the chief medical officer of health to repatriate folks, I am just not sure whether the Yukon Party is supporting that or not supporting that. I look forward to hearing from them.

We are very happy, as the territory's largest employer, that we took these actions to keep the public safe, and we are very happy that we are now able to get workers back to work again. The number of full-time employees is 95, and we have casual and part-time employees around 200 — some of them summer employees.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regardless, when the Liberals let these families know that they can return to work, it remains clear that at least some of those employees will not be welcomed back. The yukon.ca website makes clear that the vaccination mandate will likely remain in place for some sectors.

So, if the government is planning on maintaining the vaccine mandate for some sectors beyond April 4, what is the plan for those employees? Will they simply be left on leave without pay indefinitely, or will there come a time when the Liberal government stops pretending to care and terminates their employment?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me start by saying thank you to all of our public service employees. Thank you to those who did choose to be vaccinated. Thank you to those who did not and went on leave without pay. In their way, they stepped away, because they chose not to be vaccinated, but they gave service to Yukoners, so I want to thank everybody for their service to this territory. Together, we have had some of the best health outcomes — the best outcomes out of COVID generally. So, it is not that there wasn't heartache and challenge throughout this

global pandemic — there has been. But I would like to say thanks to all public servants.

We are working to keep our most vulnerable settings safe. So, we have asked the chief medical officer of health to advise us on what she believes the risk is around places like our long-term care facilities. So, yes, we may say that it may be a requirement for people who work there to be vaccinated, because we think — or if we are advised that way — I haven't been yet — but, to keep the risk low, that is what is important, and we will come back and we will let all of our employees know that and we will work with them to support them through that.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Mr. Hassard: So, the vaccine mandate doesn't just apply to Yukon government employees; it also applies to a range of private businesses in the allied health sector, NGOs, and the private contractors who do work for the government. When the Premier announced that the vaccine mandate was being removed on April 4, several businesses in the allied health sector reached out to our office to ask if that meant that they could rehire staff who they had laid off. Unfortunately, there's no clear answer to that question.

When the Liberals brought the mandate in, they waited until close to midnight the day before it was to come into force to pass the OIC.

Can the government explain which businesses will be able to bring back the employees they had to place on leave as a result of this Liberal's vaccine mandate, or are they planning to wait until midnight on April 3 to tell them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for the question. This is effectively the same question, and I thank him for that question. We are working, right now, with the chief medical officer of health to understand how to keep people in our most vulnerable settings safe, whether that's long-term care facilities or similar facilities. That's what we are working on right now, and there's a big difference between when we let the public know — the Premier often has gotten out ahead of when the order-in-council is written.

What you ought to know is that — and let me just give a shout-out to the Justice department — also public servants, by the way, who have worked flat out every time we make these changes to get those orders-in-council ready, to put everything in place appropriately. But the Premier — or the Minister of Health and Social Services or other members of Cabinet who are asked to inform the public — does so ahead of time — to tell everyone that here is where we're getting to. So, our apologies that they have been working until midnight to serve the public. That is what they're doing, but what I would like to say to them is thank you so much for helping to keep Yukoners safe.

Mr. Hassard: In fact, that was a very different question for the minister, but unfortunately, it was the same non-answer that we are very used to.

The vaccine mandate also applies to any contractor or business that bids on work with the Yukon government. In fact,

the mandate found its way into contracts and is now an explicit contract requirement. So, if the government is removing the vaccine mandate for contractors doing work on government jobs after April 4, what happens to contracts that were signed before April 4? Will contractors be forced to maintain the vaccine mandate until the conclusion of their project, even if the Yukon government has otherwise completely removed it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If my answer did not seem clear, I will do my very best right now to make it as explicitly clear as I can.

We are working right now with the chief medical officer of health to ask her for her advice around our most vulnerable settings — for example, long-term care facilities. That is what we're asking the question about.

There may be others. I don't want to be explicit with a list today because it's her advice that will come to us. We will then take that advice and make a decision on the vaccine mandate. For the majority of our public servants, the contractors, and all the people around in the vaccine mandate, it will end on April 4. For some in our most vulnerable sectors, it may continue. We are waiting to get that advice. We have asked for it as soon as we got the advice that we could move in this direction. We signalled it more than a month out, and we are now working to get that advice.

I promise this House that I will come back as soon as I can, and we will make it public as soon as we have that advice. I thank everyone for their patience.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, this is less than a month away, and businesses, contractors, and NGOs need to make decisions, families need to make decisions, and they need to know if they in fact have jobs.

NGOs that had to lay off staff because of the mandate were very interested to hear the government's announcement that the mandate was being removed. We have heard of several NGOs that had to put on leave or lay off multiple staff, yet it remains unclear which NGOs will get to hire these employees back.

Can the government explain which NGOs will bring their employees back on April 4? If NGOs are unable to bring their employees back on April 4, will the government assist those groups with the employment liability associated with permanently terminating those employees?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you to the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission for answering this question to the members opposite. Really, if the members opposite paid attention to the press conference last week, this was exactly what was said by the chief medical officer and me at that time. Added to the list are volunteers as well, so whether it is NGOs, allied health professionals, or volunteers, this is the conversation that is ongoing right now.

We are very appreciative of people's patience as these conversations continue, but at the same time — and the members opposite clearly don't want to hear the answer because they talk every time that we talk and then they say that we don't answer their questions.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was explaining to the members opposite, if they care to listen, we are working on this right now. We have said, again, the most vulnerable population — that is where we have to focus our attention.

We will make the announcement as soon as possible, when we have all the details. We do appreciate the patience of folks as we work through this.

Also, putting things into perspective, compared to other jurisdictions, as far as school closures, as far as business closures, as far as other health measures, this government and the Yukon population have worked in tandem together to reduce the worst pressures that this devastating disease could have had on the Yukon, and I am very, very thankful for that.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Cathers: 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 for debate on Wednesday, March 9, 2022.

They are Bill No. 302, *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)*, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; and Motion No. 288, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North.

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, March 9, 2022. It is Motion No. 168, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 282

Clerk: Motion No. 282, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT Standing Order 76 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly be amended for the duration of the 2022 Spring Sitting by deleting all instances of the words "Government Bill" and substituting in their place the words "appropriation bill"; and

THAT, following the 2022 Spring Sitting, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges meet prior to the 2022 Fall Sitting to review Standing Order 76.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Last fall, we had a debate here in this Legislature to talk about permanently removing Standing Order 76 or amending it so that it would reflect just on government bills other than budget bills.

At that time, I rose and I spoke about the importance of taking that conversation to the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. We did take that debate there, and we talked about it for some time. I wouldn't say that we have yet reached agreement as a committee, but what we did come to was a bit of a compromise. That compromise was to do a pilot project where, this session, we seek to remove — or to alter, sorry — Standing Order 76 so that it does remove the clause that would end debate on government bills other than budget bills and that we would trial it for this Sitting and that we would ask the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges to come back over the summer and to look at that and to try to understand how that affected the work of this House.

What I will say is that the tension in the debate is how to make sure that there is an opportunity for bills to be debated fully, while also allowing that bills have the opportunity to get to a vote ultimately.

Other legislatures have done this differently from Standing Order 76. We all seem to agree that it is time to move to something new, although we haven't yet agreed on where we should land. I think this is a good compromise.

I look forward to debate on the motion today, and I look forward to the temporary new rules that we will have in place for us, as a House, and to see how that will work to do the work for Yukoners and make sure that the business of government proceeds here in the Legislature.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise in support of this motion. It was agreed to by the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, of which I am a member. It also is, as the Government House Leader made reference to, very similar to what we had proposed last fall, through a motion brought forward in the Legislative Assembly by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition. If memory serves, I believe it was Motion No. 113.

This is a positive step forward, albeit something that's being test-driven just for this Sitting of the Assembly. I would note — and also just for the reference of everyone — that since SCREP has moved toward also making its minutes public, this is not a violation of the committee's privilege — that what we have proposed there includes the possibility of expanding the role of the work done by the Legislative Assembly through committees, such as the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, which has been active in name only for many years. We believe it could play a valuable role, including possibly having some legislation referred to that committee and allowing that committee to do work outside Sittings of this Assembly to consult with the public on legislation that is of more interest to the public. There may be a desire and benefit in having an opportunity, in a more relaxed setting than this Chamber, for stakeholders and other witnesses to come forward — recognizing that is a matter under discussion, but, just for the record, I wanted to note that and the fact that I believe and

we believe that there is room for this Legislative Assembly to grow as an institution, and part of that should include more opportunities for public consultation and public involvement on legislation, regulations, and other things that are affecting the lives of Yukoners.

I will wrap up my comments at this point, and I look forward to further work of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. We will be supporting this, of course, and would just note in closing that the Yukon Party Official Opposition does believe that we should be looking at collectively increasing the opportunities for public consultation on legislation, including direct consultation with MLAs through making more use of committees outside the Assembly.

Ms. White: It's a pleasure today to speak in favour of this motion. I believe that we've all been sent here by people who expect us to do better, and by that I mean not passing legislation that hasn't had the opportunity to be fully debated. We saw in the last Sitting what can happen if we work together. That example is going to be the better building program that comes forward again this spring.

The real test will be whether or not we can hold ourselves accountable, whether we can do the work in a timely fashion and get through it, and I believe we can. I'm looking forward to seeing this work out for this Sitting. I'm looking forward to hearing — well, I'm looking forward to seeing how that works and then, of course, the discussions that will follow, but I believe this is the first step toward doing what we all said we would do for Yukoners, which is working together.

If we fundamentally believe that ideas come from all sides, then we can work together to make them happen and I am looking forward to seeing that happen in this Sitting.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close the debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. I agree that this is an important step for us as a legislature — trying to find our way forward. I acknowledge that, as the Member for Lake Laberge noted, we agreed as a committee that we should try to allow ourselves to be able to reference what is happening in the committee work here in the Legislature. I think that is a good step, and we agreed that, on a go-forward basis, we would ensure that our minutes are more public after, of course, they have been vetted. It was really the discussion, or the debate, on this topic that led to the agreement on making the minutes public. We have now made it a go-forward thing, so that is also a good step.

I thank the member for his interest in hearing that there should be more public engagement on bills. Of course, anytime that we bring forward legislation, unless it is housekeeping-types of legislation, we always do public engagement. We put out things like "what we heard". I look forward to hearing, as their bill comes forward tomorrow, what type of public

consultation they have done on that. That is really important to me. I look forward to that.

On this motion, we will do our best to adjust. We will have to work hard to make sure that the government non-budget bills have enough time, because we always want to get those bills to a vote ultimately, and I thank the Leader of the Third Party for her words about working together to find a way so that we can make sure that there is debate and that we get to a final decision.

With that, I will sit and I look forward to the vote on this motion.

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.

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 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No.282 agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 204, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Hon. Mr. Clarke.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I was continuing with my comments, I was reviewing some of the work that is being done by the Department of Highways and Public Works on roadwork. This included significant multi-year work through key segments of the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse and specifically between the weigh scales and Lodestar Lane. It also includes some design and pre-engineering for the thaw slump at kilometre 1456, as this section is significantly impacted by permafrost thaw.

Separately, still on the Alaska Highway, we have also allocated \$2.3 million to the replacement of the Big Creek bridge, which is 60 kilometres west of Watson Lake.

While these are notable, we are also continuing to invest a significant portion on the Klondike Highway. Almost \$43 million is allocated in this year's budget. I can advise that significant work has been ongoing between kilometre 418 and kilometre 646 on the Klondike Highway, with ongoing road resiliency improvements occurring. This is also what I was referring to when I spoke previously about infrastructure deficit. This is also why we are investing in this portion.

We are also replacing bridges, such as the one at Crooked Creek, located just south of Stewart Crossing, for the sum of \$15 million. Members will be familiar with that, as it was quite a precipitous or a fairly steep drop to a small bridge and then up a steep incline on the other side. If members have travelled on the Klondike Highway, a lot of that ground has already been reprofiled, and it is a significant project. It will certainly make that area significantly safer for the travelling public. We are also rehabilitating bridges, such as the ones over the McCabe River and Moose Creek, for a total of \$3.3 million.

There are also allocations for capital for roads, but I would also like to mention the \$51 million that is allocated to various airport projects. Approximately \$46 million is allocated to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport project, which is a critical facility for the territory. I can advise that this project will be multi-year and is ongoing. Also, \$27 million will go toward a parallel runway and the rest of the other improvements around the runway, including apron panels.

We are also investing approximately \$800,000 on the Dawson airport and Old Crow aerodrome for work on the runways and other site improvements. The community aerodromes have been allocated approximately \$2 million for capital maintenance in this year's budget.

I would like to move to the Property Management division at this time. This division has a wide variety of responsibilities. One of them is building maintenance, and for that purpose, we have allocated a little more than \$10 million. Some examples of this are painting and flooring work, elevator upgrades, parking lot work, emergency generator replacements for the Haines Junction health centre, and the main sewer replacement at Whitehorse Elementary.

In the building development portion of the budget, we have allocated \$56.7 million for the building of housing, and there is a health and wellness centre for Old Crow for about \$28 million. Out of those \$56.7 million, almost \$14 million have been allocated to energy retrofit projects for government buildings.

We will also be upgrading the Selkirk storm drain for a little over \$2.5 million. This drain will run along Selkirk Street and eventually connect to the storm line under Lewes Boulevard to ultimately discharge into the Yukon River. Residents of Riverdale will be aware of the clearing that was done last year in anticipation of that project.

Staying in Riverdale, we have also allocated funds to demolish Macaulay Lodge. The contract for the demolition of this building has been awarded to a Yukon First Nation

business, and we expect the work to be completed by the end of this summer. I am optimistic about the ongoing work with the Yukon Housing Corporation to plan for a future housing development on this site.

We are also allocating approximately \$4.25 million for the purposes of replacing the Whitehorse airport maintenance facility.

Last but certainly not least, under capital planning, we have, in this year's budget, allocated \$27 million for the purpose of the continuation of the Dempster fibre project. As members will know, this project will connect the Yukon to the existing Mackenzie Valley fibre link and create a 4,000-kilometre long fibre network that will provide reliable, dependable, and redundant Internet connection to the communities in the Yukon and, in fact, across Canada's north.

We have also allocated \$7 million to the green infrastructure program. Through this allocation, we will be modernizing our grader stations and phasing out inefficient diesel generators for solar-powered facilities. These solar array systems, once installed at the grader stations at Ogilvie, Blanchard, Tuchtua, and Klondike, will offset approximately 200,000 litres of diesel fuel each year, which is a reduction of 530 tonnes of greenhouse gases.

I can also advise that the grader stations have been prioritized, and these are the first four, as far as having the greatest impact on the reduction of greenhouse gases, but there are another four that have been identified as well over the course of the next few years. Given that they are island-grid diesel generation stations, these were seen as being highly attractive targets for solar-powered facilities and for the reduction of significant volumes of greenhouse gases through the significantly less use of diesel fuel.

I am particularly proud of this project where the synergy with the departments of Environment, Highways and Public Works, and Energy, Mines and Resources really bears fruit.

We are making the most substantial investments in renewable energy in the Yukon in more than a decade as we continue to support efforts that empower Yukoners and Yukon businesses to advance the territory's climate change goals.

Of course, I have not covered all of the projects and programs from my departments. I would like to thank all employees at both departments for their ongoing work and dedication. The values and priorities, as represented through this project, are a great source of pride for me.

This budget addresses critical needs in the territory and makes necessary investments so that all Yukoners will benefit from this economic growth and the substantial and meaningful commitments to a greener and more sustainable future.

In closing, I have a few final comments to make.

Candidly, from my position of privilege and in a peaceful community and in light of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, I thought I would make a few brief comments as a legislator in the Yukon.

The other day, I was walking outside of the Legislative Assembly and some individuals were protesting lawfully, freely, and unimpeded against government COVID-19 policies, as they can expect to do in a free and democratic society. One

held a sign that read, "Vaccine mandates equal Hitler's Germany", and another sign implied that Yukon decision-makers should be judged at Nuremberg 2.0. The City of Nuremberg in Germany is, of course, where Nazi leaders were tried for their atrocious crimes against humanity at the end of World War II in 1945 and 1946. Mr. Speaker, 12 of the Nazi defendants were sentenced to death for their egregious crimes — crimes that included genocide.

As I indicated, we as Canadians value freedom of expression and peaceful protests. However, to analogize current and past public health restrictions in that manner, in my view, is extremely excessive rhetoric that is being advanced against Yukon lawmakers. Most importantly, it completely diminishes the actual horrific experiences of actual victims and descendants of the loathsome Nazi regime.

I would like to, once again, express my extreme gratitude and thank my good fortune for living in a prosperous, functioning, liberal democracy, warts and all.

Members of the House will be familiar with the economist democracy index. I looked at the most recent democracy index, which was in 2020, which highlighted democracy in decline, but the only full democracies in the world, without reservation, were Canada, all of the countries in Scandinavia, Ireland, Iceland, and New Zealand. In fact, the general public may or may not know this, but there are less than 30 countries in total in the world that are deemed to be non-flawed democracies.

I am acutely aware — and we are constantly reminded through both tragic history lessons and also as it is unfolding in the present day. As we well know, President Putin is meting out his iron-fisted, brutal, and authoritarian clampdown in real time, which ultimately is having an awful and disproportionately devastating impact on innocent civilians who we pray for, as we try to support them concretely from faraway Yukon.

I would finally express the sincere honour that I have being able to serve as the MLA for Riverdale North and that I never take for granted my freedom of speech in this Assembly in a free, democratic, and peaceful country.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise today in response to the budget. I will be speaking to a number of issues on behalf of constituents and other Yukoners. A few of the areas that I will talk about include: the pandemic; the doctor shortage; the opioid crisis; and the impact of rising prices on Yukoners' ability to pay for food, fuel, electricity, housing, and other necessities. I will also talk about our agriculture sector and challenges faced by the private sector and rising property crime.

First of all, I want to begin by quoting the letter that the Leader of the Official Opposition sent to Prime Minister Trudeau recently with regard to the federal government's decision to use the *Emergencies Act*.

In the letter urging the Prime Minister to repeal the declaration of a national state of emergency, the Leader of the Official Opposition said this — and I quote: "We also urge you to recognize that there are deep divisions in Canadian society right now, and it is time for all leaders to show respect for citizens, including people with whom they disagree, and to

focus on unifying our country. We need to come together as Canadians again, and jointly find a path forward.”

Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has created a lot of strains on citizens and on society. It's important to remember, especially as we talk about our fellow Yukoners, that we may not always agree with each other, but we don't have to agree with each other to care about each other or to respect people, including those who disagree with us and with whom we may disagree.

I want to move to talk about the international situation.

Mr. Speaker, the illegal and immoral invasion of the Ukraine by Russia is a world-changing event. Millions of people in the Ukraine are feeling the impact of this unjustified attack by Putin. People in Canada and in the Yukon, along with others around the world, have watched this happen with a mix of sadness and anger.

Canada and international allies have imposed a series of strong sanctions on Russia. Provinces and territories, including the Yukon, have also taken action. As the Leader of the Official Opposition and I both stated on the opening day of this Sitting of the Legislative Assembly, the Yukon Party strongly supports those actions. We support sending weapons, ammunition, and equipment to Ukraine and supporting refugees fleeing from the conflict.

We also urge the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of making protection of our Arctic sovereignty a top priority by taking immediate action to modernize and strengthen our air force, navy, army, reserves, and Coast Guard. As Canadians, we need to realize the importance of ensuring that we can protect our country and come to the assistance of our allies. That includes making sure our Armed Forces are ready to meet the needs of today and the future.

We also need to realize that some of the assumptions that have guided many governments, and indeed much of western society in the last few decades, have been naïve.

Our hearts go out to the innocent victims of this war in Ukraine, and we commend the people of Ukraine for their courage in facing the Russian invaders and fighting for freedom and democracy. With this invasion, the world had changed.

In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. I recall listening to the news of this in my grandparents' kitchen. As events led to the Cold War ending, many people, especially in the west, breathed a sigh of relief. As a new era began, many believed that we lived in a rules-based international order and the time for major conflicts and invasions of the type seen and feared in previous times was a thing of the past.

Global trade and mutual economic growth were thought by many to characterize the modern era. These naïve assumptions and hopes met reality when Putin invaded Ukraine. Like during the time period between World War I and World War II, some people and some countries wanted lasting peace so strongly, many made the mistake of believing other nations and leaders felt the same and then ran into hard reality when a major power invaded a peaceful neighbour. This has happened again, and the world changed again in February 2022. This will impact not only national security, but the economy, the supply chain, and many other things we have taken for granted. It includes

presenting increasing potential threats to our Arctic sovereignty, including off the Yukon's north shore.

As we face these challenges together, we must remember that whatever differences we have, together we are all Canadians, and our national interest is in protecting our democracy and the freedom we all enjoy. We also must be realistic, and we must respond to the changing global situation with actions guided by wisdom and principles, not ideology or idealism or naïve hope. We must be realistic. We must be wise. We must be principled.

We can take action at home, and we should. Some of the actions we should take have other benefits. These include becoming more self-sufficient and being able to meet more of our own needs here in the Yukon, or at least in Canada, if we are unable to do it here. This includes supporting and growing our local agriculture sector. We've seen a number of Yukon farms, market gardeners, and producers take significant steps to expand production in recent years. There are many in my riding, and I would like to thank all of them for their contributions to growing Yukon agriculture.

Other opportunities that have benefits, both economically and in potentially reducing fossil fuel emissions, include repatriating parts of the Canadian manufacturing sector that have largely gone offshore. Instead of shipping so many of our raw minerals and resources thousands of miles overseas and then shipping them thousands of miles back, there is the opportunity to actually benefit economically and reduce emissions by making more of the goods we depend on here in Canada, and it includes ending our dependence on oil, natural resources, and other products from authoritarian regimes.

Mr. Speaker, in standing here today and speaking to the 2022-23 budget, I am reminded of a time that seems ages ago in many ways, but was not that long ago — two years ago, in March 2020, just before the pandemic was declared. Once again, with all due respect to colleagues across the floor, the current government seems slow to realize that a major world-changing event has happened, and the talking points we have heard so far this Sitting once again seem stale-dated and out of touch with the new reality. The world has changed. These changes are not all what we want, but we must be realistic about the challenges that we are facing.

We will have some spirited debates, including criticism, but we should ultimately remember that, together, we are all Canadians. The interests of the Yukon and Canada should be paramount in everything that we do, and we need to recognize the importance of acting in the best interests of Yukoners and all Canadians.

I would like to move on to focus on a few of the major issues that were impacting the lives of Yukoners before the world-changing attack by Russia on Ukraine and are continuing to impact people here today.

I would like to begin with the doctor shortage. As we debated in the Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly on a number of occasions, according to the government's own numbers, 21 percent of Yukoners — over one-fifth — do not have a family doctor. Our health care system is largely set up to operate with the assumption that everyone does have a family

doctor, and if you are one of the over one-fifth of Yukoners who don't, it creates challenges in accessing the medical care you need when you need it. The closing of the walk-in clinic last summer created a further challenge for people and created further pressure on the hospital.

We raised this issue repeatedly in the fall. We asked the government to reinstate the recruitment position that they had cut. We asked them to work with the Yukon Medical Association on a plan to improve the recruitment and retention of family doctors here in the Yukon. I gave some examples of the success that we had previously when I was Health and Social Services minister in working with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and other health professions and stakeholders on a health human resources strategy.

I urge the government to work with those same stakeholders to update the strategy to reflect the needs currently and ensure that the Yukon is doing everything it can to recruit and retain family physicians here in the territory and ensure that Yukoners have access to the health care professionals that they need, including physicians, when they need them.

Unfortunately, despite repeated questions in the fall, the Minister of Health and Social Services was unwilling or unable to point to anything tangible that this government had actually done to recruit and retain physicians here in the territory. Instead, we heard talking points about talking to the YMA, but we didn't see tangible actions. We heard that they were considering reinstating the position that they had cut, but we didn't see tangible actions. Unfortunately, especially with the additional strain caused by the pandemic, every day that this physician shortage goes on, it is a problem for Yukon citizens.

I have to remind the government, as well, that through actual information that was shared with us by the physician community, it was pointed out to us that, in contrast to the government's claims of doing well, in terms of family physicians per capita, the Yukon actually has the worst ratio of family physicians per capita in the country. In the time period between 2015 and 2019, which is when the report they like to cite covered, the Yukon was the only one of all the provinces and territories in the entire country that had gotten worse in terms of the family physician ratio per capita. That is continuing through their lack of action.

The solution that we suggest is working with the Yukon Medical Association on an action plan to improve recruitment and retention of family physicians and to take those actions as quickly as possible, because it is directly affecting the lives of thousands of Yukoners every single week, every single month, and every single day.

Mr. Speaker, returning to the topic of the pandemic, one of the things I would note is that I've had a number of people mention to me the fact that, in the early days of the pandemic, there was a lot of unity within society — people standing out on balconies, in some places, clanging pots and pans together in support of our health care workers.

Unfortunately, as time has gone on, the pandemic and the politics related to it have been divisive in society. It is unfortunate. While I am trying — in urging everyone to

recognize the importance of leaders and showing respect for citizens, including people with whom they disagree, and a focus on unifying our country, I'm going to try not to point out too many people in the examples I've given, but I do want to point out that some political leaders have used very divisive rhetoric, both at a national level and here in this Assembly unfortunately, including earlier this afternoon. That rhetoric is not helpful.

Again, it's important to recognize that for Yukoners and other citizens we may disagree with, we can disagree with them, but do so respectfully. It is not helping our society when politicians choose to paint individual people within a protest — who may be saying things in an inappropriate way or have a sign that we do not agree with — it's not helpful when everyone who has come out to express concerns is painted with the same brush.

I want to be clear that I'm not defending for a moment unreasonable signs or unreasonable behaviour, but there are many others in the protests we've seen here in the Yukon who, even if members disagree with them, those citizens still deserve to have their views heard respectfully. It is not helpful for our society if people choose to play wedge politics and use divisive rhetoric. It's also not the Yukon way.

I'll move on from that, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to again emphasize and urge everyone to recognize that there are deep divisions in Canadian society right now, and it's time for all leaders to show respect for citizens, including people with whom they disagree, and to focus on unifying our country. We need to come together as Canadians again and jointly find a path forward.

Moving on to some of the specifics in the pandemic, I want to note and acknowledge that the pandemic has been tough on most people in some ways, but it has been harder on some. This includes, especially, people who have suffered job loss as a result of it or have felt divisions, including divisions within families over their views on the pandemic. I have had people contact me who are really not doing well right now — personally, financially, or in some other way.

What I want to note is that I think it is very important that we recognize the unintended consequences of the pandemic and some of the rules — no matter how well-intentioned — the cascading impact that this has had. I also want to acknowledge that it has been tough for many of our health care professionals in dealing with seeing a situation of how people's views on this have evolved and, in some cases, rather than being respected for the work that they are doing on behalf of Canadians, they have, in some cases, been blamed by some people for pandemic rules. That is, of course, neither appropriate nor acceptable.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention as well that, in the area of public health measures, as you will recall, we have been calling for more public consultation and checks on the use of emergency powers since May 2020. We proposed and tabled amendments to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* yesterday that we are calling for debate tomorrow. These measures are aimed at creating increased democratic safeguards and checks and balances over the use of emergency powers and providing for public consultation. Many of the changes are based directly on the federal government's *Emergencies Act* and the

safeguards contained in that. I want to again emphasize that, in our view, it is important that emergency powers be used only when there is no other reasonable alternative, not simply because it is more convenient for government. There are other ways to deal with matters, including public health rules that may be required to deal with situations such as the pandemic. Whenever it is possible to avoid the use of emergency powers, through using those other measures such as legislation, we believe that the use of emergency powers should be avoided.

It is also important to note that one of the themes that we have emphasized for many months throughout the pandemic is that, even if public health measures are needed, it doesn't mean that people, businesses, churches, NGOs, sports associations, et cetera, shouldn't have an opportunity to be consulted on the details that impact their lives. In fact, that exercise is not just a public relations exercise, but it is one that will lead to improvements to those policies and rules because of the fact that people have a better understanding of the rules affecting them than government does when the rules are put into place.

An example of that is the unintended consequences, as members will recall — among the letters that we have written regarding specific aspects of the pandemic is one I wrote to the Premier regarding the impact of the pandemic rules on churches and faith-based organizations. The Leader of the Official Opposition talked about this yesterday, as well as some of the other specific issues that have been raised with us by other Yukoners and the actions we took to raise these concerns.

As members who have seen the letter will recall, it noted that not only were we seeing a situation where the Yukon had more restrictions on churches and faith-based services than any province in the country, but it was actually directly impeding the ability of churches to offer addiction support programs while, at the same time, the Yukon had declared a public health emergency related to the opioid crisis. We were seeing support services directly helping people with an addiction being shut down as a result of pandemic restrictions. While Yukoners have died tragically from both the COVID-19 pandemic and the opioid crisis, in fact, more people have lost their lives due to the opioid crisis than the pandemic — my point being that addiction support services are especially important in the current situation we are in.

I also want to note as well, moving to the topic of the opioid crisis — as members will recall, we issued a press release regarding this outlining where we feel that the current government's approach regarding it is lacking. We believe that, in response to the opioid crisis, there needs to be more focus on prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

I want to emphasize that we do support effective harm-reduction programs, but there is more that needs to be done, and a real plan to address the opioid crisis needs to be much more than a list of actions focused mostly on harm reduction. In fact, I believe that the number one goal of any opioid action plan should be to help as many people as possible break their addictions and live free from the risk of overdose. As well, it is important that, in addition to prevention and treatment, appropriate resources are there to help the RCMP go after

illegal drug dealers and to arrest and prosecute the people who are selling these toxic drugs.

As I noted, in the government's response so far, we don't see enough emphasis on helping people break their addictions and stay sober through actions, including making addictions and mental health services more available in all communities, as well as improving aftercare and diversion programs. I should note as well that Yukoners have mentioned to me that, in addition to the opioid part of the drug crisis, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that there are Yukoners who are addicted to other drugs and experiencing harm as a result of that. I agree and we recognize that. It is important that, in responding to all of the illegal drug crises, there should be more focus on prevention and treatment to help people break their addictions and hopefully stay sober, as well as the enforcement piece to help the RCMP go after the people who are selling these illegal drugs.

Just moving on in my notes here, there are a number of issues that I will touch on at a later date. Rather than attempting to deal with everything at second reading here today, I will bring up some issues that I have on my list during Committee.

I would like to thank my colleagues who earlier today raised the issue of the impact of the vaccination mandate on Yukoners and the question about at what point people who have been placed on leave without pay will be able to return to work. The government has at times talked about this in a way that suggests it is a success because of the percentages, but for every one of the hundreds of people who are affected by it and who were placed on leave without pay, they don't see this as a success.

I, along with others, have heard from people who have suffered financial hardship as a direct result of this. The lack of answers from government is not helping anything.

As we look across the country and see other jurisdictions that have lifted vaccination mandates earlier, it is increasingly hard for people who have been placed on leave to understand why the government is not allowing them back to work. I would just urge them to recognize that and to recognize that government getting around to providing those answers may seem reasonable when you are the one making the decisions, but for people who are desperately looking for answers, they are concerned about this.

I would just note, in closing on this topic, that it is important that government do take appropriate steps to protect public health. One of the things that has been lacking throughout the pandemic is transparency, including the government — today we heard again the minister's attempt to question whether we support the advice of the chief medical officer of health, but we're now almost two years into a pandemic, and the government has yet to share with us, even a single time, the actual recommendations and advice that they are receiving from the chief medical officer of health. We're expected to just trust them and we have asked them repeatedly to provide it publicly to MLAs and to everyone so that everyone can judge that advice. They should have no reason, in my view, for not sharing that information.

I want to note, as well, that one of the things that has come up from a number of people is the request for more information about the statistics in the territory around adverse reactions that we've asked government to disclose. In response to my last letter, the Minister of Health and Social Services suggested that I check two websites, both of which were actually open when I wrote the letter — one, the government's COVID website and one on the hospital's website. But the specific request around information that Yukoners have been asking us for — and government has — and should be happy to share, they wouldn't share.

Other examples of where the government is not providing information — I heard from a constituent who contacted me yesterday asking for information about treatment, including whether the drug that had been approved recently — the name is escaping me at the moment — was available here in the Yukon — earlier announcements had suggested that a small quantity of it was being made available here — and how they would go about getting that if they or their family required it.

That person pointed out to me that if you look at the BC government's website, there is a lot more information about treatment for COVID-19 than here in the Yukon. That's just another example of where the government here, due to the direction of ministers, is not sharing as much information as a number of provinces are.

Again, I just want to note that the sharing of information is a very good counter to people who have questions about government decisions and that sharing more information — as long as the decisions make sense — with the public should help reinforce public confidence in the decisions being made, not undermine them. Governments should have nothing to fear from sharing this information, and it would, I believe, help answer some of the questions, rumours, and doubts that go about in the absence of that information.

Another related matter I want to touch on — I have expressed concerns every single Sitting since the 2017 Spring Sitting about the funding government is providing to the Hospital Corporation, most of the time the insufficiency of that funding, including their failure, some years, to even provide millions of dollars in core funding until after the end of the fiscal year.

Another related issue that we heard previously from the previous chair of the Hospital Corporation and the current CEO was that the hospital had wanted to increase the ICU bed capacity to increase the surge capacity of the hospital to respond to the pandemic. They wanted to increase from four beds to eight.

Last fall, when the new chair and the CEO appeared, I asked them about the progress of that in the year since witnesses had appeared. We were informed at the time — and members can go check the transcripts from late November of 2021 of what I said and what the witnesses said — the indication was that the hospital had wanted to increase the ICU bed capacity, but the stumbling block was that they did not have the staff to do that, because as members may know, the hardest part about the ICU is not the beds but the staff and the resources to operate and keep operating those beds.

Well, staffing requires financial resources. Again, had the government stepped up to provide the hospital with a funding increase to allow them to hire permanent staff for those ICU beds, we would very likely see those beds up and running. Unfortunately, due to their failure to provide those resources, we see a situation that affects the rules that are in place regarding the pandemic because of our very limited ICU capacity of just four beds. Again, I would encourage government to actually take a look at this and recognize that increasing the surge capacity within our hospital and health care system will have benefits, even after the pandemic is done.

One of the things that has been faced across the country is that, in many areas across Canada, hospitals and other parts of our health care system were struggling before the pandemic. When the pandemic occurred, that simply placed the system under additional strain. This has resulted in significant delays of surgeries and other procedures across the country, which is creating a crisis of its own. The Yukon, as we heard from the Hospital witnesses last fall and the previous fall — the indication is that our wait times for a great many procedures — both those offered by the hospital and those offered by government — are beyond what they would like it to be. In many cases, for specialist services that are hosted out of the hospital campus, though not directly operated by the hospital itself, the procedures have wait times that are longer than is considered medically appropriate. This also affects us for procedures that Yukoners have to access out of territory. What we don't see from the government is any type of a wait-time reduction action plan. This doesn't really seem to be a priority for them. That is unfortunate because Yukoners are feeling the impact every day.

I also want to note in the area — the Minister of Health and Social Services somewhat bizarrely claimed earlier today in Question Period that the Yukon is a national leader in health care. But certainly not at the front of the pack — I was baffled by that statement, because when you have the worst family doctor ratio per capita in the country and when you have long wait times, to style yourself as a national leader in health care seems a bit rich. There are parts of our health care system and people within it who do an excellent job, and I don't want to take away from that for a moment, but overall, there is an unacceptable level of gaps within our system and unacceptably long wait times that are affecting too many Yukoners. The minister, I would suggest, should work with our health care professionals on fixing those gaps and shortening those wait times before trying to claim to be a national leader in anything.

In the area of midwifery, as well, as members have raised earlier in this Legislative Assembly, we see the situation that government, in their haste to be able to announce before an election that they had regulated midwifery, they created rules that actually shut down unregulated midwifery, and the timelines that they had announced for hiring midwives as government employees keeps slipping and keeps getting pushed out. So, we see a situation of a long gap in midwifery services, and that has affected people. I heard from a constituent who, without delving into the personal details, was in a serious

situation that would have been better off if she had had access to the midwife who she had used for previous deliveries.

So, there are impacts to the gaps, and patting yourself on the back for regulating something without actually having the service in place is not very useful.

We also see the continued problem that, through the model they have chosen, they have provided only for public employees and not provided an option for midwives and private practice to continue to operate within the system. That continues to be something they should change.

One issue that I meant to mention earlier that I missed in terms of talking about the pandemic is that — regarding the pandemic rules, restrictions, mandates, requirements, et cetera — in addition to the lack of consultation with businesses in general, one of the issues that we have heard repeatedly is about the lack of consultation with allied health professionals, with the medical community, and others by government and the lack of answers for them, in some cases, that have stretched on for — in the case of, for example, one person whom I wrote a letter on behalf of in the adult health field — that government, over a month after the questions were posed, they still didn't have answers that were very important for their ability to provide a health care service. That is just not the right way to do things.

I want to move on to the issue of flood preparation. In the interest of time here this afternoon, I will try to get through some of the other important items on my list and raise others at a later date.

Last year, we saw the situation of unprecedented flooding in the Southern Lakes area, as well as in the Lake Laberge area. We appear to be, based on snow pack, facing a situation where that could occur this year. There were issues last year with government being slow to listen to concerns from constituents of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes in terms of early actions they wanted to see. We have issued a press release regarding some of the changes that we believe would be necessary to prepare for this season, including ensuring that there are further upgrades done to the Jackfish Bay road to raise it.

I understand that I have less time remaining than I thought I did here. So, I will just briefly, in wrapping up my comments before you cut me off, Madam Deputy Speaker, note that we will be raising additional points on flood preparation, on continued requests for improved cell service for people in my riding and elsewhere. As well, we'll be seeking to see the government listen to the request that has come forward from the Yukon Agricultural Association and farmers to do more on protecting farms from government elk, as well as increasing hunting opportunities there.

I have more issues I wanted to touch on, but in the interest of time here, and recognizing that you are about to cut me off, I will thank the House and look forward to raising them later.

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today in response to the Budget Address. I serve as an MLA in an urban riding. Similar to the Member for Porter Creek Centre, I receive many concerns surrounding City of Whitehorse issues, such as plowing of the streets, snow removal, the flow of traffic, speeding, and things

that pertain to the city. My riding of Porter Creek North is a wonderful mix of residential and commercial, with the Alaska Highway running through it. Thank you to the many residents who reach out with their concerns and also those who show their continued support, and also, a special thank you to my family and friends who continue to support my work and passion to be involved with all things Yukon.

The past several years have been really trying on all citizens in varying degrees. We all react differently to different rules and regulations that are put in place. Now that a more relaxed situation is starting to happen and there are more coming, the spring and the summer seasons look more welcoming. The mental health of citizens is foremost in our minds, as we move into a new phase; however, we still need to be vigilant, and I think that we have learned enough to protect ourselves to the best of our abilities.

I, for one, being a tourist advocate, am going to be very happy welcoming the return of visitors. When the border crossings are easier to traverse, we will be in better economic recovery for our seasons, for sure. Let's continue to push the federal government and use all the means that we have to get the borders open and strict vaccine mandates put away. Many businesses are thanking locals for their support, but they do really rely on the numbers that come during the tourist season to make it through the slow winter months. If rooms are not booked soon, this year is looking bleak, and believe me, time is of the essence — we need to move today.

As the opposition leader mentioned in his budget response, small business is in crisis: the pandemic, the downturn in customers, layoffs, terminations, and now a labour shortage. I see hiring signs where I have never seen them before. Some of the problems began at the beginning of the pandemic when we were scared and no one really knew the answers to the many questions. The answers were elusive, as we listened and tried to understand our best moves. The federal dollars were given out with little or no oversight — just get the money out the door. This has certainly hurt the service industry, and we can only hope that there is a turnaround in mindset on these necessary jobs for the tourism industry.

Now, the energy situation is ongoing, and although the blame game continues on who started what and when, the reality is rising costs. We will not be able to sustain the high cost of living, as it is happening in Yukon. The answer we are given is to look at the clean energy strategy — words that don't help the monthly bills that keep rising.

To purchase an electric car, to get off fossil fuels, is also another answer that we get from this government. There is \$2.1 million for electric vehicle rebates and, of course, the charging stations that are being put in throughout the territory. To get that up-to-\$5,000 rebate, we have to look at the rebate application, and there are so many hoops to jump through to be eligible. So, to get between a \$3,000 to \$5,000 rebate, the vehicle must be new — no recycling here — the retail price base model — below \$55,000 — must be purchased by a Yukoner, registered in the Yukon, and the list goes on and on.

Then, as we know, not many things last forever, especially batteries, and it is such new technology that it is still unclear

how long the lifespan of a battery is. A company or vehicle warranty is between five and eight years, depending on the vehicle, and then it could cost between \$5,000 to \$16,000 to replace a battery, plus installation costs — I could go on about the downside to this rush to put everybody in the same vehicle.

As we have stated already, there is much repetition in this budget, moving the same projects down the year slots. There is even a section within the Budget Address interpreting the five-year plan. I assume, because it is so confusing as to when the money stops on any particular project, we need an interpretation. The explanation, the five-year capital plan — and I quote: “The Five-Year Capital Plan is an evolving document where budgets may shift and change from year to year.” So, that is why we see the Burwash Landing school, the Dempster fibre project, development of a new campground, and the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement repeated and repeated.

As a critic, I look forward to speaking fully and asking questions of departments during the debate so we can hopefully get some solid answers on various dollar allocations.

I would like to thank all the staff in the departments who put the hard work into this budget. This job cannot be done without a team, and our office caucus team is the best. They support us every day, all year. Danny Macdonald, Robin Boss, Tim Kucharuk and, of course, kudos to our former chief of staff, Ted Laking.

Ms. Tredger: I would like to start by thanking my constituents for the year we have had together since the last Budget Address. It has been a tough year, there is no doubt about that, but it is an absolute joy to represent Whitehorse Centre and be part of its incredible community.

I could talk about many, many highlights of the last year — a few of my favourites — I think we were all very delighted to see the Yukon Theatre reopen under the banner of the Yukon Film Society. I was personally thrilled to see my favourite part of Rendezvous return, which was the snow sculptures in Shipyards Park. This spring, when the downtown urban gardeners plant their gardens this year, it will be their 25th year of bringing together our community to grow local food.

There have absolutely been highlights, but there is no denying that it has been a devastating year. We are currently in three separate official emergencies. We are in a pandemic. I am cautiously optimistic that we are through the worst, but the last two years have left Yukoners exhausted, depleted, and vulnerable. We are in an opioid poisoning emergency that has caused death after death. Heartbreaking doesn't even begin to cover it.

And we are in a climate emergency. As one of my constituents said to me last week, if we don't act on the climate emergency, nothing else we do will matter. Again, if we don't act on the climate emergency, nothing else we do will matter. That's not even to mention housing, which certainly feels like a crisis to Yukoners facing skyrocketing housing prices and rental prices, with few to no options to choose from. All these crises have been acknowledged by this government. They have held press conferences and summits. They say that they are listening and that they are going to act, so I looked to this

budget with hope — hope that would see that the action they promised is coming. To be frank, I am disappointed.

Sure, there are some things I am excited about. They are fulfilling their commitment to the NDP to start a universal dental program. There is funding for developing new housing lots, and after years of the NDP asking questions, Macaulay Lodge is being demolished to create space for new housing, but ultimately, I see business as usual. We are in a climate change emergency, and this government has cut funding for rural communities to get off diesel. We still receive more revenue from hunting licences than we do from placer mining fees.

I could go on and list many examples, but I would like to zero in on one example in particular, because I think that it is illustrative, and that is the funding for All Genders Yukon Society. For people who are not super familiar, they tend to fly under the radar. They are a small group of dedicated board members and a single staff member. They provide access to counselling for the trans, non-binary, and two-spirit community, as well as their families. Their services are about as close to barrier-free as it gets, and that is critical, because there are a lot of barriers to accessing mental health for the trans community.

I don't know if you have ever had the experience of having your first appointment with a therapist, of carefully dropping in the fact that you're queer, and then watching for the reaction to see what it will be, to know if this is someone you can trust, but it's stressful. Then combine that with the fact that there are many supportive and well-meaning therapists for whom gender identity is not an area of expertise. It is not easy for people to find an appropriate therapist. This funding is a lifeline — and I mean that it is a lifeline for many of the people who access it.

Funding has not been easy for the All Genders Yukon Society. For the last two years, they have had inadequate funding from the Yukon government, and they have been making ends meet by accessing emergency funding from the Red Cross to bridge them through the next year. Now the Red Cross funding has ended. Has this government stepped up to fill the gap? Have they taken their speeches about supporting mental health and supporting the LGBTQ2S+ community and put action behind it? No, they haven't. As All Genders Yukon Society lost \$112,000 of funding, this government has done nothing to help them.

Last week, members got an e-mail saying that everyone is now only eligible for one counselling session per month — one session a month.

Let me remind you that this is a group of people who have staggering mental health disparities. A recent Canadian study found that young trans adults have eight times the risk of serious suicidal thoughts in the past year and over 16 times the risk of a suicide attempt in the past year.

If you were suicidal, do you think one counselling appointment a month would be enough? If your child was suicidal, would you feel good about them seeing a therapist one time a month? I can't imagine that anyone would say yes, so why is that good enough for our trans, two-spirit, and non-binary community?

This budget had a nearly \$60-million surplus, and this government couldn't find \$114,000 that All Genders Yukon needed. That surplus was more important than \$114,000 for adequate mental health care for the trans community.

This feels to me like a story that we have heard many times — a story that has played out over and over again in the Yukon. People are in crisis. Their community steps up to fill the gap. They get praise from the government that is all too happy to talk about their accomplishments. In this case, they have told everyone how they are allies of the LGBTQ2S+ community and all about how they released the territory's first ever LGBTQ2S+ action plan and all about how they are investing in mental health, but the people on the ground who need the help are left piecing together scraps of funding, stretching their money thinner and thinner to cover ever-increasing needs.

I've talked a lot about this one example, but this example, really for me, is this budget in a nutshell — a lot of talk about how this government wants things to be different and about their exciting and bold new vision, but at the end of the day, they do what they have always done.

Ultimately, it is Yukoners who pay the price. When we talk about emergencies — when this government talks about emergencies but doesn't put their money where their mouth is, it's Yukoners who pay the price.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's tough to rise today because of the challenges that we're facing across the planet. First of all, we're in a worldwide pandemic that has led to two crises here in the Yukon, but across the world — on substance use, mental wellness, and addictions. Also, just COVID itself — and COVID has not been fair; that's for sure.

At the same time, we have a global climate crisis, and then we also have an international conflict. I have been trying to think about our budget and trying hard to understand the budget from the perspective of Yukoners. I was in a meeting in Mount Lorne last night, and I have one tomorrow night in Marsh Lake. I have another one in Tagish on Thursday — so, talking to Yukoners about the choices that we are making. Always, the role of opposition is to criticize. It is an honourable role. Their job is to poke holes in what government is doing, and government itself often stands up to talk in warm terms about what is going on, but how do we judge it? How do Yukoners judge it? That is what I have been talking to neighbours about to try to understand the choices that we are making.

It is tough, because I think that others have discussed these challenges and how they impact us. They can make life hard — for example, with the price of fuel. I saw last night when I was coming back from Mount Lorne that the price of fuel for diesel is up around \$2 a litre. Definitely it has gone up recently because of the war in Ukraine, and like others, I will condemn Russia for what is happening there — not the Russian people as much as Russian government leadership.

One of the things that I have been thinking about is that, despite all of this heartache and challenge, I feel lucky to be a Yukoner. I feel that, in this place, we can stand up and disagree respectfully, generally. I heard on the first day and even subsequent days as we have been here in the Legislature

speaking — as there were some horns honking. I think that is the protest around the COVID restrictions. I respect Yukoners and others who protest peacefully and respectfully, who honk their horns to say, "Hey, we disagree with you." I think that is okay, and I will work hard to protect their rights to have that ability to disagree with us.

That doesn't mean that you should block other people's freedoms, whether that's through your horn or through a blockade. That is not right, but it is right that people should be able to stand up and criticize, including here in this Legislature, so I will do my best to take that criticism respectfully. I will challenge some of it, of course, but I think that it is important to start by at least acknowledging that we are all Yukoners and we are all Canadians. We are all working to make this as good a place as it can be for our parents, our kids, and future generations. I know that we have differences of opinion, and that's great. I actually think that diversity builds strength, so that range of thinking is probably important to how we conduct ourselves.

I want to talk about those three crises: the international conflict in Ukraine, which has created a lot of inflation across the world, and try to talk about how we conduct ourselves fiscally; the global climate crisis and how we are trying to make ourselves more sustainable here; and the pandemic and what we are doing to try to protect the health and wellness of Yukoners.

When we landed here in the role of government roughly five years ago, the first thing we saw was that there was a structural deficit in place. We were worried. We needed to try to move us back into the black. We were concerned about where things had been heading. We worked hard to course-correct that ship. The first thing we did was to strike the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel. That panel created a report for us and a pathway to lead us to where we would get surplus budgets and responsible fiscal management. As boring as it sounds, that is super important.

I saw another deficit as well, and it was in our infrastructure. We realized that we needed to invest more in our infrastructure, whether it is water or sewer or roads, green energy, or sports facilities. We saw that there had been a lack of investment over decades and that the Yukon needed to reinvest.

So, we made this commitment to increase our capital budgets and to work to invest in the Yukon. For example, this year we have in the budget a water treatment facility for Mount Lorne. It will help out the community centre there, and I think that is really great.

I know that we are working on some sewage lagoons — two of them. One is in Carcross and one is in Marsh Lake. These are important small projects in our communities. They make a difference for the communities that they are in.

I know that we are working to invest in renovations. We are working right now on the Carcross RCMP facility and also in the wellness centre in Carcross — again, trying to invest in the infrastructure. I think that it is so important when we make these investments because they are the future of the territory.

One of the things that I have heard in terms of criticism is that there is nothing new here today. Mr. Speaker, I talked about \$50 million going to the Atlin hydro project. Of course, we have talked about the Atlin project, but investing that kind of money is new. That was actually a ministerial statement today to share that information with the Legislature and with Yukoners.

This is about investing in our future, whether it is housing, education, health care, or social services. The goal is sustainable communities and, as the Premier said in his budget speech, to create a sustainable future for the next generation of Yukoners.

One of the criticisms around this thing is that there is nothing new. Well, one of the reasons that I think you can make that argument is because we have a five-year capital plan. I just heard the Member for Porter Creek North criticize it for being evolving — that it would change over time — but I also heard the Leader of the Official Opposition say that it is not new. Well, that is because we put it out there before and said that here is where we are going to go. We thought it was important to create a road map for Yukoners and to show the direction that we are going to head.

Sure, we take away the shininess of it — that we sort of surprise people with it — but we create a more planned version of where we are trying to head as a territory. That's what the Financial Advisory Panel was about. That is what the five-year capital plan is about.

In talking about our economy, I just want to talk about inflation. It appears to me that the Official Opposition is going to talk about inflation a lot this year. Yes, we have inflation here. What's our inflation? From January to January, the latest numbers that I have seen from Statistics Canada say: 3.7 percent for the Yukon, which is the second lowest in Canada; Newfoundland and Labrador is four percent; Saskatchewan is 4.2 percent; British Columbia is 4.3 percent; Alberta is 4.8 percent; Nova Scotia is 4.9 percent; Québec is 5.1 percent; New Brunswick is 5.3 percent; Manitoba is 5.5 percent; Ontario is 5.7 percent; and Prince Edward Island is 7.1 percent. We are lower than all the provinces here. This inflation is not caused by the decisions that we have been taking; this inflation is caused by conflict in Europe.

I listened closely to the comments from the Member for Lake Laberge and his assessment about geopolitics, and I thought that he made some very good points about how it is important that we work together, that we shouldn't take any of these things for granted, that the time of peace we have had up until now may not be what we have going forward, and that we need to be concerned about our sovereignty, our safety, and our security.

But that conflict is what is causing inflation. I think, because of the advice we took from the Financial Advisory Panel — that boring advice — we have managed to keep our inflation here low. I am not saying that it will be that way forever, and I don't think that we should take complete credit for it, but on the other hand, it sure stands out as a difference. So, while we are facing these hardships right now with inflation and things we do need to address, I think that it's important to

put it in context. Canada's inflation — overall average of 5.1 percent — is lower than Germany's; it's lower than the US; it's lower than the G7 countries. So, Canada is the lowest in the G7, and we are the second lowest in Canada. Yes, it is a problem, but you really can't suggest that this is because we have made mistakes. I think that it is just the opposite; I think that we have made good choices. We have a strong GDP. I want to talk for a second about one of the things that is helping, and that is the mining sector.

My colleague, the Member for Porter Creek South, teases me about being an environmentalist who is now Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

This sector is doing very well, and I would like to thank them for that because it wasn't a given. When COVID hit, there were some very tough choices that they had to make. Mines generally these days are very big on safety in the mines, and they came out with a vaccine mandate ahead of us. They made those choices in several of the mines. They said, "You know what? We need to do this in order to keep Yukoners safe." I thank them for it. They wanted to keep the community safe. That is so important. In doing so, they have helped also to build our economy. I think that someone from across the way pointed out that some of our economic growth is due to mines, and I would like to thank them for that. The forecast is that we are heading into some strong years with mining.

I would also like to thank the mining industry because, as I have stood up and talked to them, I have said to them that we have to deal with a bunch of things. We have agreed to work on successor legislation, mining intensity targets so that we move off of fossil fuels for our mines, wetlands policy, and land use planning — we are doing all of this, and I appreciate their effort.

I was on a panel discussion with some of the mining industry recently. It was talking about how we are going to move off of fossil fuels. As an environmentalist, I sort of had to pinch myself for a moment there because this is an industry that is really working to take on the responsibility of moving off of fossil fuels. Of course, over time, we are going to need many of these critical metals, like copper from the Minto mine, in order to help make this transition.

Economically — I think that it is important to note that there have been some really hard decisions that have been taken but good decisions for the Yukon broadly. I'm glad we have done that because, as we navigate through something like the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and as it affects global prices, at least we're in a strong position to try to address that and to support Yukoners as much as we can.

Let me turn for a moment to talk about the global climate crisis.

Again, when I started talking about the economy, I talked about the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel and their report, and we have another one here — well, two reports. One is *Our Clean Future* and one is the 10-year Yukon Energy renewable strategy.

This year, we're investing \$80 million to move the energy economy. This is not a small thing.

I'm going to touch on a few topics. First of all, I want to talk about some of the impacts that we have been feeling. The north has more climate change happening and so we feel some significant impacts, although amazingly, it has been some of the provinces that have been harder hit lately than us. In some ways, again, I feel lucky to be a Yukoner. But we have had some hard-hitting things. One of them was the flood.

Last year, in 2021, we had a flood that affected three places: Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, Whitehorse Centre, and Lake Laberge. These three ridings — and luckily, Whitehorse Centre avoided much of the impact, but Lake Laberge and the Southern Lakes really did get quite a flood. It was about a foot higher than the 2007 flood, which was a record flood. To be a foot higher is a huge amount.

What happened was that we had a very heavy snow year, as everyone remembers, and then, at the same time, there was that heat dome that happened in the spring over top of British Columbia. The edge of that heat dome was up here, and basically it helped to melt the snow up in the alpine. I have never seen the water come up that high that fast.

The Member for Lake Laberge said that we hadn't acted swiftly enough, and I think that it is almost always true that we could do better on communication, but when I look back to try to judge how well we did out of the flood — so I was there during the 2007 flood, and we lost a lot of homes — a lot of them. This flood, just as a reminder, was a foot higher and we didn't lose a lot of homes. We might lose a couple to groundwater and mould. The Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation said yesterday that there is \$2 million that is going out as a fund to support homes to be repaired from the flood and that the Yukon Housing Corporation has been going around meeting with homeowners to look at the damage that has been sustained. It is a pretty good response. It can and should be better. I freely admit that, but that is a much better outcome than we had in 2007.

There are other things where we face risk. Wildland fire is an example, and I just want to acknowledge that this year we now have all 14 of our First Nations with wildland fire crews. If I was allowed to ask for clapping, I would at this moment because I think that is something worth celebrating as a territory.

We know that we are getting impacted by climate. What are we doing about it? We will get the impacts and we will, of course, adapt to those impacts. We will do better flood mapping and all that, but what are we doing to change the source of this problem? Really, that is how we reduce our emissions. So, the Yukon Climate Leadership Council is working right now. We are starting up our second Youth Panel on Climate Change. We are asking them for their advice outside of government. It is really good to get that external advice.

The Member for Porter Creek North was talking about electric vehicles. She is saying that maybe she is concerned about electric vehicles. I will add a few thoughts there. The first one is that, yes, those rebates are just for Yukoners and, yes, they are for vehicles that are registered here in the Yukon. Yes, that is correct.

There is a \$3,000 to \$5,000 rebate, but that is matching the federal rebate, so you can get up to \$10,000 back. That is pretty important to note. It's also worth noting that you can get an e-bike and get a rebate on an e-bike as well, which is also good. She was talking about the potential high cost of batteries, but what I have come to understand, with e-vehicles, is that the cost of maintenance is extremely low compared to our internal combustion engine vehicles. The lifecycle of e-vehicles — right now, the thought is that they are going to be pushing a million kilometres. Brakes are regenerative. It's actually one of the great advantages. Yes, it is more money up front. I guess that is part of the challenge. In order to get into the market, it costs more money, but once you do, your costs come down quite a bit.

As we have already made announcements, we have fast-charging stations, which are going in from Watson Lake to Beaver Creek, from Carcross to Dawson, and points in between — the Silver Trail and the Robert Campbell Highway. We have just announced earlier, in conjunction with support from the federal government, that we are going to do a couple hundred level-2 chargers, which are kind of in between the fast chargers and the charging that you will do at home. This is all really great news to move us in that direction.

I have already talked previously in the Legislature about the battery project, the grid scale battery that's going in. We are working with First Nations on that project. There were a couple of announcements recently with some of the firms that Yukon Energy is working with. It's due to replace four of our rental diesels. The Atlin project that I talked about today, and spoke further about, is due to replace four more of our rental diesels.

I appreciate that, as elected officials here, we work respectfully with each other, and this is one of those places where we disagree. I just want to highlight it — not that we need to disagree, but there is a difference, and I think Yukoners can judge.

The Official Opposition has often said that they believe the right thing to do is to build a diesel plant. I called up Yukon Energy and asked them: "If you're building a diesel plant, how long do you need to pay that off? What do you levelize your cost over?" The answer was 40 years. Let's run it forward in time. Today is 2022, so that plant would be there and need to be working to 2062. But hold on — in 2050, we're supposed to be at zero emissions everywhere. The members opposite have said that they support that plan. I'm not quite sure how that's going to work.

We talked about how to try to make things affordable, and the members opposite talked about the cost of electricity going up. There are some things which push up the cost of electricity, I agree, but not the Atlin project.

This is the interesting point. Right now, in front of the Yukon Utilities Board, is a proposal to purchase the energy from Atlin — hopefully the project moves ahead. We usually use, as an upset cost or comparison cost, diesel at 19 cents a kilowatt hour. By the way, that's the old price of diesel, because diesel has gone up a huge amount in the last couple of months from that conflict in Ukraine. I don't think that it's going to be the cost going forward, but we used 19 cents previously.

What we got was an energy price that is 13 cents a kilowatt hour. That's winter energy. That is what is super important. It will displace more of the fossil fuels that we use, and that's one of the great things about the Atlin project, but it is more than that.

If we go beyond the amount of energy that we agreed to purchase from Atlin and they sell us more, do you think our price goes up? No, it goes down. Our price goes to seven cents a kilowatt hour — again, comparing back to the 19 cents for diesel. That's the first 10 years. From 2035 and beyond — and hydro projects usually run for half a century or more — the price goes down to 11 cents a kilowatt hour in the winter, and the surplus energy will be three cents a kilowatt hour. I like those prices. Those are good prices for Yukoners, for ratepayers. I will take that any day over committing to fossil fuels and that choice.

I think that it is a good thing to compare and to look at the differences between us as a government and the Yukon Party Official Opposition.

Yesterday in the Legislature, the Member for Whitehorse Centre made some comments about ATCO. I would have to look them up for sure, but the sense I got was that it was as if ATCO was cheating Yukoners, so I checked in with the Yukon Development Corporation to ask about the rules of the Yukon Utilities Board. I was told that what the Member for Whitehorse Centre said was not correct. I will just read this first: It is possible that rates of return may be higher in a given year than originally ordered and any discrepancies are addressed at subsequent rate applications.

So, what happens is that there is an estimate of what is expected in terms of a rate of return. If the return goes higher, you bring a new rate application and you adjust it. It isn't that ATCO did anything inappropriate; it's that there have been more people switching to electricity — especially electric heat. The Yukon has been growing, as we know. It turns out to be the most popular place for people from across the country to want to come. I think that this is putting a lot of pressure on all of our systems.

The main point that the member opposite had noted — as I said, the Minister of Justice and I met with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, and there was a request from the chamber that we take a look at this and look at possible ways of reviewing it. I said here in the Legislature yesterday, and I will say it again, that I am happy to do so.

There are just a few other things around the climate crisis that I think are super important. One is food. As others have said in this Legislature, we just need to support as much local agriculture as we can. It is a good way to adapt to climate change, and it is an incredibly important way to mitigate against climate change. The more that we can be self-sustaining here, the less we have to truck stuff up and the less diesel we need to be dependent on. It's really important. I want to thank all of our farmers and producers around the territory.

A few years ago, I was talking with the head of the Agriculture branch and they explained to me that, in recent years, Yukon agriculture has doubled. When I spoke recently at the Yukon Agricultural Association AGM, I talked about

working with them to do that again — to double the amount of food that we produce here and get it onto our shelves and into our pantries and into our bellies. That is super important.

Let me move on to the last of my three broad themes, and this is just talking about people. A few years ago, we took a look at our health care system and we put out another one of these boring documents. It is called *Putting People First*. It has a whole bunch of other little pieces underneath it. You can think of our aging-in-place strategy. You can think of our mental wellness strategy. You can think of a whole suite of supports that we are trying to put out there, but we talked about how we are working to change the way that we deliver health care here to try to move it from a focus on acute health care and move it more toward being people-centred, to be more about wellness. Out of that, we worked on early learning, and we made an historic investment in early learning and childcare to ensure that our youngest folks have a bright future. That is a huge, important step.

We are building a bilingual health centre. I sat down with l'Association franco-yukonnaise just last week and we talked about the progress on staffing the health centre. There is no doubt that there are challenges around staffing right now. Why is there such a challenge? Again, it is not a local challenge. If we ask ourselves what is happening across the country — and I spoke about this last fall. I looked into the doctor shortage across the country, and the evidence that I had was that there is a higher shortage everywhere across the country than there is here, but there is a shortage here, so it is important to address. But, again, let's put it in the context of a global pandemic that has been around for two years and a lot of pressure.

I am going to talk just for a minute about our vaccination mandate and our response to COVID. I think that we should try to judge how the Yukon has fared and try to think of it against other jurisdictions. It's always difficult, because we are a place of 40,000 to 45,000 people. We are a large geography with a small population overall that is concentrated in Whitehorse, but all of us care about our communities a lot. We do need to think about the choices we have made. The members opposite talk about why we haven't lifted restrictions earlier. The Omicron wave hit here after it hit in other places, so we are just coming out of those restrictions, like other places have. If, over time, we were to try to take a look at what restrictions we have had and compare them over time with other places, in terms of the amount of time that we have been locked down or the amount of time that we have had schools closed, or remote learning, or working from home — all of those things — we would find that we compare very well against the provinces. I would have to check to make sure against the other territories — of course, every place is a little bit different — but overall, we have had less lockdown, fewer restrictions, less closure of businesses, and more supports for our businesses.

One of the arguments seems to be that there is no problem right now. The Member for Lake Laberge talked about the number of people who have died. My wife is a nurse. I know that I have said that many times here in the Legislature. She teaches health care assistance at the university. I think that is very important, because we need those people. They are so

important. They are on the front line. She and I were talking about what the choices that we have made have done. We talked about it in terms of: What if you perceive a risk? Let's say that you were standing on the highway, and you see a car coming toward you. You say to yourself, "I'm going to step out of the way." You step out of the way and the car goes by safely, and you are not hit by the car. Then do you say to yourself, "I didn't get hit by a car; therefore, I didn't need to get out of the way"? No.

The things we have put in place — those hard choices to try to protect Yukoners, and having protected Yukoners, it's not now that you can say there was no harm, because we protected Yukoners. I sure hope that is not the message that folks opposite are trying to give.

I agree with people that COVID has not been fair. I look forward to hearing — every time the members opposite talk about the use of emergency powers and what we have done, I've asked: Which ones don't you want us to do? Which ones do you disagree with? I have still yet to figure it out, because what I have heard is, "Oh, you should have done that one more." It's usually about the one allowing for remote sales for cannabis, which is now done, but what I have heard is, "Oh, you could have brought that in under the rules of the pandemic and kept it in there longer." Whereas, I think it is important that we only use those authorities to the bare minimum, in order to try to protect the safety of Yukoners. So, we have taken significant action to try to protect the health and well-being of Yukoners.

I think those things will show out over time. Again, I want to say that I appreciate that there are Yukoners who disagree with these choices, and I respect that they have a different view. I ask us all to be kind and respectful with each other about how we share those different views. I spend a lot of time trying to follow up on the information that folks who are concerned about COVID share with me, and I will do my best to be respectful of their perspectives. Has COVID been hard on folks? Oh yeah. Super hard. Starting from that very, very first choice — which I call a courageous choice — to cancel the Arctic Winter Games. When I heard from parents saying, "You can't do this; this is wrong" — then, afterward, I heard from them saying, "Thank you. That was the right call."

I know that these are hard choices, and I know that they are tough on folks, including those public servants who have been put on leave without pay. I checked the number, and I correct myself from earlier during Question Period. It's 92 — 1.5 percent. Members opposite talked about it being 20 percent early on. I said, "No, it's not 20 percent; it's much less." They said no.

I think it's important that we have worked to protect Yukoners.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to acknowledge that I am speaking today from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dūn First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and as the member elected to represent Riverdale South. I truly appreciate the opportunity to address the Legislative Assembly and all Yukoners today.

Before I begin to speak about the 2022-23 budget, I would like to acknowledge that, as we celebrate the freedoms that we have here in the Yukon and in Canada, as evidenced by this very debate, the people of Ukraine are fighting for those same freedoms in the face of completely unjustified aggression. We must support them however we can and unite against the actions of Russia.

While we are geographically far from the war, Yukoners are rallying to support our local Ukrainian community, and we are preparing to welcome refugees as they arrive. Our hearts break for the people of the Ukraine and for all of Europe at this uncertain time. Some of us have very close ties to the Ukrainian community, so I urge you all to look after yourselves and your families and friends.

I believe yesterday was two years to the day that we had to cancel the Arctic Winter Games in 2020, as noted by my colleague just a few minutes ago. We can all remember how we felt at that time, and I'm sure that no one had any idea what was in store for us or how our daily lives would be affected over these last two years. I know that we are all anxious to see the end of COVID-19, and we look forward to less uncertain times, but we should take care to remember that this pandemic is not over.

As Dr. Elliott has said recently, what has happened is that we have all gotten smarter about how to keep ourselves safe. As times change and we move forward, we must continue to respect the "safe six plus masking" and make decisions for ourselves to keep us, our families, and our loved ones safe.

This budget includes \$11.6 million dedicated to the health and social resources necessary to manage the ongoing risk of COVID-19. There is also a \$10-million COVID-19 contingency fund that I am sure we will have time to speak about as we proceed with this debate. As evidenced by this budget and the Premier's Budget Address, we are building a bright future for the Yukon. I am always inspired by the government's Budget Address.

We are so very fortunate that this budget brings us positive news. It is a hopeful time. It is the result of tremendous planning and hard work. Thank you to the dedicated staff of every department — particularly to the Department of Finance — for their amazing work, insight, and dedication. This budget is a looking-forward document and an opportunity to tell Yukoners the direction and priorities of their government. It allows us to identify what projects and programs will be our investment for the future. This year's Budget Address addresses critical needs in the territory and makes necessary investments so that all Yukoners benefit from this historic economic growth.

It might be easy to focus on only one or two areas. We have lots to focus on, and this budget, I am proud to say, addresses critical needs everywhere in the territory. The surplus budget reflects our government's enduring commitment to responsible fiscal management, even in the face of COVID-19. We are working to ensure that Yukoners benefit from economic growth. We have worked for the past five and a half years to rebuild relationships and to build partnerships to address the issues that matter to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, for the past two years, we have been under the COVID-19 cloud. As part of our government's response to COVID-19, we concentrated on two main priorities: public health measures and supporting Yukoners through a world pandemic. That brought with it difficult choices every day. The Yukon's economic support programs have been recognized as the best and most generous in the country, and they have prevented the most severe economic impacts of COVID-19.

Our government continues to work on issues as they come forward — brought by the communities — to address inequities and to solve problems with them.

The Yukon's economy is seeing tremendous growth, and it truly sets us apart from the rest of Canada. Those initiatives will continue moving us along the path to recovery.

This budget shows very clearly that we are investing in housing, education, health care and social services, green energy, and resilient infrastructure that will create sustainable communities for a generation of Yukoners.

I would like to take the opportunity to describe just a few of the initiatives from Health and Social Services and Justice, the departments that I am responsible for. First, it is important to thank the dedicated professionals who work in every corner of Health and Social Services and Justice. Health and Social Services, of course, is a much broader department than Justice, but the work is equally critical. Mr. Speaker, we have asked more than what is humanly possible of the professionals who work at these two departments. We have asked them to work to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the exemplary work of these departments is incredible. After we asked that of them, then we asked it again, and then we asked it again, and we continue to ask it of them now.

With respect to COVID-19, our government has consistently followed the science to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners. As a result, we have avoided the worst economic and health impacts of COVID-19. We are in a positive position, thanks to the diligence of Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, this cannot be overstated. Yukoners have stepped up to get vaccinated, to abide by public health measures, and to look after themselves and their fellow community members. We have developed a plan to forge ahead toward recovery in a way that protects the most vulnerable in our territory and supports the health and well-being of all of our communities. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources emphasized those points in Question Period today.

Mr. Speaker, all Yukoners have been affected by the pandemic, and our government will continue to support them as we move further along the path to recovery. I have already noted the total amounts in this year's budget to do that kind of work.

We know that our territory has been overwhelmed by loss due to substance use and suicide. I share my deep condolences to all Yukoners impacted by these tragic deaths. The loss of each friend, member of a family, or a loved one means that many more Yukoners will struggle with trauma, experience mental health crises, and carry the pain that persists as a result. These preventable losses devastate communities. Tragically,

some have had to cope with multiple losses, making the healing journey that much longer and more painful.

In January 2022 alone, there were a devastatingly high number of opioid-related deaths. The impact of this crisis truly touches every corner of our territory. We are acutely aware that we are facing the most critical health issue in Canadian history.

On January 20, 2022, our government, with the support of many leaders from across the Yukon Territory, declared a substance use health emergency. We chose the name carefully. It is to include the use of illicit drugs, opioids, alcohol, and the terrible tragedies that can result, including overdoses, including drug deaths due to overdose, and suicide.

We need to work together to address substance use and make our communities safer and healthier places to be. Our government has taken the most progressive steps toward substance use harm reduction in the history of the Yukon Territory. We have taken significant action to address substance use in our territory, and it is clear that we need to do more. That is why we have committed over \$5.5 million in this year's budget to support our government's immediate response to the substance use health emergency.

By coming together as a territory, we are working to find solutions that will help ensure that every Yukoner can access the support that they need when they need it and benefit from our recovering economy.

Through this declaration, we want to ensure that Yukoners feel supported and that we begin to move toward a stigma-free community and remove the stigma associated with drug use and addictions. We want Yukoners and communities to be aware of the resources that are offered and work to expand those services. We have reached out to First Nation governments, partner agencies, and Yukon citizens to seek collective input on how we can work together on the actions and responsibilities that will be taken under the emergency declaration. We declared this emergency to send a clear message to every Yukoner — whether it directly affected them or not — that substance use, overdoses, and suicide — and the underlying issues that lead to those outcomes — is a crisis that will take all of us to address. We also wanted to send a clear message that we intend to bolster substance use and mental wellness services, strengthen community-level responses across the territory, and support Yukoners who use substances or experience mental health challenges to safely find a path to healing.

Our government recently hosted a mental wellness summit on February 14 and 15, 2022 where presenters learned about participants, and presenters learned about and discussed topics such as prevention, treatment, support services, and aftercare, while also sharing a variety of harm-reduction models and solutions. By all accounts, this summit was a resounding success in sparking ideas, innovations, and conversation.

Our government is working to find immediate crisis responses, as well as long-term, community-focused approaches to prevention and support.

We have committed to developing a new territory-wide public awareness and education campaign that addresses the toxic drug supply present in Yukon communities. It must be

aimed at all aspects of our communities — those who use drugs and all of us who need to know how to help them.

We have also committed to expanding drug testing and opioid treatment services to rural communities and to continuing to expand availability here in Whitehorse.

We have worked to enhance our government's supervised consumption site to support those who use inhalants. We are only the second place in Canada to provide such service, as I understand it. We are told by the experts that this is a service that our community needs.

We are working with local agencies to broaden services to vulnerable populations. This includes increasing support to existing resources that have shown success, such as extending operational hours for innovative services like the outreach van, which is a mobile, multi-service unit. We have committed to increasing on-the-land treatment options across the territory and to working with our partners throughout the territory to expand these services. We are committed to working to remove barriers to treatment options by reserving treatment programs and arranging payments for those most in need. We are also working to develop a new opioid action plan to build on the work of Yukon's first action plan from 2018. This work will be essential to the health and well-being of our territory, and it will be the result of our coordinated efforts for the substance use health emergency.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of many of our First Nation governments that announced programs and initiatives to address the substance use health emergency — in particular, the community outreach done by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation designed to educate and protect their citizens. As well, an example is the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, which has organized treatment programs and announced a managed alcohol program to be opened soon on their traditional territory.

Mr. Speaker, we are building a brighter future for the territory by investing in the sustainable, people-centred health and social services system that improves outcomes for all Yukoners. I heard the leader of the opposition say that there is nothing new or exciting in this budget. I completely disagree. We are transforming the Yukon's health care system into a national leader in people-centred service as we continue to implement *Putting People First* recommendations. An independent examination of how we can improve Yukon's health care system was done. *Putting People First* is the result, and the recommendations have been accepted by this government and will improve our health care system.

Our government has taken significant steps to make service delivery more accessible, more efficient, and responsive to the needs of Yukoners. Our government is committed to modernizing the Yukon's health and social services delivery to better meet the needs of all Yukoners. We are increasing access to medical services in the territory while reducing wait times and the need for out-of-territory medical travel, but if you do need to travel for medical treatment, our government is supporting you with increased medical travel subsidies and places for you to get treatment.

We have listened to Yukoners and what they have told us on the doorsteps, through public engagement, through our

partnerships, working with First Nation governments, municipalities, community groups, and Yukoners.

Government must understand their responsibility to the people of this territory. Government must understand their authority to act, their obligations to serve all Yukoners, and government must foster innovative, progressive, problem-solving leadership among a talented public service, and this one does.

This budget, like every budget we have tabled, reflects that attitude and the approach. It is fair, efficient, and accountable. It ensures that priorities that exist in every corner of this great territory are addressed.

Anybody who is sometimes difficult in this Chamber, and anyone who thinks maybe the work that we've done on any given Tuesday, like this one, doesn't matter need only to cast their minds back to the last day of the Fall Sitting.

Our work resonates with Yukoners, and they just had to be here on maybe that last day or have heard about it in the Fall Sitting of 2021, when many Yukon firefighters took time out of their lives to put on their dress uniforms and came down here to witness the passing of a piece of legislation that affects their lives, their professions, and their safety. They brought gratitude and, for us, a visual opportunity to see that the work that we do every day matters to people — to ordinary people, to people who work in this community, to people who work hard to build their lives in this community — and by community, I mean the entire Yukon Territory.

Maybe another example of something that seems like a small gesture but will mean so much to so many people — and often those are opportunities that exist on the road to reconciliation — Mr. Speaker, a total of 10 eagle feathers were unveiled yesterday at the court house in Whitehorse and will now be available for use in courtrooms in Whitehorse, in Watson Lake, and in Dawson City and during circuit courts in rural Yukon communities.

The feathers may be used to swear oaths in court and are a means of acknowledging and incorporating Yukon First Nation culture within the mainstream justice system, as well as bringing respect and awareness to Yukon First Nation culture within the buildings that these courts take place. It is another example of meaningful work here done by government in building relationships and listening.

For generations, our courtrooms across the country have acknowledged colonial traditions and willfully ignored the significance of the Yukon First Nation cultures, or cultures across the country, and practices and beliefs. By ensuring that witnesses have the cultural means to swear or affirm their oaths with ceremonial feathers, our territory is taking an incredibly significant and important step in acknowledging and respecting Yukon First Nations and advancing reconciliation. It is a proud moment for those who work at the Department of Justice, for the individuals at the Council of Yukon First Nations, at Yukon First Nation governments, the Government of Yukon, and the court system as they come together to make this small but significant change.

Mr. Speaker, all communities matter, and I am so proud that our government has not only made this a priority, but has

worked extensively with each and every community to meet with them and to listen to their priorities and to respond. This budget is about growing vibrant and sustainable communities and supporting Yukoners everywhere.

As I turn to the Department of Justice for a moment, I want to say how proud I am of the work that the department has done and the dedicated individuals who have made it their career. The work they do truly affects us all. The department has developed priorities to guide its work on behalf of Yukoners. And they are: reconciliation with Yukon First Nations; working as a team; identifying and meeting their clients' needs; initiative; innovation; and communication. Such an expression of these commitments could not even be contemplated without the foundational work done by our government to repair relations and build trust with Yukon First Nations. We are committed to reconciliation and to rebuilding trust and relationships in order that we can discuss and solve complex problems at a table, rather than in a courtroom.

There are a number of new initiatives underway through the Department of Justice that will support action taken under and according to the substance use health emergency. In our 2022-23 budget, there are reflections of those priorities. The RCMP will engage five new members, which increases their capacity to expand to drug trafficking enforcement. We are working with the federal government to expand First Nation policing support through the First Nation and Inuit policing program. We have feedback from First Nation communities on policing, and it has been recognized, and our government supports culturally responsive policing.

We recognize the importance of housing, and we are very pleased to be moving forward with supervised community housing for justice-involved women. This program is intended to support women as they transition from custody to the community or to provide an alternative to custody or to support their participation when accessing services through the Yukon's treatment courts.

Our government has developed and integrated a restorative justice unit to improve restorative justice service delivery and to increase engagement with First Nation governments and to support community-designed, community-led restorative justice initiatives. This is a piece of work, along with community safety planning, that the now Minister of Education and I have worked on together for many years, prior to even being elected here to this Legislative Assembly. It is a proud moment for us to see the progress of this work.

The new restorative justice unit combines existing youth justice and adult justice resources to provide program delivery across the Yukon. Our goal of creating the integrated restorative justice unit is to increase the use of restorative justice services throughout the Yukon and to provide a holistic, integrated approach to clients accessing these services.

I am old enough to have been here and working in the criminal justice system during the first wave of restorative justice practices, and I am so proud to see us move and progress these practices across the territory. They have not been used as well as they could have in the intervening years.

We have many other priorities that are being worked on, but lastly today, I would like to speak about how we are expanding community safety planning practices in our territory. As many may know, there is much interest expressed by First Nation governments, Yukon communities, and others about community safety concerns and community-led initiatives to address them — again, a project that the now Minister of Education has worked on endlessly in her career.

Yesterday, we heard tributes to the Arctic Inspiration Prize and one of this year's winners, the House of Wolf and Associates and its leader, Gina Nagano. The award was given out last Friday. The commitment and dedication of Gina Nagano's team, and the values of community safety, are helping communities face the issues they identify and are almost single-handedly making our communities safer.

Both community safety planning and community safety officer programming are important to the safety and well-being of northern and remote communities. These initiatives provide for communities to lead in the assessment of safety concerns and the identification and implementation of appropriate mitigations. They recognize the uniqueness of each community and the value that each individual can contribute to community safety. We are learning from experience that it is important to enable communities to create tailored community safety approaches that are responsive to individual circumstances, concerns, and priorities that are meaningful to their citizens and their communities.

This year's budget introduced funding that will be available until 2030 for Yukon First Nation governments to do community safety planning and some implementation of programs. I'm very proud to have taken this step as a government. For the Government of Yukon, it is essential that we take a people-centred approach to improving how Yukoners engage with the justice system.

A story I told earlier, the initiative that I spoke about — the eagle feathers in the courtrooms — are in fact an example of such a people-centred approach to improving how Yukoners engage with the justice system. This program, as others, shows respect for our partnerships and helps move forward priorities of Yukon First Nations to achieve justice for their people.

I want to take a moment to thank my family and friends for their endless support and understanding. As everyone who has ever done this job or one like it, being a member of the government and of this Legislative Assembly takes a toll on your personal life. Everyone who has done it knows that. It is wrong, but the demands on your time mean that your family and friends regularly take a back seat, and they don't have you in their everyday moments of their lives as much as they or you might like.

COVID-19 has brought a whole new layer of responsibility and workload. This past year has been particularly egregious. Thank you to the hundreds of people who have reached out to me with words of support and encouragement. I would also like to thank the people of Riverdale South. The honour is mine to have been elected a second time to represent them and to bring forward their concerns and to help resolve issues that are of interest to them and to all Yukoners.

Those are the individual Yukoners who have taken the time to express their opinions, to express their votes, and to participate in our democratic process for the purposes of having a representative here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. I also appreciate that we come here representing all of our individual neighbourhoods, our ridings, and our communities and those who cast the vote for us, but maybe more importantly, we represent those who did not cast a vote for us because the responsibility and honour of sitting in this seat — the honour of representing the people and of respecting our democracy is what our friends in Ukraine are fighting for this very second.

I just want to take the last opportunity to thank all of the front-line workers for keeping us safe and making the past two years more bearable than it has been in most places. Our store clerks, servers, cleaners, and medical professionals of all types have allowed our lives up here in the left-hand corner of Canada to remain relatively uninterrupted. I know that may not be what is on the front pages of the papers, or it may not be what some people think, but the truth is that our lives have remained relatively uninterrupted, and I want to thank each and every one of our front-line workers for going to work, for being safe, and for being kind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to our government's 2022-23 budget, Bill No. 204. I rise today as the MLA for Mountainview and also as the Minister of Education and the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. As I stand here, I want to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I am always filled with gratitude to be in this position, and I am humbled by the trust that folks in the Yukon have put in me. I stand with that every single day. Each day that I can represent my constituents with absolute honour is an opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with these people, my colleagues, knowing that this year's budget will absolutely build a brighter future for all Yukoners.

I just hosted my latest constituency event on Sunday for Mountainview. It was the second one for this year, and I'm so proud of the level of commitment and engagement that comes from this community. The people in McIntyre, Hillcrest, Granger, and Valleyview are focused on community safety, youth, and empowering and supporting people to be the best that they can be. I know that these are priorities for many Yukoners across the territory, and I am pleased to see them reflected in this year's budget.

There are many other areas supported by this budget as well, including housing, education, health and social service delivery, and climate action, just to name a few. I know that these were many of the priorities that Yukoners expressed to me during the last election, so I'm very happy to see them reflected in our budget. It is a thoughtful, comprehensive, and holistic budget. I would like to thank the Premier's team in the Department of Finance for all of their efforts to develop the budget and the supporting materials. I would also like to thank

the many staff in Education, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and all of the departments for their work to support this year's budget. It takes a lot of work at a time when our entire government is working to support Yukoners to get on the path to recovery.

The last two years have been very challenging. I am proud to say that our public service has stepped up to the challenge and continued to provide the programs and services that Yukoners rely on. Along with the budget, the fiscal and economic outlook shows that our territory is in a very strong position with many exciting opportunities on the horizon. As our economy continues to grow, the five-year capital plan identifies up in the range of \$2.6 billion in spending on priorities that are important to my constituents and all Yukoners. This includes: new schools for our children; homes for Yukon families; community and recreational infrastructure to support activity and healthy living; and investment in our transportation infrastructure to keep our communities connected. There are also substantial investments in green energy that will help us achieve the goals identified in *Our Clean Future*.

I think it's important to note that we have not let the pandemic prevent us from moving the territory along in the direction Yukoners have asked us for. Our work to implement *Our Clean Future* is vital as we face a climate emergency. It really comes down to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and supporting all Yukoners to build more resilient communities so that the next generation is better equipped to deal with our changing climate. These problems are not going away, and we cannot waste any time to address them.

Our ongoing work to implement the *Putting People First* recommendations is vital to build a sustainable health and social services system that is holistic and people-centred. This work will improve outcomes for all Yukoners and make our territory a national leader when it comes to health and social services.

We are also continuing to work to make Yukon a safer and more inclusive and welcoming place for all Yukoners. The Yukon's MMIWG strategy and the LGBTQ2S+ action plan are key elements to this work. I will speak more about that in a moment. These are just some of the areas that we are focused on, ensuring that all Yukoners benefit from economic growth.

With this year's budget, our government continues to invest in a brighter future for the people of the Yukon. I would like to take an opportunity to speak about the work happening to improve Yukon's education system. There is a tremendous amount happening. I won't be able to touch on all of them, of course, but I would like to highlight some of the major initiatives underway that are reflected in this budget.

Yukoners begin their learning journey as children, and our Liberal government is working to ensure that Yukon children get the best start at life. Last year, we launched our universal, affordable childcare program to put more money in the pockets of Yukon families. This program offsets the cost of childcare by up to \$700 per month per child. This is making life more affordable for Yukon families. Our government also ensures that fully qualified early childcare educators in the Yukon

receive over \$30 per hour. This is the highest minimum wage for early childhood educators in the country. This program has been in place for a little under a year, but it is already receiving praise. The Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development is a research centre at the University of Toronto that is committed to using the best available evidence on early childcare development to inform public discourse, public policy, and the professional learning of those who work with young children.

In recognition of our universal, affordable childcare program, the Atkinson Centre called Yukon Canada's new leader in early learning and childcare. They noted that we did not wait for the federal government to come through with funding to launch our program, which ticks all the boxes to address affordability, quality, and accessibility.

This year's budget includes more than \$40 million to continue providing nationally recognized early learning and childcare opportunities in our territory.

By working with our partners, we have reached an agreement to access an additional \$54.3 million in federal funding over the next five years for early learning and childcare. This includes \$800,000 in cultural enhancement funding to develop enhanced, culturally rich early learning programs and environments. This funding will help us to continue expanding access to high-quality early learning and childcare throughout the territory, including our universal, affordable childcare program.

This kind of program was never even considered under the previous governments. I'm proud to be part of the Liberal government that introduced universal, affordable childcare in the Yukon. This is a key part of our work to support Yukon families by making life more affordable and to support childcare operators and early learning educators to ensure that our children have the support that they need to succeed. It is also a great example of our work to modernize and improve our education system.

Another \$255,000 in this year's budget will support work with Yukon University and other partners to support the development of a qualified early learning workforce. Ensuring that Yukon learners are supported from childhood all the way to adulthood is an essential part of ensuring a brighter future for the territory. They say that it takes a village to raise a child, and we continue to work with our partners throughout the territory to improve education outcomes for all Yukon students.

It was an honour and a humbling experience to join the Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education to establish the Yukon First Nation School Board. Our government, the Chiefs Committee on Education, and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate share the common goal of providing high quality and culturally appropriate education systems for all Yukon students based on an indigenous world view. The establishment of the Yukon First Nation School Board is part of our work to decolonize the Yukon's education system, and it will ensure that Yukon First Nations can meaningfully shape their children's education. This historic accomplishment happened on the 49th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, and I can't think of a better way to honour

the vision of past First Nation leaders and build a brighter future for the next generation.

Earlier this year, seven school communities, including eight schools, voted in favour of being governed by the First Nation School Board starting in the 2022-23 school year. As the Minister of Education, I look forward to working collaboratively with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the new First Nation School Board Interim Governance Committee to move this important work forward. I also look forward to continuing to work on a government-to-government basis with individual First Nations on their education priorities for their citizens. Education is a critical area of reconciliation, and Yukoners can be confident that our Liberal government is a willing partner when it comes to working in partnership with First Nations to improve our education system.

The past two years have created many challenges for our education system. It has been inspiring to see how adaptive and resilient our schools are. I want to thank all the educators, staff, and families across the territory who have supported our students to continue learning throughout the pandemic. I am pleased to see money in the budget specifically for mental health supports in our schools. We know that mental health is a key contributor to our students' success, and we will continue to work with our education partners to support mental wellness. Part of that support includes making sure that students feel that they belong in our schools and are supported to thrive in their learning.

I am very excited to see nearly \$800,000 in this year's budget to continue implementing the recommendations of the review on inclusive and special education. This includes funding for additional psychology assessments, professional services, and a specialized teacher to support students on the autism spectrum. That review provides a road map to build a world-class inclusive education system here in the territory. This work is long overdue, and I am thrilled to see it moving forward.

There is a lot of momentum right now when it comes to improving our education system, and this is good news for Yukoners.

The 2019 Auditor General report on education is unfortunately not much different from the report from 2009. The difference has been the response of our Liberal government. We are working in collaboration with our partners and doing the hard work to make our education system better for all Yukoners.

In addition to modernizing and improving education delivery, we are also investing in education facilities to meet the needs of our growing communities, so \$1.275 million in the budget is dedicated to design work for the new Kluane Lake School in Burwash Landing, which will accommodate students from kindergarten to grade 12. The Kluane First Nation requested a school to be built in Burwash Landing more than 100 years ago. We are thrilled to be working alongside the Kluane First Nation on this new school, which will support Kluane First Nation citizens to learn and thrive in their own community.

In our fastest growing community, Whistle Bend here in Whitehorse, we are investing more than \$25 million this year toward the first new elementary school in the city in over 25 years. I am pleased to see that a local business, Ketz Construction, is building that school. Yukoners will recall the poor decisions that were made to replace F.H. Collins Secondary School and the breakdown in trust among the contracting community. I want to thank my colleagues, the Member for Whitehorse West and the former Minister of Highways and Public Works as well. The work that he and his department undertook to overhaul the government's procurement during our previous mandate has helped to mend broken relationships with Yukon contractors and restore confidence in government procurement in the territory — thank you.

I would also like to commend the Member for Riverdale North, the current Minister of Highways and Public Works, for his efforts to fully implement the First Nation procurement policy. That work began under his predecessor and has also been a key part of improving procurement in the territory to support our local businesses.

The construction of the CSSC Mercier school in Riverdale is a great example of our improved approach. It has served as a model for the new Whistle Bend school. I was pleased to join the Minister of Highways and Public Works, along with representatives from Ketz Construction, for a land blessing of the site last fall. This new school will soon be able to provide families and children in this neighbourhood with a modern learning environment just a short walk away from their own homes. This is much more than a building; it is a groundbreaking investment in our children's future for years to come.

I am so pleased to share some highlights from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate budget for 2022-23. This represents the first budget since we updated the name and formal mandate of the directorate in the fall of 2021. The work of the directorate has kept women's equality at the heart of what we do and continues to strengthen the depth of our work to reflect the equity of all genders and sexual orientations. I'm so pleased that the new name of Women and Gender Equity Directorate accurately represents this work now.

Something that I have spoken about many times in this House, but it bears repeating, is the implementation of the Government of Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ action plan. With over 100 action items, the action plan paves a path to end discrimination and improve inclusivity, both within Government of Yukon services and the territory as a whole.

This year's budget contains \$110,000 to continue the implementation of the plan, although that doesn't reflect all of the work that is happening within our government departments that will move this agenda forward. I am pleased to say that there is also funding for Queer Yukon Society and for the Yukon Pride Centre. We have allocated \$425,000 for this existing project. The Pride Centre will serve the LGBTQ2S+ community, which has experienced discrimination and systemic barriers for far too long. I'm sorry that the member opposite, as part of the NDP caucus, feels differently about this. I certainly will be meeting with members of their caucus to

discuss paths forward, and I will continue to strive to implement this important action plan.

I also want to highlight the important work that is happening at Women and Gender Equity Directorate to implement the Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls strategy. The Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to release our response to the national inquiry. We have been working hard to make change ever since. Our strategy contains 31 actions and four main paths: strengthening connections and supports; education and economic empowerment; community safety and justice; and community dialogue in action.

Officials at the technical level are now working very hard to develop the implementation framework for this strategy. This fiscal year, we're providing \$285,000 in funding for the Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people strategy.

Again, as the LGBTQ2S+ action plan doesn't sit in one particular place within the budget, nor does the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls strategy sit in one place within our budget. We are investing in low-barrier, affordable housing, inclusive education, restorative justice responses, *Putting People First*, and health overall, specifically mental health, community safety, and the psychiatric services and programming. We are investing in SART. We are investing in justice-involved women and better programming for these folks in the Yukon. When we support these, we are supporting changing the story to upholding dignity and justice and the Yukon missing and murdered indigenous women and girls strategy.

We look forward to hosting an accountability forum this upcoming May for partners, signatories, and family members as a way to reconnect and communicate about how we are all taking action to change the story for all indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people, which ultimately will help to create safer communities for all Yukoners.

I am also very pleased to see nearly \$600,000 to support the work of the Yukon First Nation Government's Burial Investigation Committee. The work of this committee is very important. I was honoured to be in Lower Post last summer with the Premier, the Liard First Nation Chief Stephen Charlie, Daylu Dena Council Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling, BC Premier John Horgan, and federal Minister Marc Miller for the ceremonial demolition of the Lower Post residential school.

All of our communities continue to feel the lasting impacts of trauma caused by the residential school system on survivors and their families. Shedding light on this tragic history is absolutely necessary for healing and moving forward on the path to reconciliation.

This budget continues to support Yukoners across the territory. First, we are also working hard to expand the sexualized assault response team, which was first launched in the territory in March 2020 in Whitehorse. One of my main priorities in this new mandate has been to work to expand the services of the sexualized assault response team beyond Whitehorse. Currently, any victim of sexualized violence can now access a 24/7, toll-free support line and a website with

information and local resources from anywhere in the territory, but we can do more.

We need to expand victim-centred collaborative services to be available outside of Whitehorse. This year, we are partnering with the Government of Canada to provide another \$125,000 to support the planning for the expansion of SART services. I am also pleased to say that we are increasing the funding to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to support the Sally and Sisters program. This important program has been a critical service for women and children in need for the last 10 years. It provides a safe environment for women to access food support and navigation services. The increase in funding of \$143,000 will allow the program to operate four days per week.

I would also like to touch on some other priorities that I am pleased to see included in this year's budget, such as \$3 million to support the implementation of community safety initiatives in the coming years, including \$300,000 this year. I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services and of Justice already spoke about this, but I really am excited about this move and the support that our government is putting into this. Again, when we talk about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, this is a foundational piece to transforming our communities. It goes right alongside the economic prosperity that we are experiencing in our territory. We will have true balance when we see social prosperity as well.

Another \$400,000 is included for the Selkirk First Nation community safety officer program. These programs are so important for our communities. I want to give a big shout-out to Gina Nagano and the House of Wolf. I am so happy to see the Indigenous Community Safety Partnership program win the Arctic Inspiration Prize in the \$500,000 category. This is so well-deserved and will help expand this important program in the territory. I know that safety is one of the number one issues in my riding.

I met with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, our community associations, and the RCMP to bring everyone together to make some much-needed positive changes in Mountainview. As a result, we are now working toward finalizing the Mountainview community safety and wellness committee working group. The working group is slated to meet this week for the first time since October. We have, as we know, had a lot of restrictions and have been unable to come together in person, so I am very excited to sit down with everyone again and keep moving forward on this very important project together. Last year, we discussed the draft terms of reference as a group in an effort to formalize the document and officially make this a functioning committee to advocate for the riding. I want to commend and celebrate these folks for their continuous advocacy toward safety and wellness in our riding.

We have reached out to the city to invite them to the upcoming meeting and to join the group itself, and we are looking forward to taking the next steps together. So, it's very exciting and I can't wait to talk about that more publicly.

I am also pleased to see more than \$5.5 million for the immediate response to the substance use health emergency in our territory. This is a serious issue impacting all of our communities. We all know someone who has been affected by

substance use, by mental health challenges, and by suicide. These are hard topics to talk about. When I reflect on how I got here into this position, it was really about saving lives and about making a difference for Yukoners. It has been incredibly difficult on every level to see our community struggle and to lose young people. That is not the vision that our elders had for the Yukon, and I will work alongside my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and other Cabinet ministers and other leaders in the Yukon to change that story as well. There are no simple fixes here. Communities right across Canada are facing these challenges and we are looking for ways to better help those in our communities who are struggling. These are complex issues that require all of us to work together. These are health issues that demand a harm-reduction approach. Our Liberal government has put a focus on harm reduction over the past five years. We recognize that so much more needs to be done, and we are taking action.

I want to thank again the Minister of Health and Social Services for her leadership on this file. The supervised consumption site that we opened last year is a first in northern Canada. This provides a safe place for people to use substances and improves access to a range of supports. It will soon be one of the only sites in the country that supports users to inhale substances. A safe supply of opioids in the territory is helping those suffering from addiction and serious substance use issues. Last fall, we expanded this program to help more Yukoners in need. These are critical elements of our Liberal government's harm-reduction approach. They are hands down the most progressive steps that have ever been taken in the territory to address substance use.

We are also expanding outreach and public education, along with harm-reduction initiatives like naloxone training and drug-testing services. Phase 1 of the Mental Wellness Summit was an important opportunity to bring people together to discuss solutions. It has been disappointing to hear the disparaging remarks about this summit, which is just part of ongoing conversation that we need to continue to have here in the Legislative Assembly to bring the awareness and to bring the conversation together.

Having community leaders come together to acknowledge these problems and to work together in good faith to improve our response is critical. The substance use health emergency can only be addressed through collaboration right across this territory. That includes every single member of this House.

I know that Yukoners whom I have spoken to are pleased to see our government working in partnership to address the emergency. We all need to step up our response to this emergency. I want to acknowledge the work and leadership of Kwanlin Dün First Nation, which recently announced plans to expand programs and services for citizens dealing with substance abuse issues. We will continue to work with our partners on solutions that help all of our communities.

The encouragement and advocacy of my constituents is grounding. I am so humbled to represent Mountainview. One of the things about my livestreams that I have been having for the last couple of years is that people tune in from all over the territory. They reach out, so I have caseworks from across the

territory on a regular basis. I'm so humbled to have Yukoners reach out and seek the assistance of me and other MLAs on really personal issues that they may have in all different types of areas in their lives. It gives me energy in my role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and reinforces the importance of our government's work. We are here to improve the lives of Yukoners. We take that role seriously, and we work every day to improve government service delivery and create the conditions for our communities to thrive. The work that my colleagues and I did during our previous mandate has helped us to move our territory in a positive direction after many years of division.

In closing, I want to leave my final words to the people I love dearly. I thank my husband, Rick McLean, for his unwavering support and commitment to me and to this team as well. I thank my sons, Jedrek and Colin, for their ongoing support and encouragement. I am so proud of them. I have always said that the work that we do, anything I have ever done, has been for them and the next generations to come. I view my life that way. I do the work for the next seven generations, and they represent that to me. I want to, as the Minister of Health and Social Services has said to my colleague, thank my friends for never giving up on me and for continuing to invite me to things even though I don't always have time to do it. I don't always have time for the people who have supported me to be here. But knowing that they are there and that they are patiently waiting and they are silently, sometimes, supporting — that means the world to me. They fill me up when I need that. They invite me out, and we have some good laughs and enjoy the company of each other. I encourage Yukoners to do the same. Get out. Exercise. Try something new. Get together with friends. We are starting to see that light at the end of the tunnel. This has been a really hard few years for every single Yukoner, for every Canadian and worldwide. I cannot even talk about the war that is happening in Ukraine without moving to tears, so I'm not going to do that, because it's a difficult topic and my heart is with all those people who are suffering throughout the world but particularly there.

On that note, I thank you very much for your attention to the words that I have been able to share with you today. I very much look forward to Committee of the Whole debate and talking in more detail about the areas within the budget that are important to all Yukoners.

Thank you.

Ms. McLeod: Of course, I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill No. 204 this afternoon. I would like to first thank my constituents for their continued faith and support for me to represent them here in this place. I appreciate their support and, of course, the support of my family.

I will be brief this afternoon. Of course, there are programs and services that we can all support that are contained in this budget. There are some things that should help Yukoners, and of course, we are happy about that, and I look forward to discussing specific items when we get to the departments. I know that we have mentioned this over the years, and when you

think that it can't get any worse, well, son of a gun, it gets worse.

It is almost impossible to find information in this budget that you can relate to anything that is going on. Everything is very buried within a line item, so I expect that we are going to spend a great deal of time in Committee when we go through each line to find out exactly what is contained there. One of the reasons I mention that is because for five years — over five years — my community and I have been advocating for street lights on the Robert Campbell Highway. Now, lo and behold, there is a news release that says that street lights are going to happen on the Robert Campbell Highway. That is good news. I cannot find a single thing about it in the budget — not one.

Of course, it is a concern to me, because when I look at the Town of Watson Lake's budget, I see a line item in there, because they are being made to pay for part of that project. I am going to be quite interested to know how every Yukon community is affected by these payments that they have to make to see projects move forward. Now, \$150,000 obviously doesn't stack up to a \$50-million surplus, but it is certainly a great deal of money to a community the size of Watson Lake.

The Premier, in his budget speech, mentioned that — I want to just talk about one thing for sure today, and that is the issue of lot development within Watson Lake, and it is vitally important to my community, of course. The Premier, in his budget speech, mentioned that planning and feasibility work is being done for lots in Watson Lake. Now, clearly, there is something wrong with the translation of the language here.

Last fall, the Watson Lake OCP was approved by the government. The tender for lot development was expected to go out this spring. It was a year late, at that. Now, it's sounding an awful lot like it's not going to happen again this year. When the Minister of Community Services addressed AYC recently, there was no mention of lot development in Watson Lake. Certainly, I look forward to getting into debate on Community Services to try to find out for my constituents just what is going on, because it is an issue of vital importance, as I mentioned. We can't grow and can't begin to address any housing issues until this matter is sorted.

I would like to say that, because I am so short here, I would like to share my time with the Member for Lake Laberge, but that happens in the House of Commons, as I understand it. I just wanted to get that in there, because I realize that we have some extra time.

Mr. Hassard: It is a pleasure to rise today to have the opportunity to respond to the budget that the Premier brought forward last Thursday. It has been a pleasure to listen to everyone's speeches and get their perspectives as well.

I would just like to begin by thanking the good people of Pelly-Nisutlin for their continued support. I certainly appreciate it very much. I am happy to see the days get longer and sunnier, and hopefully that, combined with the lifting of restrictions, will help people's lives return to some type of normalcy. I, too, would like to thank Yukoners for their incredible patience getting through this past winter, in particular, despite some of

the rather ridiculous restrictions that this Liberal government has imposed on them.

Moving on to the budget, on Thursday, as I said, the Premier tabled the budget here in the Legislature. It's the largest budget that has ever been tabled here in this House. It is in the neighbourhood of \$1.97 billion. Unfortunately, bigger is not always better.

As I was listening to the Leader of the NDP the other day, she was criticizing the government for spending too much money on highway maintenance. As a resident of rural Yukon — as you are yourself, Mr. Speaker — I would have to question her judgment on that. Then, even more interesting, when I got to looking closer at the budget, the reality is that the actuals for 2021 show just over \$49 million for maintenance. This year, the government has budgeted \$46.5 million. According to my math, that's actually a decrease.

That's in light of the fact that, for the past two winters, we've received more than normal precipitation, and we've seen more severe weather patterns. One would think that a forward-thinking government, in fact, would have increased that maintenance budget, rather than cutting it.

I know that the government doesn't like it when I say that they're cutting budgets. They prefer to say that they're finding efficiencies, but the reality is that costs are increasing and the budget numbers are getting smaller. There is no two ways about it; that's a cut. So, here we have an almost \$2-billion budget, which is a record, but we're cutting the highway maintenance budget. It seems rather bizarre.

As we know and as we've talked about, budgets are about priorities. When a government sets a budget, it's about setting their priorities. It's clear that highway maintenance for rural Yukon is not a priority for this government, which is interesting. You know, they talked about — one of their campaign slogans was every community matters. I said, from day one, that unfortunately for this government, some communities matter more than others, and it continues to be shown.

The Minister of Justice doesn't like those comments, and that's fine. I didn't expect her to like it, but it's a reality.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just talk about the three communities in my riding, and I'll talk about a few of the realities. I was in Ross River a couple of weeks ago, and I stopped by the school, as I always do, and I certainly wasn't surprised to see that the school is still short-staffed and still under-supported. We have two EMS volunteers in the community, because the EMS service was gutted by this government with their mandate. When I stood in this House last fall and talked about how this was going to affect the community of Ross River, the minister said: Oh no, don't worry; they are going to be supported by Whitehorse. We are going to take people in there to help out with EMS — but that was just another empty promise from this government.

I had the opportunity to take the water delivery person for a drive. He wanted to show me a few things around town and show me some of the absolutely deplorable conditions that he is expected to work in to try to deliver water to houses that are owned by Yukon Housing that haven't been — walkways haven't been shovelled the entire winter — and he has got to

almost take his life in his hands to deliver water to government buildings. It is not right.

I looked at the swimming pool and was kind of musing about whether the swimming pool would get to reopen this summer in Ross River, and as I was talking to people about it, I was informed that there have been more than one letter and e-mail sent off to the government and not even a response given to them about what was going to happen with the swimming pool this year. There are limited recreation facilities in Ross River, and the pool is very important to that community, and so I would hope that someone on that side of the Assembly would take that into consideration and take it seriously.

Moving to Faro — many residents in Faro have asked for increased supports in light of the tragic shooting in that community. Government's response was: Well, we have wellness hubs in Watson Lake and Carmacks — but that is cold comfort to the citizens of Faro who, in that time of need and in that time of tragedy — Mr. Speaker, you know how far it is from Carmacks to Faro. That's not acceptable.

I won't even get started about the lack of mental health supports throughout the entire Yukon. We have been in a state of emergency for almost 24 months. We have seen an unprecedented number of opioid deaths and suicides, so I would like to hope that the government would take this a lot more seriously.

I know that we don't have a lot of time, so I'm going to try to be quick. I will talk about Teslin for a few minutes. Last year, we had snowpack conditions at roughly 140 percent of historical levels, and this year they announced — in the last couple of days — that we were at 164 percent of historical levels, I believe. I really hope that the Minister of Community Services and the government will listen to the community — that they will listen to the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council — and help them prepare earlier for flooding. There is a very good chance that Teslin will flood again, and it would be nice if the government would actually have some forethought and spend some money ahead of time to be prepared rather than wait until it is an emergency situation.

I do have to give kudos to the citizens of Teslin. They did an absolutely amazing job of dealing with the flood last June. I would like to note that there was no support from the army and there were no Cabinet ministers down for photo ops. That maybe sped things up and kept things moving a little smoother.

When they needed help from the officials in Community Services, whether they needed sandbags or help getting funding, the officials were really, really impressive, very helpful, and really good to work with. That was really appreciated by the community.

As I listened to the Minister of Community Services in his budget speech, he spoke, as he has many times, about the Nisutlin Bay bridge in Teslin. As we all know, as the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works, he has often talked about how he and his Liberal government have done such a great job of moving this project forward and negotiating a deal with the First Nation. Ironically, here we are five years later and still nothing has happened.

I won't say nothing has happened. The tender closed in February, but now apparently it won't be awarded until September, and that is if the contractors will actually hold their prices for another six months, which could be debatable. Only the Liberals could see this as an improvement and progress as we go another building season with nothing happening.

I don't have a lot more to say, but I can't cede the floor without responding to one of the comments made by the Minister of Community Services in his speech. I really have to wonder at his almost delusional ideas that the Yukon Party may be in some way supportive of a carbon tax. It is almost comical. We have discussed the carbon tax for probably hours in this Legislature. Certainly, no one ever said that we were in favour of it. Actually, if I had another minute, I would encourage the Premier at this time — we have talked about the skyrocketing fuel prices and what it's doing to the Yukon, driving the costs of everything up. Now would be a great opportunity for the Premier to have a talk with the Prime Minister and maybe cut the carbon tax, get rid of the carbon tax, or at least put it on hold or stop the April 1 increase. Anything that we can do to help people would certainly be of benefit.

So, Mr. Speaker —

Speaker: Order, please. The time being 5:30 p.m., the House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 204 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 46

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, March 9, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 9, 2022 — 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

Speaker: Today, we have in the gallery Bengie Clethero, deputy advocate, Child and Youth Advocate office. Please join me in welcoming Bengie to the Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It gives me great pleasure today to welcome to the Assembly the High Commissioner of India to Canada, Ajay Bisaria, and his wife, Bharati Chaturvedi. These are two extremely impressive individuals. The High Commissioner spent his career throughout the world working in diplomatic service. Ms. Chaturvedi runs one of the largest non-profits in the world that focuses on environmental issues. They have been here in the Yukon for the last number of days, sharing a message from the world's largest democracy, and they are looking for opportunities for Yukon companies to work in India or investment here, as well as continuing to help Yukon with issues around our labour market. Of course, we have a large, large number of students now at Yukon University from India.

It was a great pleasure, and I really want to thank them for spending time over the last number of days here — and what a great pleasure it has been to host them.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I ask my colleagues to help me welcome to the gallery Laura Wilson, a dietician with the Yukon bariatric program who is here for our tribute.

From the Department of Health and Social Services, welcome Paula Mowat, Bobby Prematunga, and Leeann Kayseas.

From the Council of Yukon First Nations, we have Kayla Brinda and Shauna Strand. They are here for the introduction of Bill No. 11. Thank you so much for coming.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Nutrition Month

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to speak about national Nutrition Month. This year marks 40 years of dieticians all over the country

raising awareness of the importance of food in our lives and our communities.

The theme for 2022 is “Ingredients for a Healthier Tomorrow”. This speaks to the ingredients or individual actions that we take to improve our health today and the broader systemic changes that can be made for the future.

Dieticians recognize the factors that influence what and how we eat, and they are complex. Dieticians are important members of multidisciplinary teams in long-term care facilities, in hospitals, in health centres, and in the community at large. They have the opportunity to share the science of nutrition and make sure that food traditions and cultures are respected.

In the Yukon, we have many examples of how dieticians and nutrition teams are leading the way forward to support sustainable food systems. Yukon Hospital Corporation's traditional food program has many nutritional leaders who recognize the importance of traditional food in First Nation cultures and its impact on healing. The program works with First Nations and resident hunters to donate wild game to the program. The food is then prepared using traditional methods and served to patients to help support their cultural needs and healing journey.

The food literacy grant program builds on existing and new community-driven food literacy initiatives. Building skills, confidence, and connection, these projects help Yukoners make sustainable food choices.

Another great example of a program that Yukoners have access to is the Yukon bariatric program. This Yukon-designed program has operated for 12 years and is led by a Yukon team of health professionals who work together to help Yukoners who are dealing with weight issues, and it focuses on preventing serious ailments such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Thanks to the virtual platforms like Zoom, they are now able to help Yukoners in every community.

Dieticians recognize that food is important for us all. They also recognize that the meaning of food is that what is sustainable for one person may not look the same for every person.

I encourage all Yukoners to get involved in exploring what action they can take to learn more about the connection between food, public health, and our environment and how our choices influence the future health of ourselves, our communities, and our planet. Food is so much more than just energy. It is culture, it is family and community traditions and how we show love to our family and friends. I know, as we are able to come together again, that food and nutrition will play such a central role in our gatherings.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March as national Nutrition Month in Canada. Across the country, dieticians, health practitioners, organizations, governments, and others are spreading the word on raising awareness around the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. Of course, preferences, allergies, cultures, traditions, and dietary restrictions all impact the way people eat and the outcome of food on the body.

Dieticians work to help make food work for you in a healthy, balanced way. I would like to thank those in the gallery and listening for the work that they do. They can help create an eating plan that works for you and promote healthy eating and nutrition on a daily basis.

Healthy eating and balanced diets are not always easy for many to think about and are even harder for some to follow. Many people can't afford to make proper nutrition choices for themselves and their families, and the rising cost of everything from fuel to electricity and food is making this even more of a challenge today. Some children do not have an adequate breakfast or lunch to sustain them through their day at school, and I would like to acknowledge and thank Yukon Food for Learning and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate for the work that they are doing to provide healthy meals in Yukon schools. At each of the participating schools, there are volunteers and staff who assist in ensuring that food is distributed to students.

I would also like to recognize and thank the Yukon's agricultural sector, farmers, market gardeners, producers, processors, and all those who contribute to the local production of vegetables, meats, eggs, and other food products. Thanks to your efforts, Yukoners have access to an increasing variety of healthy local foods that are available especially during the growing season, but also increasingly available year-round due to your efforts.

Before I close, I would like to recognize that March 16 this year is Dieticians Day. According to the Dieticians of Canada, it celebrates dieticians as regulated health professionals committed to using their specialized knowledge and skills to translate the science of nutrition into terms that everyone can understand to unlock food's potential and support healthy living for all Canadians. Again, thank you to all for the work that they do in promoting nutrition and a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge national Nutrition Month. In honour of this month, I would like to talk about the gaps that still exist in the territory when it comes to good nutrition, because for many Yukoners, good nutrition remains out of reach. While we can talk about how individuals can make healthy decisions, we also have to take a hard look at the systems in place to support these choices. Good nutrition starts with affordability.

Last fall, I brought forward the motion to review the Yukon social assistance rates. This review is long overdue. Many Yukoners who rely on social assistance feel trapped because the rates do not reflect the actual cost of living in the territory today. Since last fall, social assistance rates still have not been reviewed.

Many of the same Yukoners who rely on social assistance are also living in hotel rooms with no access to a stove, a fridge, or a microwave. Without a kitchen, good nutrition is almost impossible.

On my most recent visit to Old Crow, I listened to many citizens who are food insecure. Current supports do not reflect

the rising cost of food today in the communities, and it's not just Old Crow. If you want to understand food insecurity in the Yukon, all you have to do is look at the rising number of people accessing the Whitehorse Food Bank from across the territory.

Food banks are designed to be a last resort, but because of a lack of upstream support, more people are relying on emergency food hampers for basic nutrition. Until this poverty is addressed on a systemic level, like finally reviewing the social assistance rates, implementing a basic income, and treating housing like a human right, Yukoners will continue to struggle with nutrition.

I hope that the members of this House take this month to reflect on the ways that we, as leaders in our community, can make decisions to enable our youth, elders, and everyone in between to eat well and be healthy.

Applause

In recognition of National Engineering Month

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to Yukon's engineers on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and on behalf of the Third Party. Engineers play an invaluable role in our society. Within the Yukon, we have engineers who focus on infrastructure, such as transportation and buildings, or natural resources, like mining and the environment. There are also computer and technology engineers who design, install, and maintain our computer systems. They all do one thing in common: They work hard to find meaningful solutions to problems.

Living in a remote territory, we face unique challenges. We are working toward modernizing our digital infrastructure, upgrading or replacing aging infrastructure, and mitigating the impacts of climate change. One project that stands out to me is the Dempster fibre line. This involves the installation of an 800-kilometre fibre optic line along the Klondike and Dempster highways. To do this, we needed geotechnical engineers, civil engineers, network engineers, electrical engineers, and environmental engineers. This project would not have been possible without them.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that we face as northerners is the rapid melt of permafrost. If any of you have driven between Haines Junction and Beaver Creek, you know the impact that melting permafrost can have on our highways. Thankfully, we have engineers stepping up to mitigate these impacts, for example, the thermosyphon project outside of Beaver Creek. Engineers designed a system that uses tubes to act as a refrigeration device that transfers heat using gravity and cold air. This should reduce the impacts of the freeze-thaw cycle, making our roads safer and reducing maintenance costs.

This month, we are celebrating National Engineering Month. Throughout the month, there will be events that highlight the opportunities that come from being an engineer. You can view these virtual sessions at exploreengineering.ca.

The overarching theme for this month is "There's A Place For You in Engineering". This theme celebrates and encourages diversity within the world of engineering. I think this is rather timely as yesterday was International Women's Day. While the number of women in the engineering profession

has risen over the past decade, there is still room for improvement. Engineers Yukon, the regulating body of engineers in the territory, is working with Engineers Canada on the 30 by 30 initiative. This initiative is a commitment made by Engineers Canada to raise the percentage of newly licensed engineers who are women to 30 percent by 2030. The Government of Yukon also encourages young people to start a career in engineering through our engineers in training program.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I would like to thank all engineers, as well as those in training. Through your dedication, innovation, and tireless work, you are helping to build safer, healthier, and more prosperous communities for all Yukoners.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March as National Engineering Month. Hosted by Engineers Canada, the national regulatory body, National Engineering Month is celebrating with the intention of recognizing and celebrating the achievement of engineers throughout Canada and providing information to those who have yet to decide on the path they wish to take in their career.

The Yukon is home to an incredible range of expertise and knowledge based on the collective experience of our locally based engineers. They use that knowledge and expertise to make things work throughout the territory. Our local infrastructure — roadworks, bridges, and neighbourhoods — are all planned and built on the work of engineers.

There are so many parts of our society for which we have engineers to thank. They contribute to everything that we do, use, and see around us — chemical, mechanical, civil, geotechnical, and electrical engineering are just a number of the types of engineering that you might be used to hearing about. Within each type is a number of other subcategories of engineering. In fact, if it exists, chances are there is a type of engineering associated with it. These important trades continue to be major contributors to our economy and to life within each of our communities.

I would like to thank Engineers Yukon for the continued work that they do to advance engineering within the territory and to all those involved with engineering in the Yukon. To all those involved in engineering across the Yukon, the solid foundation that you have built over the years across the territory continues to serve us well, and your continued contributions allow us to thrive.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling the Yukon Party's carbon-pricing plan, which confirms their support for this important tool in the fight against global warming. I also have a copy of the Yukon Party's platform, which further confirms

their support for carbon pricing and support for this important tool in the fight against global climate change.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 9 — not received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 9 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on March 8, 2022.

The petition presented by the Leader of the Third Party does not meet the requirements as to the form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, Petition No. 9 may not be received.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to admit all refugees who are fleeing Russian aggression in Ukraine to the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel program, regardless of the refugee's citizenship.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make professional development opportunities in the areas of special and inclusive education available to educational assistants.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue funding a full-time home support aid worker at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tank farm site development

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to applaud the City of Whitehorse on their commitment and partnership with the Government of Yukon and the private sector to create the master plan for the development of the tank farm property and surrounding areas.

The tank farm site is centrally located in Whitehorse, and it is 116 hectares, a piece of vacant land that has the potential to provide about 400 new homes. This commitment marks a major step forward in transforming what is currently unused vacant land into a residential community. The master plan process will provide direction on future engineering, zoning, subdivision, and development permits that are required to help turn this project into a community.

I would like to recognize that our commitment to the development of a master plan for the tank farm property is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together. After all, the development of a new community in our city does not just require planning for bricks and mortar; it requires, first and foremost, that we build strong partnerships.

It is only through these partnerships between the municipal and territorial governments, private sector landowners and developers, First Nation partners, and many others that we can address housing gaps in the territory.

The Yukon has the fastest-growing population of all provinces and territories in Canada, and in the past five years alone, the population has increased by 12.1 percent. This rapid rate of population growth is putting pressure on the availability of homes in the Yukon despite historic levels of new housing construction over the past years.

During the same period, from 2016 to 2021, the number of private dwellings in the Yukon increased by 12.9 percent, outpacing the population growth.

Residential investment has reached record levels in the territory — \$267 million worth of residential construction in 2021 — shattering the 2020 record of nearly \$200 million. Despite these promising trends, we are still playing catch-up. We know that a key part of the solution of housing availability and affordability is to bring more housing supply online. We also know that to accomplish this, we need to work together. That is precisely why the collective commitment to the tank farm master plan is so important. While the agreement to begin the process of procuring planning services is an important first step, we need to keep the momentum going.

The ongoing collaboration between key partners, as well as engaging with the public throughout the process, will be a major component of this residential planning and the development's success. Thank you to the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Housing Corporation, and the private sector partners that are helping to get this site planned and these homes built. This is just one of the ongoing projects in the Yukon that will lead to more homes for Yukoners. I look forward to seeing the tank farm property become Whitehorse's newest residential community.

Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise and respond to this ministerial statement on behalf of the Official Opposition. We are certainly pleased to see this development as well. We would like to add our congratulations to the City of Whitehorse for this important step. I know that a lot of Yukoners have been following the tank farm development in Whitehorse closely. It has been an issue for a number of years as remediation work to clean up the old fuel tanks has taken place, and questions have been raised over the years about what would eventually happen with that land.

With housing a continuing issue in our growing city and territory, I know that any effort to get more land developed and more housing on the market is very much appreciated. I am particularly appreciative of the fact that this particular development is being driven by and involves the private sector.

According to the City of Whitehorse, which has taken the lead in recent years, the tank farm area is actually far bigger than most Whitehorse residents realize. The land being discussed today encompasses a much larger swath of central Whitehorse. This area runs pretty much from Elijah Smith Elementary School to the Alaska Highway-Two Mile Hill intersection. Media reports peg the estimates at the number of lots that could be potentially created at 1,400. That is certainly a lot of lots and a lot of development, and it will certainly be welcome in our housing market.

In our current housing crisis with a growing territory, any room for error is small and will have a profound impact on getting these lots to market. Of course, we know that a number of Yukon government departments are involved — Community Services being one — but we also understand that the Yukon Housing Corporation is taking an active role in this, as evidenced by the fact that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation is doing this ministerial statement. We are wondering if the minister can tell us about this new role that Yukon Housing will take in the development of land and if there are any changes to the department's mandate as a result of that.

We would also like to note that there is ongoing remediation with the tank farm area itself. We would ask that the minister provide an update as to the contamination status of the site and whether or not Environment Yukon will be involved with the liability on an ongoing basis and whether or not that liability will be transferred to the property owners should that sale occur.

We also understand that there are some questions around the payment for the underground utilities in this new development. I'm wondering if the minister can confirm if it has been determined which level of government will cover the costs of the underground utilities associated with this. We would like to know when that will be ironed out and whether or not it will be before major construction begins.

I also note that a number of residents in the area have raised concerns, particularly those in Valleyview and Hillcrest, so I would like it if the minister could offer his thoughts on how the input of residents in Valleyview and Hillcrest will be considered in this process.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the City of Whitehorse for this important step, and I look forward to seeing these lots developed in our community.

Ms. Tredger: It's welcome news that planning for the tank farm is moving ahead, and we look forward to more residential lots being released. Congratulations to the City of Whitehorse and the developer on their work to get the tank farm developed into more housing for Yukoners.

It does beg the question: What about the lots that the Yukon government owns that are still sitting empty? 5th and Rogers comes to mind. I understand that it has gone out to tender again and I'm looking forward to the day it becomes housing instead of just a talking point.

The tank farm lots will be great news for Yukoners who have a down payment ready to go for a new house and lot. That's great because houses are in short supply, but what about the Yukoners who can't afford to buy a house? Where are the creative ideas for making the housing market accessible to all Yukoners?

For example, has there been any consideration of zoning lots to allow for modular homes? This seems like an ideal option given our current shortage of contractors and our need for housing fast. It would make buying some of the new lots coming online more affordable for many Yukoners.

What about renters? Where are the creative ideas for making rent affordable and stable — ideas like housing co-ops?

What I saw in the budget for housing this year was money for more lots, but not much that was creative or exciting to make housing more accessible for people who need a home, not just an investment.

We're happy to see the tank farm going ahead with planning, but we need more than new lots to change the way housing is done in this territory. We need creative, innovative approaches, and that's something that Yukoners are missing out on.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As noted, the tank farm project has the potential to create hundreds of new homes for Yukoners and to address some of the housing demand that we're seeing in Whitehorse. I would just like to quickly respond to some of these questions that were tabled. Firstly — and I will just quickly go through them — there was a question about consultation with the community members. Of course, that's part of the master plan work. Who is going to pay for the horizontal or some of the ground services work and infrastructure? That will be defined after the master plan is completed, and we'll have a scope of exactly what's needed within that, and there will be conversations between the government and the City of Whitehorse.

Of course, what you have seen in our budget this year is a very innovative way to work with First Nations, such as Kwanlin Dün, on helping to make sure that it can be procured. If you look at my mandate letter, you will see that, yes, Yukon Housing Corporation is now taking a lead role on housing development, so please, you can refer to that, but we're

working in concert with Community Services and Energy, Mines and Resources.

I'm sad to see that the critic roles have changed, but we'll see when we get into budget debate concerning that. When we talk about innovative ideas, we actually have \$60 million in the budget this year that goes to affordable housing, and we're also working on land trusts. Yesterday we spoke about the fact that we were putting in a supplement between \$200, \$400, \$600, and \$800 toward folks to offset part of the high cost of rent. There are about 200 people using that right now, and there is no wait-list, which is good to see.

I would like to take the rest of the time and just — I want to thank the individuals at Yukon Housing Corporation and government. What we didn't hear in the response — there weren't a lot of accolades for the Yukon government, and that goes to the public servants who have driven this work. As well, we have two First Nations that have land within this area, so we'll be working closely with Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

We all owe a big thank you to Mr. Sidhu, who has taken this forward. He has wanted to see this developed. He is a well-recognized, successful entrepreneur in our city, and I want to thank him for coming to the table with us.

Just a little bit of a timeline for the House today on how this has come to be — it really goes back to the fact that I had an opportunity to sit with Mayor Cabott shortly after the election of our new mayor, in November, and we really aligned on our thoughts concerning the tank farm and the work that could be done.

We then set up a meeting with the City of Whitehorse officials and the property owner, Mr. Sidhu, where we began to lay out the groundwork and really walked in leadership with the city. They have taken a lead role and so have we.

Last week, I met with the Mayor of the City of Whitehorse again, and with city officials, to really discuss the work that we are doing and how we can support them on the master plan — again, on 5th and Rogers, which we will get a chance to talk about. We are working closely with them. We will have an RFP going out, but we want to share it with them first so that it meets the downtown zoning plans and the vision that they have for the city. It's very important that we are in lockstep and aligned with them.

With that, I think it's important — and some in the House will remember — that a good old friend of mine — his name was Brad Taylor. He knocked on the government's door for many, many years, trying to move this forward. I can't help but think of Brad today, because he didn't get to see this work done. He was successful in some other smaller developments, but this was something that Brad always wanted to see. Today, that is who I think about, because we now have a chance to see the private sector, the municipality, and the Government of Yukon move this project forward finally.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Flooding preparedness

Mr. Cathers: Yukoners who were affected by the 2021 floods were concerned to see the most recent snow survey released by the government's Water Resources branch. It confirms that snowpack levels are above to well above average in most Yukon watersheds. The government release on this concludes: "Above average spring breakup and snowmelt flood potential is anticipated in most of the territory."

When we raised this with the minister a few weeks ago, he was dismissive of public concerns and told the *Whitehorse Star* that the nature and the location of snowpack was much different from last year and therefore not much cause for concern. The snow survey indicates otherwise.

Many Yukoners are looking for more action showing that the government will be better prepared for flooding than it was last year. What steps is the government taking to ensure that they are ready for the possibility of flooding in 2022?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Government of Yukon created a multi-departmental flood recovery working group to coordinate a variety of flood recovery initiatives for communities impacted by the 2021 floods. Efforts are focused on the cleanup from the 2021 flood event, supporting community and individual flood preparedness, increasing response efficiencies, and establishing long-term mitigation options.

Yukoners, of course, know that there is a lot of snow out there this year. Weather observations, snow pillow data, and the March snow survey indicate that most regions of the territory have above-average snowpack, but it is still too early to provide an accurate flood forecast, but an above-average flood potential is anticipated.

The flood potential will become much clearer following the next territory-wide snow surveys in April and May, and I can advise that, for the first time in recent memory, there were February snow and water surveys and we have more resources being brought to bear so as to provide accurate information to all departments to provide that data for their coordinated response to any potential floods this season.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the partial answer from the minister and have noticed, of course, that while multiple factors influence whether it actually does flood, the potential is higher than normal.

While the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge areas were certainly hit hardest last year, there were impacts in other regions throughout the Yukon. The Village of Carmacks, for instance, would like to see a number of measures taken in that area. They would like to see an engineering study of flood mitigation in Carmacks and for the government to support the construction of a berm or dike similar to that of Dawson City.

What steps is the government taking to address the flooding concerns of the residents of Carmacks?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Government of Yukon created a multi-departmental flood recovery working group to coordinate a variety of flood-recovery initiatives for communities impacted by the 2021 floods. Efforts are focused on cleanup from the 2021 flood event, supporting community and

individual flood preparedness, increasing response efficiencies, and establishing long-term mitigation options.

We are working very, very hard to address and identify where potential flooding will be happening in the coming year. We have lots of sandbags, and we have certainly learned an awful lot and have a lot of measures and experts we can pull on in this coming flood season.

I will say that we recognize the urgent need to tackle climate change, and we are taking bold action, as well, to meet the Yukon's climate change goals. Last year, we mounted the largest flood-mitigation effort in Yukon history. The Yukon Party has actually commended us for that effort. The Yukon Party is concerned about not being prepared, and I understand that. They provided no preparation in 2007 and, in the wake of that flood in 2007 — 2008, nothing done; 2009, nothing done; 2010, nothing done; 2011, nothing done; 2013, nothing done; 2014, 2015, 2016, nothing done.

In 2021, we launched the largest flood mitigation in Yukon history. We protected the homes and we are now prepared for floods into the future.

Mr. Cathers: That was quite the imaginative response by the Minister of Community Services. We appreciate the hard work done by government staff, contractors, and people who volunteered to help fellow Yukoners throughout the flooding last summer. The effort was commendable, but there are also lessons that can be learned in areas that government can do better.

There were gaps in communication and coordination, and many people in affected areas have raised this as an issue. We appreciate that the government listened to citizens and us by starting earlier this year with preparations and meetings, but there have been gaps in communications again with some people who were forced to evacuate their homes not being invited to two online meetings about flood preparedness for this year.

Will the minister agree to make improving communications and coordination a priority, and will he commit to advertising flood meetings in the newspapers and online, as well as ensuring, specifically, that people who were seriously impacted by the flooding last year are informed of these public flood preparation meetings?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In preparation for the flood response this year, we conducted an early season February assessment of snowpack conditions in the upper Yukon River Basin. We sent a letter to Southern Lakes residents and held a community meeting to provide an update on recovery work and flood preparedness. That community meeting was for residents of the Southern Lakes. We plan for future meetings for Lake Laberge and other areas. We are going to advertise all of the meetings we have. We have also consolidated our mailing list to make sure that the response to the community is much more robust. We are currently looking at all the ways that we are responding to these floods and trying to refine our systems as is necessary to make sure that we are prepared for the coming season. We hope that there will be as little flooding as possible, but we are preparing for the worst and we will certainly deal with it.

I just met with Brigadier-General Godbout last week to have conversations about that and keep the communication lines open in case we have to pull on other tools like the Canadian military again. We are hoping that it won't be the case, but we are in communication all the time and we are taking those actions earlier so that we actually have those communication channels open.

Question re: Whistle Bend development

Ms. Clarke: The territory is facing an affordability crisis. The recently tabled Liberal budget states — and I quote: “The demand for new housing outstripped new building for several years prior to 2020 resulting in the current housing shortage.” The reason supply has not kept up with demand is because of delays in releasing land for development. For example, on May 18, 2021, 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.” Despite this commitment, it was not until two days ago that the government finally released phase 6 lots and, instead of 171, they only released 70.

Can the minister clarify why he delayed the release —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think my colleague can rise and we can go back to 2018, but really, what we're focused on at this particular point is making sure that we get as many lots built as possible. I commend the Premier's vision for us in our mandate letters. We're looking at building over 1,000 lots in the next five years, and it has been a complete pleasure to work with Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services through the Yukon Housing Corporation to look at even more — hundreds more lots.

What we announced today, that work with the City of Whitehorse, is over and above that commitment of 1,000 lots. If we really want to go back and start to dig through some of the challenges that had happened previously, it really was the ball being passed back and forth at one time between the municipal level of government and the Yukon level of government. I think there were probably challenges with budgets and capacity and there were different things, and probably in the end, good decisions were made by both levels of government.

But I think, if we go back, that was our biggest challenge. From my knowledge, you need about 200-plus lots per year — that is what we had seen — and we're always striving to do that, either with the private sector or with government. In some years, you end up having maybe 300, so it makes up if there are not enough on an ongoing basis. But that's what we've seen over the last number of years, and that's what we're committed to doing.

Ms. Clarke: As I pointed out, the budget highlights that the affordability crisis we are facing is, in part, due to the fact that the government has not kept pace with demand for new land development, so that has us wondering why the government continues to delay and reduce the number of lots

that are released. It is clear that these decisions are contributing to skyrocketing housing prices.

I would like to go back to May 18 of last year, when 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.” That is another timeline and commitment that the minister did not live up to. It has now been revealed that phase 7 has been split in half, and it might take until 2024 for both halves to be released.

Can the minister explain why he delayed the release of the 90 lots from phase 7?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We just last week released 78 residential lots, and a month or so before, we released 26 commercial lots. Those are all part of the release that was being referred to previously. We're working on the next round. Those lots include: 32 townhouse lots in Whistle Bend, which range in price from \$75,000 to \$90,000; 38 residential lots, single-family residential lots, which range from \$100,000 to \$157,000; there are infill lots in the city; there are lots in Mayo, which are much less expensive.

Overall, this is a release of lots that just went out the door last week and we're happy to see that. We are working, as always, to continue the supply of lot development.

Ms. Clarke: Last spring, the minister committed to get a combined 261 lots out for development by the fall of 2021 as part of phases 6 and 7 of Whistle Bend. Unfortunately, the minister delayed the release of these lots in Whistle Bend. As the budget states, these decisions are contributing to the housing affordability crisis.

Last spring, the minister also committed to have the tendering out for phases 8 and 9 of Whistle Bend. However, we know that these two phases have also now been delayed.

Can the minister tell us when phases 8 and 9 will be released? How many lots will be contained in both of those phases?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to start the answer to the member opposite by attempting to correct some of the statements that were made. We know that the housing situation in the territory is really a national issue; it's not only a local issue. This is something that we're seeing in jurisdictions across the country.

We're working very, very hard — my colleagues and I — to address this national housing issue. We continue to advance Whistle Bend as quickly as possible in phases, and we work closely with local contractors who carry out construction and supply the materials where possible. We ensure progress every year, releasing lots by way of lottery for private citizens and contractors in advance of the spring start to the construction season. My colleague has just talked about all of the lots that we put out for tender already just last week.

Once Whistle Bend is completed, it will include 16 phases — 2,173 lots, with 20 of those being commercial lots — and \$300 million worth of investment and economic benefit for Yukon contractors and businesses, alongside much-needed homes for our growing population.

Last year, we retooled the phases of Whistle Bend to accommodate the contractor. We are now going ahead with it.

We will continue to work on Whistle Bend, and we hope to get about 200 lots out in the coming year.

Question re: Wetlands protection

Ms. White: The government likes to describe itself as a climate champion, but they still put corporate interests ahead of those interests of Yukoners and the environment. A blatant example is how this government is handling wetlands. Wetlands are an essential asset that nature provides us with in the fight against climate change. Wetlands absorb and store carbon, and when they already contain thousands of years' worth of carbon, they continue absorbing more, yet wetlands in the Yukon currently have no protection, and the government seems happy to let them be destroyed for profit.

Will the minister immediately pause all development, exploration, and extraction in any undisturbed wetland until an updated wetlands policy is in place?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think I started talking about this just yesterday, when I was discussing all of the work that we are doing to modernize mining activity here in the territory, but of course, it is not just mining that is in wetlands. We have a wetlands policy that is currently out there being worked on right now by us, First Nation governments, the public, environmental groups, and industry. We released that last year — a draft of that wetlands strategy — and there was within it a way in which we were going to work to respect existing wetlands, so it is actually in development right now.

Also, I will note that we currently have a draft Dawson regional land use plan in place, and the planning commission is working to get us their finalized plan by this coming summer. In that plan, what we did differently from what the Yukon Party did with the Peel plan was, when the commission provided us with draft suggestions about areas to withdraw, we withdrew them — areas of conservation. We did the withdrawal on those lands as per the suggestion of the Dawson Regional Planning Commission.

Ms. White: What I was asking for was an immediate pause on all wetland exploitation. So, wetlands are critical to the environment. They protect us from drought, they reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our atmosphere, and they're home for a wide variety of flora and fauna, but they are more than that.

Wetlands are essentially both a huge carbon storage and also a ticking carbon bomb if they're disturbed. If all the carbon that wetlands have been absorbing for thousands of years is released, it will take thousands of more years to be reabsorbed, and that's only if the wetlands can be successfully reclaimed.

So, not only has the government taken no steps to protect wetlands, they have also excluded them from greenhouse gas emissions calculations and targets. This means that all the carbon released in the atmosphere when a wetland is disturbed magically doesn't affect climate change in the eyes of this government.

When will the destruction of wetlands be included in the government's greenhouse gas emissions calculations and targets?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are committed to completing a Yukon wetlands stewardship policy in 2022 — in this year. The policy will help the Government of Yukon make decisions that respect the importance of wetlands and the benefits that they provide and support for a diverse, growing economy.

Together, we can build a solid and consistent approach to wetlands stewardship that reflects the values and interests of Yukoners. This policy was drafted with input from First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, federal and municipal governments, industry, and other key organizations through roundtable-facilitated discussions that go back a number of years.

We heard from Yukoners through a public survey in the fall of 2021. A report on what we heard will be provided on engageyukon.ca as soon as it is available.

Our next step is to conclude consultation with our First Nation and indigenous partners. As the member opposite indicated, of course we know that wetlands are important in the Yukon, because they are essential to maintaining waterflows, flood protection, purifying water, recharging and discharging groundwater, storing carbon, and providing habitat for fish and wildlife.

In addition, certain wetlands support traditional subsistence and cultural activities, such as harvesting and recreation. We know that the protection of wetlands is first and foremost for Yukoners.

Ms. White: That time around, I was asking when we were going to include the destruction of wetlands in greenhouse gas calculations and targets.

We know that the government has been working on a draft wetlands policy, and this draft has been highly criticized by First Nation governments and Yukon conservation groups. During the 2020 Yukon Water Board hearing on wetlands, the Yukon Conservation Society said — and I quote: This policy has been "... designed primarily to facilitate development and does not prioritize wetland conservation..."

As an example, one policy in the draft strategy would require a wetland to be nominated for protection. It essentially puts the burden of protection on the public. Instead, the burden should be on the developer to justify its use.

Will the minister listen to experts and finally start protecting wetlands from further destruction?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I actually have also sat down with the Yukon Conservation Society, with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and Ducks Unlimited. We have had a very healthy conversation about wetlands and their importance. I thank the member opposite for her question.

The Minister of Environment and I have asked our departments to do more work on wetlands to try to understand their role as carbon stores and what happens when we have activity in and around wetlands. We are looking at the ways in which that activity will be appropriate and measured. It's not a simple thing to do, to try to measure the emissions of the environment. I have seen this before in past decades, when we tried to look at carbon sequestration in our forests. It is challenging, but I think it is important. We are doing detailed mapping. We are doing analysis, and we have asked for that

research work to be done so that it can help inform us so that we understand what the situation is with wetlands.

I thank the member opposite for her question.

Question re: Wildland firefighters workers' compensation coverage

Ms. McLeod: In last year's Fall Sitting of the Legislature, there was considerable debate about the inclusion of wildland firefighters in the cancer presumption portion of the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*. The issue came about as a result of strong advocacy from the Third Party, and it met fairly strong resistance from the Liberal government.

At the time, the minister said that more work was needed to understand the implications of the impact of such an inclusion on rates that affect other businesses in the same rate category, such as aviation and adventure tourism.

Has the minister begun this work? If so, what is the status of the assessment of rate impact on the inclusion of wildland fire on other businesses in this rate category?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really am happy to be talking about the Yukon *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*. This piece of legislation did pass the Legislature last year. It is one of the most comprehensive and progressive pieces of legislation in the country, and I am looking forward to seeing it come into effect later this year.

This government recognizes the invaluable contribution of every Yukoner who fights fires, whether full time or part time, professionally or as a volunteer. On December 2, the act was amended to add nine cancers to the list of cancers eligible under this presumption. There are now 19 cancers, including pancreatic and thyroid, alongside three cancers that primarily affect women. This latter addition recognizes the increasing role that women are taking in fighting fires. These additional cancers are effective as of December 2, 2021.

We know that there has been some conversation about adding wildland fire. We did talk about that a little bit last session. It is an extremely expensive proposition for a number of businesses. Currently, the role of wildland fire is not the same as those who fight fires in urban environments, so we are going to continue to look and identify the threats to wildland fire. If there are changes that we have to do to the presumption list, we will certainly do that.

Ms. McLeod: Beyond doing the work to determine the cost implications for other businesses in the same rate category, there was also work needed to consult the business community.

Can the minister tell us if consultation with the business community about the inclusion of wildland firefighters in the cancer presumption has begun, and if not, when will that consultation take place?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are certainly constantly looking to improve the workplace safety of all Yukoners. We will continue to do that work. I have asked the department to continue to monitor for cancers that might affect wildland fire. You have to understand that, when it comes to workplace safety, if there are cancers identified, such as some of the cancers that some of the urban firefighters are exposed to — if those cancers are prevalent in wildland fire, they have to wear

the proper PPE as well. That would mean requiring, perhaps, face masks or other type of PPE, so there are lots of implications for these decisions going forward.

I know that we have had these conversations with Wildland Fire, and I will continue to have these and look to identify the threats and then work to mitigate those threats. It is not just about the presumption; it's also about mitigation. I will say that every single firefighter, and every single individual in the territory, is covered by workers' compensation benefits. If they are exposed, or suffer a workplace incident, or are exposed to carcinogens that may provoke an occupational illness sometime in the future, they will be covered by workplace safety, by compensation benefits. We don't want to create a two-tiered system. That is very important to keep in mind, but you are covered if you are injured at work.

Ms. McLeod: I am a little shocked at the lack of information coming from this minister on this important file.

In a November 22 letter last year, the BC General Employees' Union wrote to the minister to express their support for the inclusion of wildland firefighters to fall under cancer presumption in the legislation. In that letter, they explained how wildland firefighters were added to the BC presumption in a way that was — and I quote: "... simple and low-cost..."

In response, the minister wrote to the BCGEU and committed to seek a list of possible carcinogens that wildland firefighters may be exposed to and to monitor the science and carcinogens that wildland firefighters are exposed to. Can the minister provide an update on the progress of that work?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm very gratified to hear that the Member for Watson Lake has been listening to the debate. I did commit to those things; that work is continuing. We're constantly monitoring it at Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board for potential workplace vectors of disease, vectors of illness, vectors of injury, and we will seek to prevent those. Once we identify those occupational diseases, the workplace perils, we then take mitigative steps to prevent them.

I will note that, in my discussions with the BC union, the firefighters here in the territory provide very different roles than they do in BC. They have very different exposures; they do different jobs than they do in BC. They have different training than they do in BC, so we have to compare apples to apples. That's not being done, so we have to make sure that we're actually comparing the same perils and the same workplace exposures that you have in BC as you do in Yukon, and quite frankly, those same exposures do not exist. So, we are looking to see which potential carcinogens Yukon wildland firefighters are exposed to, and we will take action once we determine that.

Question re: Rural fire protection services

Mr. Istchenko: Last December, the Department of Community Services released a report on the Fire Marshal's Office fire suppression and rescue resource distribution in rural Yukon. The review was launched last spring after two separate fires in Keno in the past 15 months. Since then, we have had fires in other communities that have brought territory-wide

attention to the shared concerns surrounding the lack of fire protection in rural Yukon.

The report recommends changes to the Yukon fire service training curriculum and standard, including either revisions to the current three-level training or shifting to the two-level training model. The report further suggests that the elimination of the intermediate level and a reallocation of skills between two levels would appear to be more efficient and way better utilized.

So, has the minister directed his department to adopt either of these recommended models, and will the new program be available to Yukoners this season?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The delivery of fire services in the Yukon's unincorporated communities is challenging, given our remote and small population base. To ensure that our fire service model remains sustainable, we commissioned the independent review of fire services in rural Yukon that the member opposite was just referencing. The review contains 104 recommendations in the areas of governance, operations, strategy, risk management, and compliance. These present an exciting opportunity to shape the future of the Yukon fire service, and we are pleased to see a number of recommendations that will ensure safe and sustainable fire services across the Yukon. Since the release of the review in December 2021, the Fire Marshal's Office presented the report to communities and fire service stakeholders. Throughout March, April, May, and June, the Fire Marshal's Office will meet with key communities, Yukon fire chiefs, Yukon First Nations, municipal governments, and fire service stakeholders to receive their feedback on the report and to develop priorities for improvements that will shape the future of the fire services in rural Yukon for years to come.

Mr. Istchenko: So, most firefighters in rural Yukon are volunteers and they are required to meet an adequate level of training to protect their communities. The rural fire services review highlights that the basic firefighter training classification is a minimum standard required to be a firefighter in the Yukon. It also notes that there remain a number of impediments to volunteerism that may be possible to overcome, including — it says in the report — adopting the NWT model of optional self-contained breathing apparatuses at the fire department's lowest operational level. The report recommends that the Fire Marshal's Office should constitute a working group, including — and the minister spoke a little bit about it — Yukon's Occupational Health and Safety to research criteria and discussion options of a similar program for the Yukon.

So, has the minister directed his department to begin this work to reduce barriers for volunteer firefighters in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say that we continue to work in partnership with Yukon communities on the recruitment and retention of fire service volunteers and to ensure effective and sustainable fire service delivery to Yukon communities.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the lack of fire protection in Keno drew territorial attention to the barriers for firefighting services in rural Yukon. In a briefing from officials — and I thank the officials for the briefing — they noted that the legislation

related to fire services in the Yukon is not consistent with current practices. The report identifies a number of conflicting policies and notes that there is currently no reference to level of service in any legislation respecting fire protection.

It also says that the fire marshal appears to be risk-managing operations of volunteer fire departments that cannot come close to meeting the realistic operational capabilities. The report questions why the policies have not been modified when the department has determined that they will risk-manage the issue of non-compliance.

Has the minister directed the department to address this inconsistency in the legislation and the question of the risk management operation as revealed in the report? Will he direct the department to meet with affected communities and gather information?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, I did say that we continue to work in partnership with Yukon communities on the recruitment and retention of fire service volunteers to ensure effective and sustainable fire service delivery in the Yukon communities. I also went through the list of months and the meetings that will be happening over the coming months.

With 104 recommendations included in the review, there is significant work to be done to devise a path forward. Our government has taken immediate action on a few of the short-term recommendations identified in the review, particularly as they pertain to firefighter safety and Occupational Health and Safety compliance.

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

BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 302: *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 302, standing in the name of Mr. Cathers.

Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 302, entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that Bill No. 302, entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise today in speaking to this private members' legislation. I would note, as I begin my remarks here today, that we proposed amendments to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. These measures are aimed at increasing the democratic safeguards and checks and balances under the legislation over the use of emergency powers and providing for the possibility of public consultation. Many of these changes are based directly on the federal government's *Emergencies Act* and the safeguards contained in there.

I would note as well that previously I tabled proposed amendments to Bill No. 300. All of those amendments are

contained in the bill here today, but we have also expanded it, largely based on safeguards that are in the federal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the recent debate nationally has prompted increased interest in this topic. It is something that the federal government's decision to invoke the *Emergencies Act* triggered a national discussion around the responsible use of emergency legislation. As you will recall, multiple experts and organizations spoke about the importance of democratic oversight of governments using emergency powers. Politicians who were debating the invocation of the act spoke to the checks and balances that exist in the federal *Emergencies Act*. The Premier himself spoke of the checks and balances in that federal legislation.

A large part of the national debate recently surrounded the importance of not normalizing the use of emergency powers. That is something consistent with what we believe in and have been saying since May 2020. We agree that the use of emergency powers should not be normalized. In bringing forward this legislation, we are trying to propose a construction solution that includes democratic safeguards that we believe should be included, but also preserve the ability for the government to act quickly in a real emergency.

I want to emphasize that we are open to considering amendments to this legislation and input from other parties. I would like to acknowledge that the Third Party attended the briefing that we offered on this and thank them for their questions regarding this legislation and the thoughts they shared with us. The legislation reflects concerns that we have heard from Yukoners and safeguards that are rooted in federal legislation, as well as in the previous legislation that we tabled, Bill No. 300, which is being expanded on here today. We were trying to reflect what we believe are best practices in provincial legislation, such as requiring the Legislative Assembly to vote on the extension of a state of emergency. I would note that much larger jurisdictions, such as Ontario, have that provision in place.

As I noted in my introduction, previously, we proposed legislation to improve the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to require democratic oversight of government during an extended emergency. This new version of our proposed legislative amendments includes everything that was contained in the previous private members' bills that I tabled, both before the election and then afterwards — most recently, Bill No. 300, *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)* — but there are some very important additions made to the bill which are aimed at putting in new democratic oversights and safeguards, largely and directly inspired by oversights and safeguards contained in the federal *Emergencies Act*. The language in the bill is very similar to the democratic safeguards found in the federal legislation, and in fact, in many cases, it mirrors the clauses in that legislation, with minor adjustments to reflect differences such as the fact that, at the federal level, both the House of Commons and the Senate are required to review and debate a declaration of an emergency, whereas, of course, here in the Yukon, we do not have two houses. We just have the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Here are the highlights of what we are proposing in this bill. It includes a requirement that any declaration of a state of emergency be debated by the Legislative Assembly within seven days and be subject to a vote. That is a requirement contained in the federal legislation, which requires both houses of Parliament to have a such a vote. Additionally, this would provide the Yukon Legislative Assembly with control over the extension of a state of emergency. It would require that any regulations and ministerial orders issued under a state of emergency be subject to a mandatory review by either the Legislative Assembly or one of its committees within 45 days of being issued. That would also provide, as laid out in the legislation, the opportunity that the committee could choose to seek public input on those changes. It's clear from the intent of the legislation that we believe that should be something that typically occurs with such matters.

The legislation also seeks to empower committees of the Legislative Assembly, as I mentioned, to conduct public hearings on regulations and ministerial orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. If the Speaker receives a request from three MLAs, it would require that the Legislative Assembly consider a request to revoke a declaration of a state of emergency. I would just note on the side that this is, again, a provision found in the federal *Emergencies Act*. As it is worded in that legislation, either 10 senators or 20 Members of Parliament can write to the Speaker of the respective Chamber and request that the matter be revisited. We, in trying to import that provision into Yukon legislation, are suggesting that the number would be perhaps three MLAs, but again, this is an area that we are open to hearing thoughts from others on — what the appropriate number of MLAs would be.

For example, as was suggested by another member, it should potentially have to be from more than one caucus that those MLAs would come from. We are open to hearing thoughts on all matters and considering potential amendments.

Moving back to what the bill contains, there is a requirement that a public inquiry be held after the declaration of a state of emergency with the ability to waive that requirement with the agreement of three-quarters of MLAs. Again, in the federal legislation, there is a requirement that, after the declaration of a state of emergency, there be a public inquiry into why it was called, whether it was necessary, and how it was handled after it occurred. What we are proposing here is that, while we agree that the federal provision of requiring a public inquiry as a norm makes some sense, we do think that there are some cases — such as if a state of emergency is declared related to a wildfire or a flood — where it might not actually warrant a public inquiry. We believe that a modified version of what is in the federal bill that actually allows the Assembly to choose to waive the normal public inquiry with the agreement of three-quarters of the members of the Assembly, based on a request from Cabinet, is what we have proposed.

In proposing this, we are trying to propose constructive solutions and realistic options that allow government to act quickly in a true emergency, but provide for more democratic oversight and the opportunity for public input even after the fact

to review what is in place. We are certainly open to hearing ideas and to considering amendments from other Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I would just emphasize as well that one of the things that we heard from the Government House Leader was a question about what public consultation had occurred. I would note that, as the member will be aware, we don't have the same resources that the government has to do public consultation, but if other members are supportive of seeing public consultation on this legislation, we would be more than happy to see that occur. I would note that while it is not what typically occurs with private members' bills, it actually has happened on several occasions, including during our time in government with proposals brought forward by a member of the Liberal caucus at the time regarding changes to the *Human Rights Act*. There was an all-party committee that took the bill and sought other input from Yukoners regarding what was, at the time, Bill No. 102. That has also occurred with the proposal from the former leader of the New Democratic Party, the late Todd Hardy, who had proposed anti-smoking legislation, which was referred to a select committee created for that purpose, which I was on, as was one member of each of the other caucuses. Again, we heard from Yukoners on those matters.

We are open to hearing thoughts from others on possible options for proceeding with this legislation, if they are supportive of that at second reading, but I would note that one possibility is to also refer it to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. As members will be aware, we have discussed at SCREP the possibility of doing that with more legislation, including government bills, to provide the opportunity for public consultation directly with Members of the Legislative Assembly on some pieces of legislation that may be of more interest to the public. A perfect example of that, in my view, is the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* last fall. I think it's fair to say that there would have been an interest from both us and the Third Party in seeing public consultation on that and the possibility for, potentially, amendments to be made to that legislation following public consultation.

So, as members will be aware, we've suggested at SCREP, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, that for some pieces of legislation, rather than trying to deal with it all in the short time available during a legislative Sitting, that perhaps some legislation should be referred to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, which has long been rather inactive, and that would allow members to have more opportunity to discuss that legislation, as well as, if they felt it appropriate, to do consultation with expert witnesses as well as members of the public. We believe that this would be an improvement in the democratic process here in the territory — to start doing that more frequently.

I would also note, just talking briefly about the question of reviewing a state of emergency, that the provisions contained within Bill No. 302, which we are discussing here today about recalling the Legislative Assembly, almost mirror the wording in the federal legislation regarding that, with very minor changes just to reflect differences in the way the federal legislation tends to refer to things and the fact that they have

both the House and the Senate and here we only have the Legislative Assembly.

I would just note that, while some may question whether there is a need for the Legislative Assembly to debate a state of emergency, that provision is in the federal legislation. It requires the House of Commons and the Senate to both debate that legislation, and I would respectfully contend that if over 400 MPs and senators — close to 450, in fact — can be summoned to debate a state of emergency at the federal level and the need for it, then surely, here in the Yukon, we can summon 19 MLAs back for debate in the Legislative Assembly if the House isn't sitting at the time.

The bill also includes a clause to provide for the ability of the Legislative Assembly to meet virtually or in another Chamber if circumstances require it so that if, for example, a state of emergency was affecting the ability to use these premises or make it difficult to get members together, there would be the ability to do that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I just want to note in wrapping up my comments on this that the Yukon Party continues to believe that emergency powers should be used only when there is no reasonable alternative. However, if emergency powers are being used, we believe that they should be subject to proper democratic oversight and safeguards, and again, our position continues to be that emergency powers should only be used when there is no other reasonable alternative — not simply because it is convenient. As stated many times before in this Assembly throughout the pandemic, we believe that other tools, such as time-limited legislation, are more appropriate than using emergency powers to deal with whatever public health measures may be required during a pandemic.

I also want to just note that, even if public health measures are required, in our view, it doesn't mean that people, businesses, churches, NGOs, sport associations, and others shouldn't have an opportunity to be consulted on the details that impact their lives. We believe that in addition to giving people the opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions, that type of process — both in the pandemic and in any future emergencies that might be dealt with by this territory — actually just leads to better policy and, of course, is a far more democratic approach that gives the people we represent the ability to bring forward their concerns and suggestions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I won't go on for much longer here. On the topic of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the use of emergency powers and the provisions, I have stood many times in this House before. In the interest of time, I will conclude my remarks and will look forward to hearing suggestions from other Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I do want to reiterate, in closing, that these are our suggestions of a constructive solution and structure, but we are certainly open to hearing from other Members of the Legislative Assembly, if they have suggestions on how to improve this.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I want to begin by thanking the member opposite for bringing this bill forward. This is a first time for me to stand in the Legislature and debate a private member's bill or a bill coming from the opposition. I did a lot of work last night after we heard that this bill was coming forward to try to think about this bill.

I think that, at all times, the work that we do here in the Legislature is so critically important. Then to add on top of that the nature that this is a first time where it's not coming from the government-side of the House, I thought, "Okay, you had better be diligent with it." Then, on top of that, the act that we're talking about, the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, is an act of paramountcy — that's an appropriate word. It's a word that was used when I was on the select committee looking at the act, meaning the act itself overrides lots of other acts. So, it's really important that we get it right; it's a very important act.

I appreciate that the Member for Lake Laberge is asking us to debate this important act and has taken the time to bring forward issues that I think are important to consider with respect to the act. Of course, it also relates to emergencies, and if we have learned nothing else over the past couple of years, it is how important they are for Yukoners and how much they affect our lives, and so it is terribly important work.

As the member noted just moments ago, there has been a lot of conversation about COVID and the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — I will sometimes refer to it as "CEMA" — and the chief medical officer of health and lots of conversation in this Legislature over the past two years. I went back to try to scan through it. There is so much, but it's important to try to get a sense of what we've been talking about.

This bill is different in that, as he notes, he has added things to it. He just stood up and said that he had some influence from the federal *Emergencies Act*. I downloaded that act, as well, and took a look at it to try to see a comparison of the two. I noted a lot of those similarities. I must apologize that I did not have the opportunity to attend the briefing that the member opposite provided. I thank him for doing that. We got invited on the Monday afternoon for Tuesday morning. Unfortunately, we had a Management Board meeting at that time, so all of Cabinet could not attend. I wish that we had had more time. I look forward to further conversation with him about it.

Here in the Legislature over the past two years, we have had five tributes on COVID. By my last count, not counting today, there have been 136 questions that have come to us during Question Period — each question is often three questions, but you understand what I'm saying. So, 136 times, questions have been raised and a couple of petitions. I also have put forward a couple of motions — one we debated quite fully and one was adjourned. We also created a select committee.

I will talk a bit about that select committee in a moment, but just to begin with, I went to — and anyone can find it right now. If you go to the Yukon Legislative Assembly webpage, you can look under select committees. I think it is the second or third one down. One of the things that we did as a committee was we decided to try to make all of the information that we received open, public, and transparent, again, because of the importance of this type of legislation. I went back through and

grabbed all that material. It is far, far too much to read in an evening. One of the submissions that was given to us from, I believe, the Department of Community Services and the Department of Justice was 300 or 400 pages' worth of material, including a cross-jurisdictional look. It is definitely a complicated thing, so there is lots of material there.

I also looked through to try to see other times when we have debated this in the Legislature and to try to find references and moments when we talked about the importance of sharing information and about public engagement. I mentioned it yesterday, and the Member for Lake Laberge just talked about me mentioning it, and I think that he stood just now and said that, on the government side, they didn't have an opportunity to engage with the public because they don't have the same resources as government, but that doesn't diminish the importance of talking to the public.

In fact, one of the arguments within the bill itself that is before us today at second reading is that it is arguing that we need to get more public engagement on these issues. So, it is interesting to me that we are talking about the importance of getting public engagement and considering passing amendments to a critical piece of legislation without having engaged the public. I will talk a little bit about that.

Let me start with this notion of information. Yesterday in the Legislature — and I believe it was also the Member for Lake Laberge — in debate on second reading of the budget, he talked about how, during the pandemic, we did not share information from the chief medical officer of health. The criticism that came was that there was no information. Well, we did have two times that the chief medical office of health was invited to be a witness here, where the opposition members were given free rein to pose questions. We also, of course, gave briefings to the opposition members — not we, sorry — the chief medical officer of health gave briefings to the opposition members. There was a request from the opposition that they get direct briefings, and we said, "Yes, for sure, let's get that", and we set it up. Then as we got to the end of sort of the first wave of the pandemic, when we changed the border restrictions and all those rules, things loosened up, okay. Everything changed at that point, and then when we started hitting the next waves, opposition members again said, "Hey, we're not sure what is going on", and so we set up briefings again. I believe that the member's comments about "no information" from the chief medical officer of health are not at all correct.

In fact, one of the specific things that the Member for Lake Laberge pointed out was that there was no information that had been shared. At that moment, I'm saying, "Oh, come on"; I even tabled some of those recommendations here in the Legislature. We could find them, and if the member doesn't recall, I will certainly go back through, find them, point to the link where they are. That was part of our debate here. I stood up in the Legislature and already talked about it. It was actually on that day when I tabled it. I say, "Hey, I have just tabled this information", so it's all in the public record.

One of those motions that I brought — I'm going to talk a little bit about the two motions. The first one is Motion No. 217. That motion was to talk about whether there was support in this

House for following the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. We're in an emergency that's declared under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We are getting these recommendations. In the debate that day, as we were talking about it, we were discussing whether or not there was support for the notion of following the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. The Leader of the Yukon Party stood and said that we shouldn't debate this because everybody knows already. Their position, as he stated at that moment, was that they do not wish to follow the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health, and he stated that the Third Party does wish to follow the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health.

They put forward a motion at that point to adjourn debate. In other words, let's not talk about it because it is all known, it's all decided, everybody's position is understood — which kind of contradicts what's being asked for in this amendment to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. It's the importance of making sure that we do have debate here and that we have the opportunity. So, there was an opportunity that I put on the table for all the members of this Legislature this past fall, and it was adjourned, because it was believed that "Yeah, we already know that everybody thinks; we're good."

The other motion that was brought forward was a motion by me as well, and it was a motion to debate whether this House supported the extension of the state of emergency. That is exactly what this bill is asking us to do — to have the ability that — let's say that there is an emergency and the government declares that emergency — that within a week — seven days — that the House sit to consider whether it's not just the government that thinks it's an emergency, but whether it is this Legislature or a majority of this Legislature or maybe a super majority of the Legislature, depending on where we get to with the suggestion.

Then, in that motion that we had in front of us, on Motion No. 236 — in that motion, we asked this House to consider whether we should have an extension to the state of emergency. What happened then?

In this Legislature, that debate went on for three days, but because of the nature of the motion, it was three days over five weeks. I'll have to check to make sure who brought the motion forward. It might have been a colleague — a private member — but it took us five weeks as a House to decide whether or not there really was an emergency. That's not a good example.

Can you imagine, for example, the flood or a fire and it takes us, as a group of people, five weeks to say whether or not there is an emergency? That would be a bit of a problem.

I think it's important to think through how these things will play out, because we don't want to catch ourselves in that type of situation.

So, as I stand here today, I wish to acknowledge that there are some jurisdictions in Canada — it's about 50-50 — that require that it be the legislature that considers extensions to states of emergency, or longer states of emergency, and there are some that do not, but I think that's a really good question to pose.

However, we had better be pretty careful about how we introduce it so that we don't inadvertently, through the way in which we have amended a piece of legislation here — if it's through a private members' bill or however it is amended — that it be done appropriately, because we are talking about incredibly serious issues. I just want to make sure that there needs to be that forethought that would go into how this legislation would be shaped. What if we set ourselves up into a situation where we were caught without being able to take a decision? That would be a very deep concern.

As I have said, Motion No. 236 was introduced on October 24, 2020. It was debated again on October 28, 2020. It was debated again on November 18, 2020, and I'm sure that it was because we insisted on bringing it back each time. We used up three days of this Legislature to get to that decision. Maybe that's appropriate. Maybe that's the amount of time that it would take, but surely, we can't let it take five weeks.

Just coming back to how we communicate, I have talked here in this Legislature about how we made sure that information was flowing to the opposition members. I think that it is always fair to say that people would wish for more. I think that it is always fair to say that we should look for continuous improvement in how we communicate. I recall early on — in probably that very first Sitting in the spring of 2020 when we were in that abbreviated Sitting because of the pandemic itself — that the Member for Lake Laberge made a very constructive suggestion. He said that no matter how much communication you are doing with the communities and trying to inform them about what's going on, you probably need to do more. That seems like a fair statement to me.

We started in that first week with a community call, and we welcomed municipalities, First Nation governments, and local advisory councils. We had this very large call. We talked it through with the communities and we asked them what they wanted. We set up three-times-a-week calls. I remember that we were flat out trying to get information. Then we realized that we should get the chief medical officer of health to sit in on those calls so that they could answer questions directly from our communities. Those calls three times a week — after things settled out a bit — went to twice a week, and while we had the border measures in place over the first period of time, it got down to about once a week.

After border measures were lifted, after we ended the state of emergency, things went down to maybe once a month or so, and then, after that, we hit the Delta wave and following right after that, on the heels of the Delta wave, the Omicron wave, and we went back into a state of emergency in order to allow for more supports for Yukoners to help keep Yukoners safe. We went back to those community calls and they started to get going more rapidly again.

My role at that time had changed. I was no longer the minister responsible for emergencies, but I know that those calls were going on. I am sure that the Minister of Health and Social Services or the Minister of Community Services could talk about those calls and the conversations with communities and how we were making sure that communication around something like our civil emergency was trying to be kept up.

Something that I got out of those calls — something that I shared with the select committee and something that I have said in this Legislature when we talked about it — is: What are the deficiencies of this piece of legislation in front of us? How can we improve it?

The main one predates our self-government agreements. It doesn't talk about First Nation governments. There isn't an appropriate way that it spells out within the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* how we will work with this other order of government that is throughout the territory. That, I think, is one of the biggest deficiencies of the current piece of legislation and one of the things that we really need to fix, and I have said that often.

We have heard it from those calls. We have heard it sitting down at the Yukon Forum four times a year, and First Nations have said to us that this is critically important. When we started debate here today on the bill in front of us, I listened to the Member for Lake Laberge. I was hoping to hear from him that there had been some conversation with communities, with the public, and with First Nations, but unfortunately, that hasn't been able to happen, and I appreciate what he is saying — that the resources weren't there for them to be able to do it. But still, here we are. I think it's important to do that. In fact, I think it is important to do that before you get to the legislation side of this, because what if we get it wrong?

I appreciate that he has stated that he is open to input. I think it is incredibly important to be open to input — not just from us here, but from other governments that this legislation affects so keenly. I think, as we build in oversights and safeguards to the legislation with respect to this Legislature, that it's also important that we have oversights and safeguards which are going to be there for other orders of government. They are very affected by this.

The last thing I will say under the topic of communication is that we have had many, many livestreams. For a while, they were a couple of times a week. I think they dropped down to roughly every couple of weeks. Once our borders opened up, once those rules changed, and once we ended up out of the worst of it, the frequency reduced, but we always had them. Then, when it got more severe again, we brought them back, and I think we have just now moved from weekly livestreams back to livestreams every couple of weeks. Almost every time, we have had the chief medical officer of health on those livestreams.

What we have done is that we have asked the chief medical officer of health to share with Yukoners what she is sharing with us. We have tried very hard not to filter anything or not to put any sort of step in between. We have tried to provide the chief medical officer of health direct access to Yukoners through those livestreams. We have always taken questions from the media. These are ways we have tried. We are not the only jurisdiction that has done that. The country has been in states of emergency under their equivalent to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We have watched. This has been very common, where the chief medical officer of health stands up and gives this information. They have been incredibly

important ways in which we stay connected as societies — in this case, Yukoners.

Normally, when there is a piece of legislation that we would go through, that engagement would happen. It would be done well ahead of time. Often there are two rounds of it. You would start with asking very open-ended questions about what the public thinks we should do. Then when you start to get closer on a piece of legislation, you would go back out and again talk with various groups and certainly with other governments — incredibly important — and then almost always we would issue a “what we heard” document.

I was still hoping to hear — and maybe I will hear this afterwards today when other members of the Official Opposition stand up — about what their party has done in terms of engagement around this issue, because it is very important.

I think that we absolutely need to hear from our communities. I think that we absolutely need to hear from First Nations. As I have stated from the beginning, I think that the goals that the Member for Lake Laberge is trying to achieve — higher levels of oversight and safeguards — are good and laudable. I don't think that they yet have made it to the other issues that lie within this piece of legislation. I have heard directly from First Nations — and, in fact, I know that they have formed a working group. They have people talking about what they would like to see as changes to this piece of legislation. I think that we are missing it right now as we go through. That doesn't mean the amendments that the member opposite has proposed are not good and valid, but we do have to acknowledge that they are certainly not sufficient.

I would like to say that, even though there has not been engagement on this issue or this bill that's in front of us yet, that there still is — I would like to acknowledge that the Yukon Party is stating that it's important to have engagement, and I want to thank them for that.

I was looking at, over the last five years, where we've talked about the importance of having engagement on pieces of legislation. It started in 2017. The members opposite were saying that engagement is super important.

I'm going to pull up some quotes from October of this last year.

This is a quote from the Member for Lake Laberge as we were discussing the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* amendments — and I quote: “I would note that, first of all, the lack of public consultation regarding these changes is a concern.”

So, the Member for Lake Laberge was expressing concern about not enough engagement around the SCAN legislation.

From the same day — and I quote: “Again, a couple of our concerns include the lack of consultation with the public and a lack of a review of SCAN. The government should have done both before proceeding with changes here...”

Then finally, another quote from that same day: “With that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my remarks. I do want to emphasize, as I did at the start, that there are some parts of this proposal and additional definitions that the government is proposing adding that we do think are worthy of consideration. We do have a problem with the lack of public consultation.”

It wasn't just confined to the Member for Lake Laberge. The Leader of the NDP also said that day — and I quote: “You know, it is so interesting. My colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, and I disagree on lots and lots of things. I guess it is no surprise here. It's no surprise to him and it's no surprise to me, but he just highlighted the lack of public consultation around the amendments to this legislation, and I have to say that I agree.”

The Leader of the Yukon Party also talked — this is on a different day — I believe it was November 1 out of Hansard, where the Leader of the Yukon Party said — and I quote: “I do want to reiterate, though, that we have some concerns with the changes to SCANA, largely due to a lack of consultation on those changes.”

I think it is really great that the members of the opposition are saying that we need to have consultation before we get to amendments to legislation here. That's not what they are saying today, but that is what they have been saying generally, and I think it's important to note. I think that's a good change for them.

We had the issues around the Peel. They ended up going to the Supreme Court. That was largely due to a lack of consultation. I remember YESAA amendments that went to court, where there hadn't been consultation with First Nations. I remember a discussion around the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. There were criticisms, at the time, that the Yukon Party had not — well, criticisms from the privacy commissioner who said that they hadn't talked with the public. I want to thank them for now saying, generally, over the past five years, that it is important that we have engagement, although I note that it is missing from today.

Okay, let me talk for a second about the select committee that was struck last year — or maybe the year before, in 2020, I think — from a motion here in this Legislature to review the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. One of the things we, as a committee, did right away, and I have noted, is —

By the way, the chair of the committee was the then-leader of the Third Party. The vice-chair of the committee is my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge. I was the third member of that committee. It was an all-party committee with one member from each party. We set it up that way in order that it would be balanced, because this piece of legislation is so important to the territory. We didn't, as government, say, “Oh no, it's going to be three of us, two of them”, et cetera. No. We said, “Let's do one-one-one.” We agreed, as a committee, that it should be transparent, that we should share information. We asked to get information from all the departments. If you look online, you will see our four sets of minutes — I think we had roughly five meetings. I would have to go back and check my notes to be sure. You can see our work and how it progressed. One of the first things we did was to pose questions to each of the departments to ask about the legislation and what needs to change and what concerns they had with it.

We asked the deputy ministers of Justice and Community Services to come and speak to us, which they did. I am going to reference some of the material that was given to us just to share with us here what that select committee found in terms of

needed changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. There was conversation at our table about the ability for this Legislature to have additional oversight. I think that was always on the table as an important piece, but it certainly was not the first and foremost piece — it was just a piece.

One of the things that I recall as coming forward right away from the deputy ministers of Justice and Community Services was that there are really two acts that work together here, and we need to work on them both. We haven't even mentioned that other act, but I will mention it here: It's the *Public Health and Safety Act*. These two acts, and the way in which they work around emergencies, are very important. Of course, this is not the same as how it works for Canada or other jurisdictions, because each jurisdiction has a different set of legislation. That is why it's important to always do cross-jurisdictional work, but it's critical that we put it in the context of the Yukon, understanding our laws, especially with a law like CEMA that overrides other laws.

As I have noted, there are about 20 submissions. People can check those out and take a look at them. There are a couple that I want to note for us. I have some quotes from the Executive Council Office. The first thing that they noted for us and the first sentence in their submission to us is that “CEMA is an act of paramountcy.” Again, it's this notion that this act can override other acts, and we need to be very careful about how it works. It is a very important piece of legislation, in other words, and it is critical that we understand how it works.

One of the things that they said in their submission to us — and I quote: “... CEMA is a blunt tool and one that is well suited to managing localized and time limited emergencies.” They are talking about how, if you have a fire, you know it is an emergency. It may not be the whole of the Yukon; it might very specific in location, but you can go and deal with it.

What we figured out from the pandemic is that there is this longer term to it. Again, quoting from the same document: “A more nuanced legislative framework may allow government to respond to a variety emergencies in a more proportional way.” Sorry, I will continue on with that quote. “A more nuanced legislative framework may also be better suited to managing on-going emergencies and territory-wide emergencies of extended duration.”

So, it is really important to try to understand how the rules are set up for something like a fire or a flood, something of a very specific nature, and something that is different, like this, which is longer term. And so, they noted that it is important to think about those differences, and we are not getting that here on these amendments, but this is what they proposed as being needed for the *Civil Emergencies Measures Act*.

They went on in a heading called “Emergency Provisions in Yukon First Nation Self-Government Agreements”. There is a long section there and I encourage all of us to go and read it. They are talking about how we have to be careful with the legislation and orders that come under the legislation — and I quote: “... First Nations under their emergency legislation could displace orders made by YG under CEMA...”

Later on, they say — and I quote: “... this could potentially result in confusion and/or conflicting orders on and off

Settlement Lands, and/or on the Settlement Lands of different..." self-governing Yukon First Nations. They let us know that we have to be very careful about how we are doing this, and they just gave us a heads-up that this is an important thing to sort through.

When I read through the bill that is in front of us today at second reading and I looked at it, I tried to put it in this context, because that is what the Executive Council Office suggested that we do. I tried to think, "Okay, how would this have that effect?" To be honest, Mr. Speaker, I thought to myself that we could really get some legal expertise on this — that would be pretty important. We are moving these acts around. There is a proposal for changes to how they work, and I would want to be careful that we are not inadvertently changing things in a way that we don't understand.

In their submission to us, the Executive Council Office also went on to talk about federal legislation and hierarchy of legislation and supremacy of overlapping orders from Canada and the Yukon, particularly in relation to borders and conditions for admission into the Yukon.

You will recall that we had rules about our borders. We set up here, in the territory, isolation requirements to keep Yukoners safe under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. As we did that, we said that the federal government is dealing with Beaver Creek and Fraser and the Haines Road, and they are dealing with that. We had to have very close conversations with the federal government to make sure that things were going work well.

Two more things that I will say from this submission to us — and I quote: "In examining CEMA, thought could be given to how communications and consultation with First Nations governments might be improved, including establishing clear expectations for collaboration and communication upfront, establishing formal and informal communications channels and assigning these responsibilities within YG."

The last line in their submission was, quote: "A comprehensive review of CEMA, in the context of the broader pandemic response and sustained public health emergencies, should be undertaken prior to considering amendments." That is what we are doing today.

We are considering an amendment to this piece of legislation. Again, I think it is being brought forward with good intent. I support the notion that oversight and safeguards are important. I agree with the thought that we should think about these situations as being different from business as usual. It might not just be whichever government is in power that has these roles, but we just got advice — and this advice went to my colleague as well, the Member for Lake Laberge, because he was on the select committee — and it said very clearly that, before you start amending this act, please do your diligence around it.

There are a lot of submissions, and I am not going to go into all of them, but there is some really great information there. It's important information. I encourage us to go and have a look at it.

The main things that I take away from this are: This is an act that can override other acts; we need to be very careful about

how it works in the context of our legal framework here in the territory; we need to be looking at the *Public Health and Safety Act*; and we must be talking with First Nations. My feeling is that these things should happen before we get to the amendments that we have before us today.

Let's talk about the bill that is before us. I will just get into some of the details. First of all, I again wish to thank the Member for Lake Laberge for this effort. It is impressive. I have never had to do this. I am not a drafter. We have a legislative counsel office that does all this work. I said yesterday as I stood and answered in Question Period that I am so impressed with all of the work that they have done. It has been tough under the emergency, but I am impressed with what he has done here for this. He noted that there are differences here. I want to go through a few of those.

First of all, one of the things that I noted — I wish I could have had a briefing, and I again thank him for having set up a briefing and am sorry that I was not able to attend — is that there is language now in here that starts to borrow from the federal government's *Emergencies Act*, so I downloaded that act. I tried to read through it and look at them side by side. What he said — and this is under the amendment to section 6 — or in his bill, it's section 2, and it is talking about in section 6.3. It says that if a government declares a state of emergency, that's fine. Let them do that, but then, within seven days, get back here. I realized that suddenly we have some other things that we need to work on. It's how our own Legislative Assembly works and how the rules work here so that this does not go offside here. I grabbed the Standing Orders and I started to go through them. I didn't hear him say that he had a conversation with the Clerk's office here, but I also know just from other work that we're doing on the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges that there is no legal counsel here with the Clerk's office, which may be needed in order to make this work well or appropriately.

The concept seems right to me, but I just want to make sure that, when we do this, we're not inadvertently putting ourselves offside of our own rules here. They need to work.

I sort of went through and saw that — here's where it came from in the federal emergency legislation, and here's where the Member for Lake Laberge has put it in in his draft. Does that work?

I had several questions in my mind. If we get to Committee of the Whole, then fine — I would be happy to get into the clause by clause. But there were several things that I want to note just for today.

One of them is that, let's say that we had ministerial orders. It says here — I'm now down under one of the new sections that would be added as section 16(2) — that we should have, within 45 days of being enacted by the Commissioner in Executive Council, a review.

So, let's say that there was any ministerial order that was brought in. We've had ministerial orders over the past two years. Again, I went back through and tried to look for where the members opposite asked for that review. I've heard them many times say that they disagreed with ministerial orders. They thought that it was inappropriate — they said that they

were oversteps — but the only two times I could find when they actually asked us about them here in the Legislature and talked about what's going on were ones where they asked us to add them — not take them away.

Let's just take a look at some of those ministerial orders.

I'm going to have to go back and find it. I would be happy to table it. It was in the select committee because the select committee gave us the whole list.

We have here border controls — we brought in border controls. I didn't hear any concerns that came up — well, I heard questions about border controls, for sure, and about maps that we were giving out and things like that, but I didn't hear that we should have a review of those. We had the state of emergency. As I have already noted, we brought forward Motion No. 236. It took us five weeks, but we got an agreement to say that we all agreed on the emergency, and then we went on and we had the drivers' medicals. We said that we don't need to have medicals for our older drivers. I didn't hear a concern about that from the members opposite.

We delegated authority to the Minister of Education around flexibility for instruction, and this was to make sure that, if schools had to have rules put in place, we could get it done quickly and that we could pivot pretty quickly. We had work around enforcement for the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We had exemptions. We created a bubble with British Columbia, Nunavut, and NWT. We had the self-isolation requirements. That, of course, was a big one, and this was all about trying to keep Yukoners safe. We had the ability for leases and timelines to be extended so that we could protect people in those leases. We allowed for leaves of absence if people were subject to a self-isolation requirement so that they wouldn't get fired from their jobs. There were a bunch of ones where, if a business or society needed to have a general meeting and they couldn't do it because they couldn't get together — we didn't want them to go offside because then they wouldn't be able to get funding. So, we said, "Okay, let's extend those time periods." We had one around masks. We had one saying that medical practitioners could get provisional licensing and that we would have more doctors around. We had the ability for pharmacists to expand their scope of practice to extend prescriptions.

We gave one around property tax relief where we said, "Let's extend the date regarding property tax relief." This was one of the ones where the Member for Lake Laberge said, "You brought that in, but you didn't inform people fairly, so they didn't know about that later deadline and they might have missed a deadline. You should have extended it again." That is one of the ones we were asked to extend further. We enabled our cannabis licensees to sell their products remotely. This is another one: Here in the Legislature, the one time I recall the members talking about the ministerial orders, saying, "We want you to do something different", it was, "Please do it further. Do it more."

We had rent deferral. Let's say there was someone who had to be self-isolating and they ran into trouble with their rent. We said, "No evicting people if they were self-isolating."

We extended the timeline for school council elections. We made sure that we weren't going to claw back any assistance

that people got from the feds — social assistance — and then we allowed for electronic meetings. We allowed for people to be able to sign things like legal documents remotely. We waived airport parking fees, landing fees, and loading bridge fees. That is basically the list.

What I heard from the members opposite then and now is that we need to be able to have a way to review these things. That is what this bill is asking us to do, yet we have been here for a couple of years with these, and I have never seen a motion asking for any of those to be reviewed. The only thing I have heard specifically is to please extend. I still think this is a good point, but I want to be careful because the way that stuff is set up is coming from the federal legal framework, and I just want to know from our legislative counsel office whether that works in our context.

There is another piece in here where there is a conversation around three people being able to call for a review. So, let's say that three of us, as legislators, come back and ask for a review of the emergency. Let's say that we get together as an Assembly and we say, "Yes, we should keep the emergency in place." I assume that it can happen again. It doesn't say that it can just be once, but then in our Standing Orders, it talks about how we are not allowed to re-debate something, so if we debate it again, how does that work? We would definitely need to work through the Standing Orders.

There is another piece in there that says that if we are going to extend the state of emergency, we need three-quarters of a majority in order for that to happen. Well, three-quarters of 18 would be between 15 and 16, so you would need 16 in order to make that happen. Watch now what that means. If you have three people who disagree, you're done. I just don't have other examples where we use a majority of three-quarters. I looked through the Standing Orders and found a couple of examples where we use a super majority of two-thirds. I think that is important, but all of these details are incredibly important.

Let me just talk for a moment about how we could do this, I believe, more appropriately. I totally agree with the member opposite that this needs to involve all parties because we are talking about emergencies. We should rise above what is the normal system here — the Westminster system — of criticizing and the government having all the authority. I think it is important that it be shared. I think this is a good value for us to consider, but, my goodness, we are talking about such a critical piece of legislation. We certainly need to consider it in its entirety. We definitely need to have First Nations at the table.

I believe that this is the right thing to be doing. I have stood up and said this often in this House — that we need a review of this piece of legislation. I continue to say it. I think that there are some very good ideas here and that they are worth pursuing. I am not trying to avoid the conversation about it; I just believe that we need to be careful that the conversation happens in our legal framework, our context, within our Standing Orders, and with our self-governing First Nations and our communities. That would be the way in which I would like to see this happen.

In our 2021 election campaign, we committed to reviewing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, and I made sure, as we were

developing our platform, that we put the *Public Health and Safety Act* in there.

These two things go so hand in hand. You have to watch where the chief medical officer of health's responsibility lies, where they have decision-making roles, where they have the role to make recommendations, who they make those recommendations to, and how the decisions follow.

We have done our best to try to make sure that the work of the chief medical officer of health is shared here in this Legislative Assembly, is shared with colleagues on all sides of the House, is shared with the public, and is used in the best way in order to try to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

I will just say a couple more things and then I will wrap up my time. I thank everyone for the opportunity to speak at length. I believe that this is an incredibly important piece of legislation. I think that it really matters. I just believe that the responsible approach is to do this work more deeply and more thoroughly. When I look through the bill that is before us today and in the context of the legislation, I am uncertain if there are unexpected or adverse consequences to what is being asked. I agree with the principles that are being proposed, although I find them to be overly limited in what is important about this legislation.

While we should be criticized — that is how this House is set up. I have stood up and said, and will continue to say, that I appreciate the efforts of Yukoners to keep each other safe during this pandemic. It has been incredible to watch.

COVID has never been fair. I remember thinking that from day one. There was some conversation that I was listening to — and I can't remember whether I was in a community discussing it — and someone said: "You know, this is not fair. This group is going to be more adversely affected than this group." Then someone else said: "This thing is not going to be fair at all." I remember thinking that they are right, and I still think that today.

Of course, we want to do our best to support all Yukoners, but it has been tough. I want to acknowledge the hard work that everyone has done to try to keep us safe. I will include, when I say "everyone", all of us here as legislators trying to do our best to keep everyone safe and well.

I'm not sure what will happen with this piece of legislation. Again, I appreciate that we have the opportunity to rise to speak about it today. When it was tabled, of course, I read it, and yesterday afternoon when the Member for Lake Laberge indicated that they were going to bring it forward today, I spent all evening trying to work through it, trying to consider it, and trying to be respectful to the bill that's before us and to do my diligence around it. I find that there are important topics, but what I don't find is that I can support the bill as it stands. I think that we ought to take this good work, this initiative, and put it into a process that would allow us to do a fuller and more appropriate review using some of the resources that the member opposite was referring to. I just don't quite understand how we can get to: Let's change the legislation and then let's talk to Yukoners. That's not the way I think it ought to go. I think that it just must go the other way.

What I will say is that we recognize that this legislation needs to be reviewed. Our government is committed to reviewing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act* to better equip the Yukon to address future emergencies. I will, as I stand on my feet, say that we are intending to table a motion addressing this commitment next week. I hope it will be supported by all members of this House.

We do not support this bill being referred to a standing committee, and we do not support the bill as it is written and before us today. We look forward to a vote on the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Tredger: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to address this private member's bill.

When we look back at the last two years, or frankly even the last two weeks or the last two days, it's clear that the COVID pandemic has affected every single Yukoner.

I am cautiously optimistic. I really hope that we are seeing the end of this tunnel finally, so it is time to look and see what lessons we can learn.

In early 2020, opposition parties were receiving regular updates from the chief medical officer of health. That gave elected officials the ability to ask questions often to better help those around them in understanding the directives and decisions being made. As 2020 wore on, there were fewer and fewer briefings from the CMOH. There were fewer yet in 2021 and not a single one this year. I highlight this issue because, without having a clear channel to unfiltered and non-politicized information, without being able to ask questions of the experts, people in our positions are often left guessing at the "whats" and the "whys" behind decisions that are being made publicly in the weekly online updates.

As elected representatives, we are receiving information at the same time as the public, so do we, as a group of decision-makers, think that these updates that are given to the public and media, with the media being allowed two questions — and I am thankful that they do have those questions and occasionally get extras — is that an adequate amount of oversight? That is really the question. When an emergency is declared and enforceable rules or directives come out of it, what is the role of this Chamber and those of us who are elected?

Moving from the general to the specific, on this specific bill, I would say that this bill has some really important points. There is a need for more accountability and more oversight of the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. I absolutely agree that there is a need for improvement. It is well-known that we have been pushing for less politics and more opinions — and more information from experts — in the use of CEMA. Declaring a state of emergency that grants such broad powers to a government should be used only in the best interests of all Yukoners.

I do want to point out that there are numerous issues with this bill as well. Parts of this bill have essentially been copied from the federal *Emergencies Act*. That is problematic in terms of legislative language, scope of the bill, feasibility, and so on. I say this not to be nitpicky but because it is important. It is a concern that this bill, as written, would do what it is intended

to do, because it is harder than one might think to take a federal bill and apply it to a much smaller jurisdiction, like ours.

This bill tries to fix some issues that were raised during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we also have to remember that in the Yukon, CEMA has only previously been used for floods and fires. We need to be careful when we are amending a bill with one specific use in mind, as it would be applicable for all other uses as well. That is when it becomes overarching and excessive.

I would like to speak to some of the specific sections of the bill, starting with section 15. I like the idea of having the possibility of the state of emergency requiring approval of the Legislative Assembly. It would improve oversight and allow for a public debate on the use of such an important legislative tool.

That said, there are a few concerns. I know we are all thinking about COVID right now and for good reason. As mentioned, previously, CEMA has only been used in the Yukon for flooding and fires. I'm not sure there is a need for the Assembly to debate the need for a state of emergency when people's houses are being flooded or threatened by wildfire.

I remember, this summer, so many people took time off work to go help with the sandbagging efforts at Laberge and the Southern Lakes. In an emergency time, I would rather see public servants go help with sandbagging and transporting volunteers and such rather than having to stay at the office to write briefing notes and prepare for legislative proceedings, et cetera. An emergency is not the time for more bureaucracy.

Debate and ratification by the Assembly would improve oversight in the case of an evolving emergency, like we have seen these past two years, but this bill does not differentiate between short-term and evolving emergencies. I would want to see that distinction made to see how the legislation could be made to work efficiently in all types of emergencies.

As I mentioned, this bill has been used during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but it has also been used to respond to floods and wildfires. I don't know that Yukoners want their representatives spending time debating the merits of a particular emergency response when the flood waters are rising ever closer to their homes. I would prefer to see a mechanism such as an inquiry after a flood has receded to make sure we have learned the lessons and can better prepare next time. It's about accountability for the emergency response, not whether government should respond to emergencies.

Could it be that the Legislative Assembly debates and improves only the extension of a state of emergency of CEMA? Or maybe there could be a way to expedite the process of all three party leaders agreeing. I think there are better methods for oversight, and I would like to see them explored further.

I have some concerns with some of the language being used in the proposed section 15. Some of it, again, is based on the House of Commons' rules and proceedings. The rules and proceedings for this Assembly are different and don't use the same language. I have concerns that some of the language in the bill doesn't mean anything for us in the Yukon in our proceedings. You can't just take a federal bill and transpose it into the territory without extensive rewriting so it fits into our

own systems of laws and rules. Again, I say this not to be obstructionist or nitpicky but because we need to make sure that this does what it is intended to do. Again, I would like this to be explored to make sure that language is aligned with our own system of proceedings and legislation.

Moving on to section 16, the Yukon NDP has been very clear that we wish that the CEMA process was more transparent, especially when it came to recommendations made by the chief medical officer of health and how the regulations under CEMA were being decided.

We do need more transparency and accountability when they are as broad and overreaching as the ones we have seen during the pandemic — not as much to repeal them, or to change them, but to improve the public's understanding of why these measures are being taken. Better transparency and better communication around these measures would have been a big help during the pandemic, as we have said often.

That said, do we need a committee or the Legislative Assembly to review regulations when it comes to fighting a wildfire threatening one of our communities or evacuating people from a flood zone? I think that we need to hear from experts on that more than politicians. I say that specifically because of the 45-day timeline for review included in the bill, which means that this may have to take place while the emergency is still unfolding. I have concerns about the checks and balances being proposed versus what is actually possible to achieve, while all efforts are simultaneously being made to save lives and property from fires and floods, for example. I would absolutely want to see an opportunity for the emergency officer in charge to provide a rationale for the regulations being put in place.

Again, I will leave the fine details for now.

Moving on to section 17, this would allow three members of the Legislative Assembly to table a motion, and this motion would bypass all other business to be discussed by the Legislative Assembly. A concern is that this seems to allow three members to continuously disrupt the work of the Legislative Assembly to debate a similar motion over and over again. This contradicts the rules of the House, so one question would be: What supersedes what?

It also has the potential to allow three MLAs, three MLAs alone, to completely disrupt the work of the Legislative Assembly, and that is an issue. I know that the member opposite did say that he is open to considering amendments. At this point, I am not sure what the best way to amend this is. It could be three MLAs from at least two different political parties. Another possibility is that it could be five MLAs, or it could be debated outside of normal sitting hours so that the rest of the business could get done. There are a lot of options. I would like to say that these kinds of questions should have been dealt with prior to tabling the bill, as now it leaves members very little time to think about a better way to do it.

Lastly, I believe that I would like to deal with section 18. Section 18 deals with the question of holding a public inquiry following the application of CEMA. I like very much the idea of a public inquiry after such a broad emergency like we have seen in the past two years — again, not to specifically point

fingers and blame, but to make sure that we learn the lessons and that we are better prepared for next time.

I worry about the proposal here, because putting partisan appointees in charge of the inquiry risks further politicization of the issue. I would like to see, perhaps, a board appointed with agreement from all parties instead. We should be putting the inquiry in the hands of non-partisan experts, not leaving it to political operatives, as it is currently written.

Lastly — and concerns have been raised about this before — subsection 4 allows for waiving of the public inquiry by a three-quarter majority of members. I'm wondering where that threshold comes from. Maybe it should be unanimous; maybe it should be 50 percent plus one. What if the government holds three-quarters or more of the seats? — as does sometimes happen. They could choose not to investigate themselves.

Overall, we are interested in these ideas put forward. We absolutely agree with the idea of reviewing and improving the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, especially in terms of oversight, accountability, and expert opinions.

But I'm not convinced that this bill achieves that, while maintaining the ability to respond to emergencies in a timely manner. There are many options that this bill puts forward to explore. This is an important debate that we are having on an important piece of legislation that needs to be improved and lessons learned.

Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this private member's bill put forward by my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge. I would also like to thank those before me speaking today — both the Member for Whitehorse Centre and the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes have made excellent points that I appreciate very much.

Unfortunately, to get where we are in the order now, I only have 20 minutes to respond, and so I will concede to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that I won't be able to cover all of the material that he raised today. Some of it, I will have to table, perhaps for a Friday night at the Jackalope, but I will do my best to cover off some of the more pressing points that I wanted to raise.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister of Canada declared a state of emergency in Ottawa. That sparked a considerable national discourse around the appropriateness and the use of emergency powers in our country. We saw politicians weigh in, we saw academics weigh in, and we saw NGOs weigh in, all of whom provided their thoughts on the use of emergency powers.

One of the takeaways from that event, in my view, was the discussion about what is the appropriate level of power that a government should exercise in a state of emergency. When should a government be able to exercise that power? How? And for how long?

Now that, I thought, was extremely relevant to us here in the Yukon because of the fact that the invocation of a state of emergency in Ottawa for a mere number of days provoked that level of discourse.

Here in Yukon, I believe that we are in month 21 of a state of emergency over the past two years. I don't think that this level of debate and discussion has happened here in the Yukon.

I think that it is worth noting the principle of what we're talking about today. There was a lot of discussion about what this particular government has done over the last two years, which particular measures they used, what steps they took, et cetera. Ultimately, I think what shouldn't be lost is the fundamental principle, which is the rule of law. We have laws that are passed through this Assembly that bind all actors and all Yukoners. When a government exercises emergency powers, they unilaterally enable themselves to act outside of that law, so all of the powers that were exercised by the Liberal government here in Yukon were needed because they were inconsistent in some way with the law.

That came in a lot of different forms, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources outlined a number of those. I think that he listed most of them. I know that in the past he has asked, "Which of these do you not support?" What is lost in that is not our support or lack of support for an individual measure; it is the principle that the government, through a unilateral declaration in the Cabinet room, can now exercise an extremely broad and sweeping level of power to not follow the law.

The ways in which this government did not follow the law were benign in my view, for the most part. I don't think that it is a democratic travesty to extend relief to property owners vis-à-vis their municipal property taxes or to allow small businesses to exercise new sales channels like delivery, even if they are inconsistent with the law. But the fundamental principle there is that those powers are there for emergencies and are extremely enabling of government to act outside of the law, beyond the law, or in ways that are inconsistent with the law. That is not something that I think we should take lightly and that is the nature of the federal discussion around the *Emergencies Act* use in Ottawa.

I have seen some really thoughtful input on this from some very intelligent people, whether they are in the NGO sector or the academic sector. I think that most people agree — and what I have seen in public discourse is that emergency powers should not be normalized. It cannot become the norm for the government to take action through emergency powers unless it is absolutely necessary and critical to do it in that way.

I would posit that some of the actions that this Liberal Government of Yukon has taken over the course of the last few years were not necessarily to that threshold. I do believe that there were other remedies for some of the actions that they took. I do believe that time-limited legislation was something that should have been considered. I do believe that strategic amendments to particular bills to allow for things — this has become sort of the poster-child regulation, but the delivery of cannabis. Of all the things that the government did, I always find it interesting that this is the one we talk about the most.

The reason I say that is because, when the government acts in that way — when they take action that is beyond the law for some reason — it very well could be justified. In this particular case, it was justified. However, there is always the possibility

that it goes too far. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources noted the border restrictions that this government imposed on internal travel in the country — at the border of the Yukon. I would remind members that this exact action was taken also by the Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories came out shortly after, released their legal advice, and indicated that the action they had taken was indeed likely a Charter violation, and therefore, they changed tack. That is a pretty serious concern. If government is taking unilateral action outside of the law and violating the Charter, that is something that I think merits a debate and discussion in the Legislative Assembly.

So, that is sort of the fundamental premise of what our intent is with bringing this forward. I listened carefully to the concerns that were raised by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as well as the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I very much appreciate them. There was a great deal of time spent on the consultation aspect of this bill and the fact that there has been no consultation on this bill, which, of course, is very much true. The minister outlined what normally happens when government consults in the development of a piece of legislation. I think we are all very familiar with it. I am personally extremely familiar with it. I have seen the development of legislation both from the political level at the Cabinet table, but I have also worked in departments and policy shops for departments that have looked at actions that require public consultation.

I know that when the government seeks to consult on matters, it has a whole team of policy and communication folks who go out. It often goes through a multi-stage process that allows for policy analysts in various departments to weigh in and communication analysts in various departments to weigh in, and then a large-scale consultation usually takes place.

Obviously, as my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, indicated, that is not the type of resource that we have in opposition, and so that is not the degree of consultation that we were able to conduct, but the minister makes a sound point that consultation should, indeed, occur.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to note a few comments following on the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes' comments. He noted, as well, that over the course of the last few years, there has been plenty of time to discuss the state of emergency and the actions that the government has taken. He cited the tabling and debate around motions that were put forward in the previous Legislature, prior to my time being elected here. I believe that those motions were from my predecessor — as the Member for Copperbelt North, actually.

I wanted to note that, while I appreciate his point that there were three days of legislative business occupied by debate on a motion about whether or not members supported the state of emergency, there is a fundamental difference between a non-binding motion in the Legislature and a vote on something that is outlined in law, like the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. That is because motions that are passed in the Legislature aren't binding. We know that this government in particular often doesn't follow motions that are passed in the Legislature. There have been a few, since I have been here, that I could point to as

examples. In fact, if the government did follow motions that were passed by the Legislature, the current composition of the Cabinet would look a little bit different, but that is not my point. My point is that there is a fundamental difference between debating a non-binding motion in the Legislature on a private members' day and having a vote on the extension of a state of emergency pursuant to legislation. That is very different fundamentally, and the principle behind them is very different, in my view.

With that, Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to say is that, as I began to indicate, I do believe that further consultation is warranted and I do believe that more work can be done on the bill itself. I think that this work should be done in a multi-party way. I think it should be done in a way that allows for the three parties to be represented and for that group of people to seek input from outside parties.

Previously, this Legislature — not this Legislature but a previous Legislature — has considered this through the development of a standing committee on the review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. That committee is no longer with us and died with the conclusion of that last Legislature.

We have Committee of the Whole, which, of course, allows for debate and allows for amendment but doesn't allow the dynamic ability to go out and seek input. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has suggested that we need to hear from First Nations, communities, and others. I think that's sound advice. I would also add that I think we should hear from legal experts about the extent to which emergency powers should be exercised. I think we should hear from the Civil Liberties Association of Canada about their thoughts on the matter. I think we should hear from the Canadian Constitution Foundation. I think that experts like Dr. Leah West of the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs would be of great benefit — all of whom have weighed in over the past few weeks, speaking about the federal invocation of the state of emergency and the pursuant emergency powers that are afforded to the federal government.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, what I will do is make an amendment to the motion that we have before us today. Now, it is of course a bill that is before us, but the motion is for second reading. So, I will propose an amendment to that motion.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Dixon: I move:

THAT the motion for second reading of Bill No. 302, *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)*, be amended by adding immediately after the phrase "be now read a second time" the phrase "and referred to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments; and

THAT the committee report the bill to the Legislative Assembly no later than the first sitting day of the next Sitting of the Legislative Assembly."

Speaker: Order, please.

The amendment is in order. It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT the motion for second reading of Bill No. 302, *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)*, be amended by adding immediately after the phrase “be now read a second time” the phrase “and referred to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments; and

THAT the Committee report the bill to the Legislative Assembly no later than the first sitting day of the next Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.”

Leader of the Official Opposition, you have six minutes and 23 seconds remaining.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your indication of the time I have remaining, so of course I will be brief.

As a starting point, I want to thank the Member for Lake Laberge very much for his work in developing this bill. As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources pointed out, it is no small task to go into a piece of legislation, review it, draw from other pieces of legislation, and bring it together in a coherent bill that would amend legislation here in the territory. I am appreciative of that.

I am also appreciative of the comments made by the Government House Leader and the Member for Whitehorse Centre about questions, concerns, and thoughts that they have about some of the details. While I support the bill in its current form, I appreciate that further discussion would be of use and that some of the details of the bill should perhaps be considered in more detail. Whether a certain number of days are sufficient or insufficient, whether a certain number of members to vote is a sufficient or an insufficient number, each of those issues would benefit from a review from a committee of this Legislature.

The statutory instruments committee is a standing committee of our Legislature. Of course, as members all know, the Legislative Assembly can refer a bill to any of the committees it deems appropriate. I would suggest that any of the other standing committees — PAC, SCREP, MSB, appointments to boards and committees — are not well-equipped to deal with this type of bill, but I believe that the statutory instruments committee is. I believe that it is the best fit of the standing committees available to us. It is for that reason that I have put forward this amendment to send this bill to the statutory instruments committee so that this committee, which includes members from all three parties here in the Legislature, can discuss the issue.

I should also note that the current composition of the statutory instruments committee is a function of the confidence and supply agreement that was reached between the Liberals and the NDP, but nonetheless, I think that it is a fair process. It’s a fair way for all parties and all members to have the opportunity for the Legislative Assembly committee to take into consideration the various issues that need to be considered, as have been debated here today.

I take the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes’ suggestions very seriously. I think that the suggestion to seek input from communities and First Nations is a sound one. I think that seeking input from departments like ECO — whether

they are new submissions or submissions that were tabled with the former CEMA committee — should be considered. I think that the statutory instruments committee is well-equipped to consider this bill and have a discussion about the merits of the bill itself and the various provisions therein.

As I said at the outset, I believe that the bill is sound. I would vote for it today were it to come to third reading vote. We know there are steps in between and we know that we have to bring along other legislators in order to achieve that success. In order to do that, we have to be willing to entertain amendments, entertain further input. It’s my view that the statutory instruments committee is the appropriate venue for that to occur.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues about the proposal to send this to a committee. I believe that this process is one that we should consider more often. I think that, more often, bills like this — whether they are from private members or from government — ought to be more thoroughly considered by committees. I hope that this is the first of a trend toward greater legislative scrutiny over legislation that comes before the Legislative Assembly.

I also should note that the statutory instruments committee is empowered to seek input from the public, to seek input from other groups and from different levels of government as well. I think they have the tools available to them to have that discussion, not only among the parties in this Legislature, but from the public and from those outside the Chamber who are certainly affected by this as well.

It’s important work, and I think it should be done by a committee like this.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It has been our practice during COVID protocols that we could request a brief recess when there are amendments to allow for a little bit of opportunity for conversation among each of the caucuses around amendments.

Could I just request five or ten minutes? That would be most appreciated.

Speaker’s statement

Speaker: In order to facilitate discussion among members and comply with COVID-19 safety precautions, the House will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
Member for Lake Laberge, on the proposed amendment.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of this amendment brought forward by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition. As he referred to, and as I mentioned earlier, we have suggested through another all-party committee that reviewing legislation through a standing

committee and having some of the bills that are of more interest to the public having additional opportunity for people to talk directly to MLAs is a model that we believe is one that would be good for the Yukon to start expanding our democratic institutions in that manner and not doing that for every single piece of legislation, but doing it for ones such as this or the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, for example, where there is significant public interest in considering them.

I want to emphasize that, if this amendment to the motion for second reading passes and if the vote at second reading passes, referring this bill to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments certainly does not preclude a comprehensive review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* or the *Public Health and Safety Act*, as the minister suggested that the government was committed to. But those things do take time, and they should take time, because of the scope of them. And I would note, in terms of the speed of that, that the government made a commitment, when they established the previous select committee on the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* that the minister and I both served on, to go down that road, but still, we are now well over a year past when that was established, and there is no tangible sign of change occurring as a result.

So, I would actually refer back to examples of this in how the Minister of Justice characterized amendments to the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* previously — and I am just going to find the quote here. When she was talking about them bringing that forward and our criticism was about lack of consultation, she said — and I quote: “Let me say that both my colleagues have agreed that this legislation is useful, and that is why we have brought these surgical amendments. A full review of the act — a larger review of the SCAN process — that is a good idea. That is not what we are talking about here. What we are talking about here is surgical amendments so that those activities could be part of the SCAN opportunities, or possible investigations.”

While these are different pieces of legislation, the fundamental point that I am making is that the government has, at times — when they have felt that certain and specific changes should proceed before a broader review takes place — they have spoken in favour of advancing that, but they have argued against it when they would rather just do the comprehensive review and don't support the more surgical amendments.

What I would point to again is that the proposed amendments contained in Bill No. 302, *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)* — as I noted in my introductory speech, we are certainly happy to talk about the details of it or consider amendments brought forward by other members. What we were attempting to do with this is to provide a clear, tangible, specific proposal that would be, if not supported in its current form by enough other Members of the Legislative Assembly — which of course, was our hope — that at least it would be a good starting place for a conversation about the potential safeguards and oversight that should be put into the Yukon's *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, in our view. Of course, we have based many of those largely on the federal *Emergencies Act* with appropriate revisions. As well, some are

inspired by provisions in jurisdictions — such as the Province of Ontario, which we used as an example before — where the extension of the state of emergency requires a vote in the Legislative Assembly.

Again, I have to emphasize that, if this motion passes, it doesn't preclude and should in no way interfere with or delay a more comprehensive review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act* by government. These are specific, discrete segments of the legislation that are aimed at providing more oversight for the Legislative Assembly, particularly for those of us who are not on the government side, which is the majority of members in the House. The specific changes outlined in this include the requirement for votes in the Legislative Assembly on a declaration of emergency and on its extension and a provision for the Legislative Assembly, or a committee of the Legislative Assembly, to consider and review regulations and ministerial orders issued under a declaration of emergency.

I would note, as well, just for the consideration of the Third Party, that the section of the legislation leaves flexibility for a committee to determine what to do once it reviews those ministerial orders or regulations. They have the ability to hear from expert witnesses or conduct public hearings or both if they deem it appropriate. If there are other specific regulations or orders that they feel do not warrant that process, they are not bound to have every single ministerial order be subject to a public hearing process.

It does, however, empower them to make that decision and to ensure, particularly in a minority government, that it is not a handful of members of this Assembly making decisions behind closed doors in the Cabinet room without other members having the ability to weigh in and without other members being able to trigger a process, if they have the support of a majority on the committee, to engage with Yukoners and to hear their specific views and concerns.

I would suggest that, much as with two specific pieces of legislation in the past that come to mind — the examples I gave, one being Bill No. 102, which was tabled by a Liberal member when the Yukon Party was in government and by the — I'm having a mental blank on the bill number, but the anti-smoking legislation tabled by the late Todd Hardy, as Leader of the NDP. Both of those pieces of legislation were referred to a select committee that was created for that purpose. Those committees had the ability to consult on those pieces of legislation but also consider other related matters and ultimately come back and choose what they wished to contain in their report to the Legislative Assembly.

Similarly, though this is a proposal to refer it to a standing committee, if this motion passes, the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments will have the ability to decide what to do in its report, including whether to recommend passing the bill in its current form, passing a modified version of the current bill, or adding additional measures. A fourth option is, if the committee were to decide, following its work, to recommend that the more comprehensive review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act* take place before the specific elements were dealt with, that would be

within the range of the options at the committee's disposal to report on.

But the important thing this would do is trigger that process, trigger that longer discussion outside of this Legislative Assembly in the limited time we have here and allow members of all three political parties to review this legislation, to consider and discuss the specific concerns and questions that members of the NDP and the Liberal Party have raised here regarding this legislation.

I, again, want to emphasize the fact that, while we were trying to reflect the concerns of Yukoners and bring forward what we feel, based on things including the national discussion around the appropriate use of emergencies legislation and appropriate parliamentary oversight — we brought forward what I believe was a good proposal of a potential way to put safeguards in. But we are certainly open to discussing how that occurs and very open to discussing the details with other members.

As the Government House Leader indicated the concerns about the lack of public consultation, in fact, I would note that while it's up to the committee to make that decision, I would very much welcome the committee hearing from the public with thoughts on this proposed approach and any other matters that they may wish to raise.

I would hope that members will support this legislation. I understand that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Government House Leader, indicated before this amendment was proposed that he would not support it at that stage. I hope that, with this amendment and the proposal to send it to the all-party committee on statutory instruments, it will result in him changing his mind and supporting this proposal.

Again, should this pass here this afternoon, it would empower the committee to have further conversations and discussions, both about what is good in this proposed amendment to the *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act (2022)* and what changes potentially might be made to improve it.

Ms. White: There are lots of challenges today. I say that in terms of — the first I heard that the government was willing to review the legislation was on the floor of the House. I believe we haven't faced this before; we haven't had this level of emergencies called and extended, and we haven't seen what has happened in the last two years. I think if there was ever a time for a review, it would be now, because we haven't seen it used in this way. Previously, we saw it used for wildfires and flooding. Having 10 minutes to consider the amendment — I do really appreciate that I had a conversation with the Leader of the Yukon Party, where he said that one action doesn't have to exclude the other. So, I am standing here right now, and I can tell you that no one knows where I'm going, because I'm working through it as I'm talking.

There are a couple of different things. To be honest with my colleague from Laberge, the first time I read the legislation, I wasn't in agreement, and then I read it again, and I said, "Okay, well, I can see the need for oversight, and I can understand where we're going." Then I did the comparison with

the federal stuff, and we have highlighted some of our concerns around the language — because it doesn't match up — and some other things.

Yesterday at the briefing, the Member for Lake Laberge was really open to amendments, but there is just no way that it would be humanly possible to get them done in time for today. So then, the Yukon Party has brought forward — well, let's send it to a committee and try it that way. Had that just happened in isolation, without anything else, I would be supportive, but I think there are other things. I think that we need to review the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* in a broader way. I think that we need to look at the *Public Health and Safety Act* in a broader way.

The Leader of the Yukon Party told me, "Don't look at this in isolation. This isn't just one or the other." But I also know about the resources that are involved in committees. There are three members right now who sit on a committee where we have met upwards of a dozen times, and we have spent hours in the room together discussing things because we are working on this. I understand those resources. I understand the people time that is behind that.

Right now, the question is: Do I think a committee has the ability to review this legislation on that full spectrum? It is kind of what I am grappling with right this second.

Again, I've come to this point right now not having a clear idea of where I am leaning, but I understand that it's a big question from both sides. Ultimately, when we look at this bill, there are really important things included in it. It is the concept of oversight. It's the concept of making sure that more voices are involved. The truth of the matter is that, if it was a majority government, it wouldn't matter; we could go into the Assembly and the decision would be made on the other side. Where it really becomes interesting is in the situation that we are in now, where it is not a majority. It's a minority government.

When I think about future governments, I hope that we don't have majorities in the same way that we have had in the past. I hope that we have to work together. I believe that, right now, what we are doing is what I hope for the future. It sounds like a record when I say it's not easy, but it is not. The example is right now — on my feet talking about the proposed amendment.

I have to look at it right now with the consideration of the sheer amount of people time that I would be asking for from my own colleagues versus what it would look like when the government does a review. The one thing that I would say right now is that I believe that the government missed out on an opportunity to say, "We are going to learn from other examples and we are going to review this legislation."

Had that been said before today, 45 minutes ago, we might not be having the same conversation right now. It becomes challenging because, in the last few years, the truth of the matter is that we have seen this legislation used in a different way. No one saw this coming. No one could have anticipated that there would be a worldwide pandemic and that governments across the planet would be having to try to respond. In making this decision right now on the fly, there is also the point where I understand what the direction of Question Period has been

lately. I don't believe that this discussion should be about what was done and what wasn't done, but I have concerns that maybe cards have been shown in a different way.

I thank my colleagues from the Yukon Party for bringing forward the proposed bill and the amendment. I might ask for another couple of minutes to consider it, but the challenge is making that decision right now on the floor. I can say that, having read through it and finding where I thought there needed to be improvements, it was more than was in my own capabilities to do in time today. It makes me think that there needs to be that broader look at it. I know that the Yukon Party is proposing that through a committee and I know that the government is proposing that through a review. That is the question.

I know that government has stood up to speak to the review, but I would like to hear them speak to the review. I would like to know where they stand on it. That would be helpful. I say this in terms of — like the Leader of the Yukon Party said, one wasn't in isolation. I would like to know what their thoughts are on it, because that will be helpful in the decision.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment? 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.

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.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are seven yea, 10 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it.

I declare the amendment to the motion defeated.

Amendment to motion for second reading of Bill No. 302 negatived

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the motion?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to this motion. As well, I will try to do my best to discuss a little bit concerning the ideas around consultation in the work that was just touched upon.

First of all, I think it's important that we just take a look at what has played out here over the last couple of days. First what we've seen is the announcement, and I actually have really appreciated today's dialogue and discord. In the last number of years, it has been a very, I think, valuable Wednesday. We have all had an opportunity to talk about something that's very important. Truly, I think that the intent of this motion is — I agree that there has to be work done around CEMA. I think that we walked into a situation — myself and colleagues — two years ago where we were in a situation where we were using the tools that were left in the toolbox by previous governments of all political stripes.

In this particular case, I'll probably just try to focus on a couple of different items that have been touched on today, primarily by my colleague, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and maybe just try to expand a little bit on those items and also touch on some of the previous legislation that we have seen passed in the Yukon that would definitely have — that should be taken into consideration as we consider the amendments to this particular act.

I would like to start with the comments that were made early on by the Member for Lake Laberge, and that was really touching upon the comments around safeguards that were identified in these amendments. The safeguards spoke to the fact that there would be potentially three individuals in the Legislative Assembly who would have that opportunity within a particular time period to overturn the actual CEMA orders, the emergency orders.

There have been some comments made about that, and it really talks to: Is that truly a safeguard? How does that affect that small number of individuals? How could that affect not just the activities here in the lands that the Yukon government governs, but also how does that affect the decisions on settlement lands across the territory?

In a short period of time — there was a press conference just a short period of time ago, and then we had that opportunity, as the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes touched on — there was a short turnaround provided for members of government to attend a briefing. Then we are here today on Wednesday. The challenge with that is that there was a scheduling conflict around Management Board where the important financial decisions of the Government of Yukon take place, and that was the conflict. That was the meeting that we had booked at that particular time.

We have tried to do our best to prepare for this. I think that there have been a lot of strong comments and arguments made today, but I am going to touch on the safeguards. The first thing that I did today was reach out to subject-matter experts — whether from the legal community or elected individuals within First Nation governments — to try to have a discussion with them around what that would mean to them — having just three people in the Assembly. As tabled, there were other comments made today that talked about changing this in the future or

bringing it to committee, but in this particular case, it was — three individuals at the table where one particular party could make that change.

At least from my recollection over the last five years, we have been in a situation in a number of cases where this Assembly in collaboration — and in some cases, all three parties came together to support particular policy points. But you could tell that there was almost a division where, in some parties, there were two people in a free-vote system who would go in a completely different direction. I think that — to our surprise, in some cases — there was some really emotional, significant legislation that was coming through, and one or two individuals making a decision — potentially three — who then, on a split vote and the party splitting their vote, could turn the tide on a conversation like this.

I think that we have seen, at least over the last half decade, that this could be really detrimental to the governance of this territory. Even if we got alignment, really, from all three political parties, just some individuals with some strong feelings — and maybe a different set of values than the others — would be voting in a particular way or their constituency wanted them to vote that way and you would have three constituencies — and I guess they would poll them and come back, and that could certainly send us in a different direction. That was one thing that was concerning.

The second was that, going into the last election, there was a commitment made to do work around this. There was some committee work done, and I think that we all feel that this — I agree with portions of all of the speakers today that what we have seen — the tools that we have had to use — maybe the word is to be “modernized”.

But the other thing is that, within that modernization process, I think we need to make sure that they are congruent with self-government agreements. I think that was one piece that my colleague touched on today in the opening discussion, but I think that there could be a bit of further dialogue on that.

Some of the things that I would like to refer to first — there was an act that was assented to on December 19, 2005, and that is the *Cooperation in Governance Act*. It was actually an act that was assented to while the Yukon Party was in government. It speaks specifically — this would have been under the leadership of Premier Fentie — to the importance of aligning the legislation and the governance of both the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments. Of course, the member who had the opportunity to table this legislation today would have part of this Assembly at that particular time — likely in his first mandate.

It really just spoke to — I will just quote a couple of pieces from this: “Recognizing the respective authority and jurisdiction of the Legislature, the Government of Yukon and self-governing Yukon First Nations...” — just simple language, really.

As well, the next paragraph below that or two paragraphs down: “Recognizing that representatives of the Government of Yukon, the Council of Yukon First Nations and certain self-governing Yukon First Nations entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in Governance in the Yukon

which establishes...” — of course, the Yukon Forum — “... for co-operation in governance...”

So, you can tell that, for a number of years, there has been a commitment, although we have seen some challenges and gaps in that commitment, but there really has been a commitment in this Assembly through successive governments to work together and to try to ensure that legislation, goals, and priorities are aligned where they can be, but also that there is an opportunity to understand how legislation can play a role or how it should be considered in both levels of government.

What does that matter today? I would now like to go back. I’m just going to refer to the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement* and specifically to provision 13.3, and that is really talking about the activity, where it says — and I quote: “The Kwanlin Dun First Nation shall have the power to enact laws of a local or private nature on Settlement Land in relation to the following matters...” It talks about a number of different items. I’m just using this as an example. Of course, every self-governing nation across the territory would have similar language as 13.3, and it would really speak to their abilities to have particular laws enacted on those lands.

As well, the other item within the self-government agreement that I would like to touch on is 13.4. That falls under 13.4.0, and that is Emergency Powers — and I quote: “13.4.4 On Settlement Land, in relation to those matters enumerated in 13.2, in any situation that poses an Emergency to a person who is not a Citizen, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation may exercise power conferred by laws enacted by the Kwanlin Dun First Nation to relieve the Emergency, notwithstanding that Laws of General Application may apply to the Emergency.”

When I think about the comments from the MLA for Whitehorse Centre, I think there were some fantastic points made. We are debating today within one particular context, which is, of course, dealing with the challenges we have all had to face around COVID, but of course this particular piece of legislation can be used in other ways, and we’ve seen that previously. It has been more around what could be termed “natural disasters” or impacts and effects of climate change.

So, I’ll ask the House to give me a little bit of room to try to provide a couple of examples.

Where this could be a challenge is if we’re in a situation where we went down a road today or in subsequent days — and I hope this gives a little more comfort to the Leader of the Third Party on the previous vote, because I think that was an appropriate thing to do — is the fact that, what happens if we amend this act that gives particular powers to the Yukon government and then we see a self-governing First Nation start to draw down or to put their own laws in place that have the potential to completely counter what both groups are trying to do? That can be based on what’s happening with the governance of the land, if you’re trying to close roads or if you’re trying to make sure that people are safe. So, you have one government that is saying that everything is okay, but then you have another government that is enacting particular things like roadblocks or they’re asking people to move off those lands.

I think that now we have this really great opportunity to reconcile, as you move forward, how we deal with that, but in order to do that, we have to have extremely thorough conversations with First Nation governments.

Now, I will try to keep this very professional. Within the work that I think was done by the Member for Lake Laberge, I don't know if that was contemplated. Certainly, today, hearing from the Council of Yukon First Nations, I don't believe it was. Going out and seeking technical advice from legal experts on this particular item, I don't think it was. I think that was a gap.

It surprises me, because the member opposite is the former Minister of Justice and also a Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I think that what we're kind of doing now — and I think that amendment that was just voted down was really trying to take — and this term wouldn't be so professional, but one my grandfather would say is, we're kind of trying to “put a round peg in a square hole”.

So, if we're going to do this right, I think we need to go out and do the proper consultation with individuals across the Yukon — just community members — from all corners of the Yukon. That is going to be a key part of this work. I think that we have an obligation to go out and have a discussion with self-governing First Nations — as well as nations in White River, Ross River, and Liard First Nation — and likely conversations, pending legal advice on this, with transboundary nations.

The other thing that was a bit surprising was that the opposition today touched on a laundry list of people who should also be spoken with — legal experts, NGOs, and a number of folks. I appreciate that this has been brought to the table. I am wondering why, before the member tabled this legislation, those folks were not spoken to. When we talk about capacity and the ability here to do consultation, I would say that the Leader of the Official Opposition underestimates the ability of the MLA for Lake Laberge. There are about 1,200 people in that particular riding. I can tell you, I have seen some extensive consultation done by the member.

Previous to the last election, there was work that was being done by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources that was really specific to collaboration with indigenous governments. It was a planning exercise — very simplistic — and probably a lot of Yukoners who normally wouldn't know about something as simple as a local area plan, they probably know about this one because of how it was highlighted and how it turned into a massive political hot potato. It was a challenging conversation. I would say that it was definitely a challenging conversation for me, and so I think that if there is anyone who is as effective as one MLA going out and having a discussion with their constituents, the member opposite knows how to do it.

How it played out was there was a planning process between members of the area — it was called the “Shallow Bay planning” — it was a consultation process. It was very similar but not as wide as going into the work of this legislation. It was about a small area in the Yukon. There were people appointed from one First Nation — the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — and from the neighbourhood. They came together and made a series of recommendations. That is it — recommendations. Through

the election process, what ended up happening was that the member opposite took that opportunity, before the election and then when the election was called, to speak to a tremendous number of people. People in that constituency said that hundreds and hundreds of people were spoken to. Sadly, the information that was passed on was not accurate, from my perspective — I wasn't in those conversations — but from what I learned. That then, as a side note, led to members from that community coming and knocking on doors in my riding in the middle of the election and going and telling my constituents that I was —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 19(b), the Member for Porter Creek South seems to speaking to matters other than the question under discussion. We have listened to several minutes of him on a tangent that has nothing to do with the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. I would ask you to remind him of what we are debating and suggest that you urge him to actually talk about the bill that we're talking about.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: On the point of order, can we please stick to the topic on the bill?

Continue, Minister of Economic Development. You have two minutes.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, I will. I will realign my conversation. The only point I was trying to make is that I think, on this particular bill, if there was a will, there would have been extensive conversation and consultation that could have been executed.

I think that today, even for us, even being able to call the First Nation governments and have a discussion with the leadership, that alone — making those phone calls — would have been — and actually reaching out to some others, we're talking less than 20 different conversations.

So, I think that the capacity — again, I don't believe that the amendment that we talked about earlier really was going to put this on the right stead. I think what we're looking at is a piece of legislation that has some significant flaws in it. I think that this is stirring up — or will — a lot of different conversation around it.

I do agree with the intent of this motion. I think that we have work to do. I think that the Leader of the Third Party is correct in that we have an opportunity to go back and look at it. I think that every single party here did their very best to deal with a global pandemic. As we have said, when you get a handbook for the Legislative Assembly, they tell you how to conduct yourself as an MLA; there was no chapter on global pandemics, so we used the tools that we had. Hopefully, we're coming to an end to that and this will truly be the opportunity to move forward and to reconcile that.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion today.

Ms. White: First, I think that it is important to say that I see the spirit and intent of this bill and of these amendments to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, and I support these intentions and that spirit. It is why, prior to everything that has happened today, I was ready to move it. We do need to have those conversations. I agree with all the members here who have expressed support for greater oversight and accountability of this government and of any government — of future governments — and their ability to enact the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and then, with that, their ability to rule by regulation once it's in place.

While CEMA in the territory is not as broad in its power as the *Emergencies Act* recently enacted by the federal government, it still grants our Yukon government a lot of power, whether they were able to enact broad measures that temporarily rewrote or changed — without any consultation with the elected members of this Assembly — our laws about taxes, elections, the openness of our land borders, and so much more. I want to be clear that I'm not saying that these things shouldn't have been done, but that what we now see is an unprecedented and broad use of this legislation, and it's not hard to see how it might be abused by some future government because we've changed the way that it's used. Again, we have never faced this situation before.

We mentioned previously that we have only seen it to deal with things like localized wildfires and floods, but, of course, now that door has been opened and it applies to all sorts of things. Before I am accused of blindly supporting the Liberals, as I'm sure it's coming, understand that I have many criticisms on their dealings in the past two years. So, to the government side, do not consider the NDP having voted against the proposed amendment as a free pass.

I will remind everyone in this Assembly that the first emergency was declared by a majority government. Had we come into this Assembly, had we debated it, and had half of the Assembly had a difference of opinion, we still would have proceeded forward. In the past two years, the opposition has had fewer briefings from people making the decisions. When we have asked about direction and the advice of the CMOH, we have not had clear answers. That is partially what has got us here; it is our inability to access information.

So, I ask the government side: If the roles were reversed, would you have been satisfied with the level of engagement regarding the pandemic that both the Yukon Party and the NDP have received in the last two years? Would you say that it was adequate? Would you say that it was enough? Would you say that it was fulsome? Would you say that you fully understood and that you were able to make decisions based on the information that had been shared? I would like to think that this is one of those lessons that we will learn from, that there needs to be more information shared and more opportunity.

In 2020, we had weekly briefings with the CMOH, but by the time 2021 rolled around, we had two, and in 2022, we haven't had any. I heard the Premier say that he wasn't in control, but again, there is a way. We are talking about accountability here. That is part of it. Of course, we recognize

the need for our government to act swiftly in the case of an emergency. As I noted last week in Question Period, you wouldn't respond to an imminent flood by having a summit to talk about it, just as we wouldn't recall the Legislature in July to debate the need for a flood response. We want government to be able to act on that for sure. What we need is an act that balances the ability of the government to respond to imminent threats to the well-being of Yukoners with proper accountability for those actions to members of this Assembly and to the public. I think that we see the intent behind Bill No. 302. We see that desire for that accountability and that ability to share information.

I also want to point out that, under the current act, the Government of Yukon can declare a state of emergency, but it also enables our municipal governments to declare one. Knowing that this act was passed in 2002, a lot has changed since then. There are other governments in this territory. We have heard it referenced. First Nation governments are not granted these powers under the act. I think that maybe it is time we changed that, because our modern Yukon needs to include First Nation governments as equals. What would happen right now if there was an emergency in Pelly Crossing or Beaver Creek? We don't have municipal governments there. Those governments should be able to say what needs to be done. I am hoping that, with a review, it will be defined.

Considering that, I think it is an important consideration that wasn't included in the proposal from the Yukon Party. That leaves me asking: What else might have been missed in that legislation? Again, yesterday, I wasn't in favour, and then I thought maybe we could work on it, and then I identified all the spots where I thought we would have to make amendments. Then I wondered how on Earth we could possibly make amendments to laws on the floor of the Assembly without fully understanding the ramifications, because I am not a lawyer — I am not a judicial lawyer — and some of those decisions will have consequences.

But I appreciate that, like the public members here in this Assembly, I want more accountability, not just from this government but from any government. I don't speak just about me standing in this spot right now, but what about what happens in five years or 10 years? What happens when every member in this Assembly has retired and there are new people in these seats? We don't want them to have to go through what we just did. We want to learn from these mistakes. We want to make better legislation, and we want to move forward so that they aren't left having these conversations about what didn't work.

So, I believe that the intent and the spirit of today's bill needs to be part of any conversation as we go forward because we need that level of accountability. I appreciate the words that I have heard from the Leader of the Yukon Party and from the Member for Lake Laberge, and I don't think that this is about "who did what level of consultation" because really it is about trying to make it better for the people who come behind us.

So, again, to the government, this isn't a free pass. To my colleagues to my right, we had the discussion about where we were voting. Again, had the offer not come forward about

reviewing this legislation, I think that this conversation would be different.

Again, I thank my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, for bringing it forward, but I think that it needs a bigger and broader stroke. The *Civil Emergency Measures Act* goes far beyond just the proposed amendments. I think the direction and intent of those amendments needs to be included in any kind of legislative review going forward. It will be interesting to see where this ends up.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of the members who have contributed to the debate this afternoon. I would particularly like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for proposing that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. As both he and I have indicated, we believe that having more all-party committee discussion of legislation that is of significant interest to Yukoners would be a good thing.

It happened on several occasions through select committees during our time in government and led to changes to legislation, both in the case of a proposal brought forward by the NDP and by Todd Hardy at the time which resulted in changes to the Yukon's smoking legislation and a proposal brought forward by the Liberals that led to some changes to the *Human Rights Act* following some consideration by a committee.

I do just want to note that members have made their decision, but it is unfortunate that there was the choice not to support public consultation by a standing committee and discussion of the details. I do appreciate the comments from the Leader of the NDP indicating some support for the spirit and intent of this or some of the parts of it. I would just note, in urging the members of the Third Party to consider their vote and, in fact, urging members of the government to consider their vote at this point, that voting for legislation at second reading is voting to continue debating it. Amendments can be made later. There can be a decision, as occurred with the government's legislation related to energy retrofits, to not even proceed in that Sitting but to discuss it later.

If you are supportive of the intent of the bill, it's hard to square that with someone choosing to vote against it. A vote for it at second reading is a vote to continue discussing the content of the legislation or at least leaving that open for a later date.

I want to just remind all members and all Yukoners listening that, despite especially some of the unrelated discussion brought forward by members of the Liberal Party, the proposal here is a relatively simple, straightforward set of changes that are aimed at improving democratic oversight here. It takes provisions, including a number of provisions that are based on the principles of oversight contained in federal legislation and principles of oversight that have been supported by many legal and constitutional experts who have argued

about the importance of checks and balances in the use of emergency powers by any level of government.

Just to recap the specific provisions in this legislation, the bill would change the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to, one, provide the Yukon Legislative Assembly with oversight and control by requiring that any declaration of a state of emergency be considered by the Assembly within seven days of being issued and subject to a vote. That provision, again, is something that is very similar to what's in place at the federal level.

As I indicated earlier in debate, if over 400 Members of Parliament and senators can get together on a week's notice to vote on a declaration of emergency at the federal level, then surely, we can have 19 MLAs arrange to meet, especially since the legislation specifically contemplates that it could even be virtually by video conference.

The proposal would provide the Yukon Legislative Assembly with oversight and control over the extension of a state of emergency. It would require that any regulations and ministerial orders be subject to a mandatory review by either the Legislative Assembly or a committee of the Assembly within 45 days of being issued. It would empower committees of the Legislative Assembly to conduct public hearings on regulations and ministerial orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

Just to pause for a moment on reading the details, I note that this would provide the ability that, on any ministerial orders and regulations issued during a state of emergency, it would empower a committee to hear from Yukoners with concerns about them. And that, to answer concerns that may come from some members, would not require that a public hearing on every single ministerial order be held, but it would empower the committee, based on requests from Yukoners or matters that it felt were of specific interest, to do things like consult with business owners on the impacts specific rules were having on restaurants, bars, and so on. It would allow consultation with church leaders and faith-based organizations on rules that were affecting them. It would allow consultation with sports organizations on rules that were affecting them and with parents on the rules that were affecting them and their children, just to name a few of the examples that it would empower.

Returning to the list of what the proposed legislation would do, it would create the situation that, if the Speaker receives an official request from a number of Members of the Legislative Assembly to require the Assembly to consider a request to revoke a declaration of a state of emergency within seven days — I point out, in fact, that the federal legislation requires that to be considered within just three days, and it's based on either 10 senators out of just over 100 or 20 MPs out of a total Parliament of 338 making that request.

I also want to note, as I did earlier, that should this legislation pass second reading, this is an area that we have flagged in the briefings and during the House this afternoon that we are certainly open to considering amendments about the details of that. It was an attempt to bring in a provision — a safeguard from federal legislation — and come up with a reasonable number for the Yukon, but if there was a desire to

adjust that in some way, we are certainly open to that proposal. It is simply a case of saying that, if the federal government can do that for a national emergency, should we not, here in the Yukon with a much smaller House, also be open to considering such a request?

Finally, the provision in the legislation would require that a public inquiry be held after a state of emergency but create the ability for a large majority of MLAs — we had suggested three-quarters, but we are open to changes on that — to vote in favour of not having a public inquiry.

I would agree that some matters — such as some floods and some fires — probably do not warrant a public inquiry, but just to give an example of where that may not always be the case, I would point out that, last summer with the flooding, much as there were many things done right, there were also serious concerns from Yukoners, such as constituents of the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes who had about a half-dozen houses that, to use their words, were “walled into Marsh Lake” because of a decision made using emergency powers to cut that off. The intention, of course, was to protect other properties, but as all MLAs will be aware, a number of those homeowners complained to the media because they felt that the decision was not the correct one, and they felt that the Minister of Community Services did not give proper consideration to their concerns.

That is just an illustration of where, in some cases, there might be an inquiry required or required into certain aspects of the response with a flood or a wildfire.

I would also just note that, fortunately, none of my constituents at Jackfish Bay were issued an evacuation order. Some were issued an evacuation alert after the water rose above Jackfish Bay Road, and this, again, I would remind ministers, was after the Minister of Highways and Public Works didn't think that residents or me, when we contacted him, knew what we were talking about. They first told me effectively that I was wrong in responding to it and then went out and looked at the situation, and then, I believe it was the next day, staff of Community Services went door to door and handed out an evacuation alert to over a dozen property owners.

Had that actually been issued, I can assure you that some of those owners would have wanted accountability afterward and would have very likely wanted to see a public inquiry.

In returning more specifically to the scope of the bill, that is why, in doing this, it is not intended to just deal with issues related to the pandemic, but it is intended to address issues and concerns we have heard from Yukoners. The fundamental elements of this legislation do not prevent a more comprehensive review of the legislation. It does not prevent additional changes being made to incorporate the ability for First Nation governments to declare a state of emergency or changes to the *Public Health and Safety Act*.

This matter, just as the Minister of Justice argued, should occur with changes to the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* and would be a somewhat surgical approach that is aimed solely at improving democratic oversight and providing the structure to empower the ability to conduct public hearings and to hear from people whose lives

are being affected by regulations and ministerial orders during this declaration of a state of emergency or any other declaration of a state of emergency which might occur at some point in the Yukon's future.

I will wrap up my comments here by, again, encouraging members to vote to continue to discuss this legislation, rather than to vote against the contents of it and kill the bill. I would again emphasize that the Yukon Party continues to believe that a public health situation is not an excuse to bypass democracy. We believe that democratic safeguards, including checks and balances on the use of emergency powers, now and in the future, should be in place and that it is important to change the legislation to make those changes to provide democratic safeguards and oversights, based on best practices by the federal government and elsewhere in the country.

Our position continues to be that emergency powers should be used only when there is no other reasonable alternative, not simply because it is more convenient for government, and that tools, such as time-limited legislation, which is discussed and debated democratically, would have been a better approach right from the start of the pandemic, rather than issuing repeated ministerial orders and regulations that are in no way subject to public consultation or democratic debate in this Legislative Assembly before they are issued, but are affecting the lives of over 40,000 Yukoners and are the subject of concern by many Yukoners at various periods in time throughout the past almost two years, since the start of the pandemic.

With that, I would conclude my remarks and encourage all members to support this legislation at second reading, rather than voting against public consultation and democratic oversight.

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: 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.

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.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 7 yea, 10 nay.

Speaker: I think the nays have it.

I declare the motion defeated.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 302 negatived

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 288

Clerk: Motion No. 288, standing in the name of Ms. Van Bibber.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek North:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners by:

(1) creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions that they have made to their community or to Yukon; and

(2) providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2, 2022 in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would be delighted to speak about this motion that I brought forward; however, seeing the time, I move that we adjourn debate.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek North that debate be now adjourned.

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Can I just ask you to confirm with the Clerks? I just thought there was a Standing Order which stated that a member should not adjourn their own debate of their own motion.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I can make that motion to move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30, this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion No. 288 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 47

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 10, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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

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NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier 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

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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, March 10, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Bills ordered dropped from Order Paper

Speaker: Before we begin the Daily Routine, the Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. Bill No. 300, entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act*, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is similar to Bill No. 302, which was defeated at second reading yesterday.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would ask the Legislative Assembly — we have many guests today. First, I would like to welcome the guests who are here for the 70th anniversary of the MacBride Museum — the staff attending from MacBride: the captain of the ship, Patricia Cuning, is here today; Rika Matsunami, as well from the staff; and Gabriel Hopkins and Corin Noble. As well, board members attending: well known to the Assembly, Mr. Rick Nielsen, thank for you coming; Kells Boland; always challenging me on the doorstep, Andy Williams, great to see you; Dave and Irene Brekke always challenge me on the doorstep as well, great to see you; Norm Randell and Priscilla Peever. As well, from the volunteer board, Jo-Ann Waugh, I believe, is with us today.

Individuals who didn't have the opportunity to be here today, I just would like to note as well: Frank Wilps, treasurer; Keith Byram and Doug Phillips, who also contribute greatly to the organization; and former board members, our own Nils Clarke and Scott Kent, who have also played a key role with the organization. Please welcome them to the Assembly today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have a tribute today for Peter Risby to the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame. We have several guests and I would encourage us all to welcome them. We have Wayne Risby and Norma Risby. We have Grant Allan, the president of the Yukon Prospectors Association; we have Mike Burke from the Yukon Chamber of Mines; we also have, from Energy, Mines and Resources, Erin Dowd and Monica Nordling; and finally, we also have Mr. Jerry Asp, who is also an inductee to the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame — if we could welcome them all, please.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to welcome to the House this afternoon Ben Asquith and Chad Thomas, who are here for the ministerial statement today about Yukon First Nations Wildfire.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of MacBride Museum 70th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the MacBride Museum of Yukon History in recognition of their 70th anniversary. MacBride's inception began with the collective efforts of a group of visionary Yukoners who created the Yukon Historical Society back in 1950.

Led by Fred Arnot and William MacBride, the group opened the MacBride Museum in 1952 in the Whitehorse telegraph office, still located on its original site. For seven decades, the museum has evolved, added to its collection, and has grown from its humble beginnings. When visiting MacBride Museum, you will move through, first, the Aurora Hall, where you can view the incredible northern lights icicle art installation, a partnership between MacBride and Lumel Studios; the First Nations Gallery, where you can gain an introduction to and explore the stories of Yukon's 14 First Nations; the Wild World gallery, where you can see the albino moose and 35 other creatures up close; the Gold Rush Gallery, where you can learn about the history of the Klondike Gold Rush; the Land and Light Gallery, where you can explore the artwork and functional creations of the people of the Yukon from ancient times until now; the Icons and Innovators Gallery, where you can discover the places, people, and events that define the Yukon; the Cold Chamber, where you can understand more about how Yukoners live in this climate and the clothing worn; and finally, Sam McGee's Cabin and the *Woodchuck*, the 37-foot tunnel stern workboat, and learn about the Yukon River and the boats that travelled on it.

MacBride Museum has established itself as one of the Yukon's must-see tourism attractions. During the busy summer tourist season, MacBride welcomes visitors, treating them to lectures, special events, and exhibits. During the winter months, the museum staff and volunteers focus on community engagement and provide local programming to residents.

Throughout the pandemic, MacBride has shown innovation and adaptability, offering access when possible, serving as a location for local crafts, music events, and meeting spaces. The energy, creativity, and determination of Bill MacBride and the museum's other founders is still alive today. It is reflected in the character of the staff, board members, and volunteers who work to make MacBride a favourite stop. We thank them all, past and present, for their continued commitment to the Yukon's museum community and for their vision to promote the territory's rich history, especially that of Whitehorse. Here's to 70 years of community service, historical preservation, and storytelling.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to the MacBride Museum, which is celebrating 70 years since it opened its doors in 1952.

Opened by the Yukon Historical Society, Yukon's first museum was later named for William David MacBride. With his knowledge of history and being known as a pack rat, he had an amazing collection that began his passion to showcase his treasures.

In 1950, the Yukon Historical Society was established, and eventually a log building was built in 1967, Canada's centennial year, and named for MacBride.

The museum society is a non-profit group and has a board of directors to oversee the facility. Today, 70 years later, changes and an evolution of displays and culture have made MacBride one of the must-sees for everyone — locals and visitors alike.

The expansion and remodelling that took place can now house so much more, from the welcoming front Aurora Hall where northern lights icicles dangle from the ceiling to the many exhibits indoors and outdoors, you will be impressed.

The museum houses over 40,000 artifacts, documents, photographs, and so much more. I could not even begin to list all of the exciting displays and visual treasures. MacBride displays: First Nation cultural artifacts, handicrafts, and shares the story of the transitions of the first peoples; mounted animals and one albino moose in the Wild World area; Sam McGee's Cabin; Gold Rush Gallery; and the Cold Chamber. You need hours to really do it justice. The Whitehorse Inn sign that so many long-time Yukoners recognize is a true bright spot.

As well as the museum, the Copperbelt Mining Museum on the Alaska Highway just north of town and the MacBride Roundhouse are other additions that showcase another portion of Whitehorse history. The venue is used for local events, meetings, and concerts. It's a perfect surrounding for people to gather and enjoy, especially those summer evenings when you can open the large doors into the inner streetscape. It's wonderful.

Check out the gift shop that has some unique treasures and local books.

The vision statement reads: "MacBride is a dynamic museum, dedicated to promoting the value, understanding and enjoyment of Yukon history."

Thank you to the executive director and curator, Patricia Cuning, and all her wonderful staff, the board of directors, and all who support this beautiful museum. If you haven't been there, please take my advice and visit. You will be enriched with knowledge and amazed at Yukon's history.

Applause

In recognition of Peter Risby, Canadian Mining Hall of Fame inductee

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Peter Risby, who in August will become the first black man to be inducted into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame. Peter, who passed away in 2011, is aptly described by

the hall of fame as "a tenacious entrepreneur who overcame adversity to become a successful prospector and miner in Northern Canada." He was born in Kansas in 1931 to a railway porter and a German nursing student. The family fled to Canada to avoid persecution by the Ku Klux Klan and settled in a Cree community in Alberta, where Peter learned bush navigation and survival skills.

Peter was forced to attend a residential school but escaped at age seven and never returned. As an adult, Peter took a job operating heavy equipment at the Cassiar Asbestos Mine in British Columbia. From there, he ventured further north to the Yukon in 1957 and began prospecting. He sold his first claims to Johns Manville Co., then the world's largest asbestos producer. He later went on to develop and operate the Indian River gold mine, which became a major contributor to the Yukon's economy.

Peter's upbringing among the Alberta Cree helped shape his views, as he became an advocate for inclusion in the mining industry. He spent several years teaching prospecting and mineral identification courses to indigenous students and was one of the first to hire women for exploration programs.

Peter was earlier inducted into the Yukon Prospectors' Hall of Fame and named Mr. Miner in 1996. He was recognized for his technical achievements, economic contributions, and as a trail-blazing advocate of diversity and indigenous inclusion in the mining industry. It's unfortunate that Peter couldn't be with us today to be recognized, but we're honoured to acknowledge his family, including his daughter Tara, who helped lead the charge for his nomination.

Peter's nomination also received support from the Yukon Chamber of Mines, from the Yukon Prospectors Association, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations, Yukon region, and the Yukon government. Congratulations to Peter and the Risby family for a lifetime of making a difference.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I, too, am pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition as we pay tribute to the contributions of Peter Risby, as he is one of five to be inducted this year into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame.

The Risby family has an incredible history, and it is rare to find such detailed accounts spanning generations. They were certainly stories from a very different time. Pete's family faced much racial discrimination from before he was born in 1931 through his young life. I understand that after Pete's family moved from Kansas to Alberta, their lives changed for the better. Pete, despite not having any formal schooling, learned to speak fluent Cree and sharpened his knowledge and skills through his life on the land.

He came to the Yukon in 1957 after serving in the Korean War and working at the Cassiar Asbestos mine. From there, he launched into mineral exploration and prospecting. In his decades working in mining, Pete worked throughout North America and South America, but the majority of his time was spent here in the Yukon. He was involved with over 80 projects

that would, at one point, be optioned to major companies. He is credited with being instrumental in the development of the Indian River mine, as the minister said, a leading gold producer and major contributor to the Yukon Territory's economy. This was noted by the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame.

Pete was inducted into the Prospectors' Hall of Fame in 1996, an honour reserved for prospectors who have contributed tremendously to Yukon mining. His incredible contributions earned Mr. Risby well-deserved recognition here in the territory, and it is certainly exciting that he is now being recognized on a national scale.

Congratulations to the Risby family on this incredible honour. I am sure that Pete would be thrilled, just as they must be.

Applause

Ms. White: It is an honour to stand on behalf of the NDP to pay tribute to a legendary Yukoner. Peter Risby's life is one that movies and novels are based on — a life full of hardship, perseverance, adventure, luck, hard work, success, and leadership. From his beginnings in Kansas where he and his family faced direct threats from the KKK to a wonderful childhood in northern Alberta living with the Cree to the Korean War and then finally finding his way up to the Yukon, Mr. Risby's life was a colourful one.

I thank my colleagues for highlighting his extraordinary life and career. The mining industry in the Yukon looks and behaves in a different way because of his dedication to fairness and inclusion. We are glad that he was able to accept his award when he was inducted into the Yukon Prospectors' Hall of Fame in 1996 for his technical achievements, economic contributions, and as a trail-blazing advocate for diversity and indigenous inclusion in Canada's mineral industry.

Today, we're honoured to celebrate his life's work with his family and friends and for that recognition to finally be recognized on a national stage at the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling a report entitled *Child Rights Impact Assessment — Bill No. 11, Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)* and an associated letter addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a document proving the Yukon Party's support for carbon pricing, an important tool in the fight against climate change.

Ms. McLeod: I have for tabling a document from the Residential Landlord Association outlining the impact of the Liberals' rent control policy.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 14: Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022) — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Bill No. 15: Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022 — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct a review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*, beginning in 2022, to better equip the Yukon to address future emergencies.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier of Yukon to request that the Government of Canada defer the proposed increase to the federal carbon tax currently scheduled for April 1, 2022.

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

THAT this House supports the declaration of a substance use health emergency.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to call a public inquiry into the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* between March 2020 and March 2022.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review the Department of Education's food policy by:

(1) assessing what food and beverages are currently provided to students in Yukon schools;

(2) ensuring that healthy food options are promoted in high-traffic areas of schools; and

(3) conducting an environmental scan of other jurisdictions' departments of education food policies.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Yukon University through their Alice Frost Community Campus to provide training opportunities for Old Crow citizens to increase capacity for Old Crow water and septic services.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to issue an order-in-council ordering the Yukon Utilities Board to hold a general rate application for ATCO Electric Yukon.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wildland fire management agreement

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I see that Wayne Risby has just joined his colleagues up there in Yukon First Nations Wildfire, and that's what we are talking about today.

I rise to speak about an important new agreement between Yukon's Wildland Fire Management branch and Yukon First Nations Wildfire. Over the years, the two organizations have been working closely together to ensure the Yukon has the resources it needs to prevent, prepare, and fight wildfires in the territory. Last month, I was happy to announce that the Government of Yukon's Wildland Fire Management branch and Yukon First Nations Wildfire have entered into a three-year agreement that reinforces their positive working relationship and sets a foundation for how we will work together over the next several years.

Under the new agreement, funds will be provided to employ 20 youth, each to assist with the Yukon's wildland fire response, conduct forest fuel reduction and wildfire mitigation activities in support of wildfire-resilient Yukon communities.

This agreement also marks the first time that all 14 Yukon First Nations will be participating in the management of wildfires here in the Yukon and will be working to keep their communities safe from wildfire across the territory.

Yukon Wildland Fire Management has been working with Yukon First Nations for more than 20 years, and this agreement is a milestone in our work and partnership to ensure we keep our communities safe from wildfires and that Yukon Wildland Fire Management can continue their very important work. Over the years, we have designed a unique model of fire management that sees Yukon First Nations at the centre of our initial attack program, and they have been called on to assist other non-wildfire emergencies in the territory, such as potential flooding. Last year, I was happy to see the crew travel to BC to assist in fighting wildfires in the summer and to help with their flood recovery in December.

Without this ongoing partnership with Yukon First Nations, our territory would not be able to respond to the increasing extreme weather events we are seeing in the Yukon and the northwest due to climate change. By reaching this new agreement, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that Yukon First Nations Wildfire can continue to support this incredibly important work for Yukoners and Yukon communities.

I look forward to many years of collaboration, and I want to thank our partners at the Yukon Wildland Fire Management branch and Yukon First Nations Wildfire for reaching this agreement.

Ms. McLeod: First off, I would like to congratulate Yukon First Nations Wildfire for the work that they have done since their inception. They have become a valuable resource and training ground for combatting wildfires in the territory and are quickly making a name for themselves across the country in wildland firefighting circles, as they have responded to fires in other jurisdictions and have done an admirable job. We saw this last year, when our neighbours in BC were inundated by fire. Yukon First Nations Wildfire saw the need, offered their services, quickly gathered their gear, and headed south. With this new three-year unit crew services agreement announced two weeks ago, it will help solidify First Nations Wildfire operations into the future.

I am pleased to see that this agreement will focus on training youth. According to the government's own joint press release with Yukon First Nations Wildfire, the agreement will employ 20 additional youth each year to assist with Yukon's wildland fire response operations. Not only will those youth be on the front lines, but according to the joint release, they will also conduct forest fuel reduction and prevention and mitigation activities that will create wildfire-resilient Yukon communities. The skills gained by young Yukoners who will be part of this unit crew will not only be useful dealing with wildfire, but will help them in the community for years to come.

I do need to point out that Yukon First Nations Wildfire isn't just responsive to wildfires. Some crews were part of the Yukon's flood response last year at Marsh Lake. However, we also understand that the full capacity of Yukon First Nations Wildfire wasn't utilized last year, either during the wildfire season or when flooding was taking place. I am wondering if the minister can tell us if they will call upon the full extent of Yukon First Nations Wildfire crews this year or if he will leave these valuable workers sidelined.

We know that with climate change, the Yukon will be more susceptible to both wildfires and flooding. This agreement will certainly take a step toward not only ensuring healthy forests with the crews' mitigation work, but in keeping our communities safe.

I do have some questions for the minister about presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters. Last fall, there was a lot of discussion about covering wildland firefighters under new WCB legislation. In order to get the NDP to agree to support the legislation, the minister committed that he was going to conduct research on the impacts of covering these firefighters under this presumptive coverage.

The NDP reluctantly supported the legislation, but made it clear that they were — in their words — putting the government on notice. However, based on the response to questions yesterday, it seems that very little action, if any, has taken place on this commitment.

Other than saying that it would be expensive, has the minister actually undertaken a financial impact study on small business? Can the minister confirm if he has started work on this research so that wildland firefighters can be covered under presumptive cancer care? If he has, what's the status of that research?

Ms. White: We wish to congratulate First Nations Wildfire and Yukon's Wildland Fire Management branch on this exciting and forward-looking agreement. Knowing that every First Nation in the Yukon is now participating in the management of Yukon wildfires and keeping our community safe will light a spark of possibility in the imaginations of youth across the territory.

As an organization, Yukon First Nations Wildfire is about so much more than fighting fires. They work with youth to build them up into strong, resilient adults. From issues like financial literacy to mental health, the mentorship opportunities that are offered by this organization are not only creating highly trained, type 1 wildland firefighters, but they're creating the leaders of the future.

So, thank you to First Nations Wildfire and all wildland firefighters for everything you continue to do for this territory.

I appreciate that the minister has stood and said such nice things about such an important industry and the brave folks who do the work, but that stands in stark contrast with his words and actions last fall and even yesterday.

Last year, I spent considerable time talking to wildland firefighters, as well as the Whitehorse Fire Fighters Association and the BC General Employees' Union and many others. We all came to the same conclusion: Yukon wildland firefighters deserve the same presumptive protection as their urban colleagues.

While I was talking about presumptive coverage for wildland firefighters, the minister was out collecting letters from industry members who he had fed a fearful tale of increased WCB rates. He could have spent this time learning more about the wildland-urban interface of today's fires, or he could have reached out to listen to the stories of wildland firefighters who have been diagnosed with cancers that are covered for their urban counterparts and the advocacy they needed for themselves to have their illness recognized under WCB.

So, what are we supposed to think?

On the one side, the minister pats himself on the back over all the great work he is doing with wildland firefighters, yet in the same breath, he denies their request to be better supported by the government.

So, while I commend the work this government has done to build better relationships with Yukon First Nations Wildfire, I am however left wondering: Would that relationship not have been stronger if the minister had spent as much time fighting

for wildland firefighters as he did trying to prove that they don't deserve presumptive cancer coverage?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the support for Yukon First Nations Wildfire that we heard this afternoon in the House. I know that the work of Yukon wildland fire is absolutely critical to the territory, and this government has supported and worked very hard to get this agreement in place. We do that because we believe in our wildland fire resources and certainly in our Yukon First Nations Wildfire teams. We are going to do our very best to deploy them as much as possible in this coming year, and this agreement provides a certainty in the rules under which they will be used.

This is a first for the territory. This shows the leadership of Yukon First Nations Wildfire, as well as the leadership of this government, to get this deal done. I really do think that the work that has been done, certainly down in the territory and the flood response in BC — I mean, that was the very first time that we had that type of support sent down to BC, and the work that they did was absolutely incredible.

So, yes, this government certainly does support Yukon First Nations Wildfire, as well as wildland fire in general. The fact is, though, that we're talking about two different streams here. Yes, if you are injured on the job, you will get compensation for that. The presumption merely says that the evidence suggests that X employee is exposed to X hazard — and quite frankly, the work is ongoing inside WCB — but that correlation between wildland fire in the Yukon and their exposure to carcinogens that you would see in an urban environment are not there. If we can provide the evidence we need, as I have said on the floor of the House last year and even this week, we will certainly review the regulations and give the presumption that's necessary.

However, there are severe cost implications, and I did talk about this with the members opposite last year. To actually bring in the presumption for wildland fire, all of them, would be somewhere between \$6 million and \$9 million, and that is to provide a presumption for which there is very little evidence to support such a thing, as well as the need to provide the PPE to actually mitigate or prevent the exposures that — really, we don't even know if they are exposed to that. So, you could have a need to be wearing full gear to fight a forest fire to prevent a cancer that you are never going to be exposed to.

So, there are real implications to the decisions we take in this Legislative Assembly. I know that, yes, we did hear from Air North, farmers and fishers, and surveying companies, prospectors, and adventure tourists saying, "Before you increase our rates from \$2.65 to \$3.11..." — which is what the actuarial analysis suggested — "... please do some more work."

We are doing that work and we will do it. This has nothing to do with our respect for Wildland Fire Management or for Yukon First Nations Wildfire, which we think are absolutely extraordinary and have proven themselves in their service to Yukoners.

I am happy to have this discussion further, but I really don't want to sully this moment because this is an incredible day for

Yukon First Nations Wildfire and I really do commend them for their work.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Land disposition process

Mr. Dixon: It has been well-established that the number of lots released annually is too small to keep up with the demand from our housing market. The result has been a housing shortage. Put simply, we need more lots to be released to builders so that they can build homes to address this shortage. However, when the government announced the most recent land lottery, a detail in the lottery package stood out to many in the homebuilding industry. The eligibility criteria for entering a lottery includes a provision that the lot must be purchased for the construction of a dwelling with the sole purpose of providing accommodation for oneself. In other words, builders who construct homes and sell them into the housing market that is so desperate for houses are ineligible to access any of these new lots.

Several builders have pointed out that this makes no sense. Why, when we're in a housing shortage, would the government make the very people who build houses ineligible to purchase lots?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think it was yesterday when I stood up in the Legislature and talked about the lottery that just opened up late last week. It does include lots on townhouse sites, which are for contractors to bid on. The regulations have always said that, for single-family lots, it is supposed to be for Yukoners to access. Those lots are supposed to be for individuals who would then apply. They almost invariably do hire contractors to build the homes on their lots.

I have heard the same concerns raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I think that it is important to hear those concerns. I reached out as well to talk to the industry. I will have a few more conversations with them, and we will work to try to make sure that there is a balance. We want to get these lots into the hands of people who are looking for a place to live, and we are always looking to improve access to lots.

I can agree here on the floor that it is important that we strike a balance. I look forward to working with the industry to hear their concerns and make sure that the system we have in place is fair for all.

Mr. Dixon: As it stands, the eligibility requirements for this land lottery mean that individuals and businesses that build homes, of which there is a shortage, are placed in a very difficult position; they can either lie or they can find themselves out of work because of a lack of access to a lot to build on. Quite simply, this provision doesn't appear to make sense. It is not clear if this is a new provision or one that has been in place for some time, but it is clear that it needs to be fixed.

So, will the minister agree to fix this eligibility requirement before the land lottery closes on March 28?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I certainly will work on the issue right away. I just said in my previous response — maybe it wasn't heard — that this has always been a provision. We

understand clearly that the way the system has worked is that contractors often get lots of people to put their names forward to try to get access to these lots. Again, there are townhouse lots that are available for contractors. Again, for those individuals who come out of a lottery, they invariably hire contractors to build their homes.

I just want to note that the point here is about making sure that we have a balance and that we are supporting access to lots for all Yukoners. Again, I make the commitment here today that I will work with the department, with those people who want to put their name in as homeowners, and with the industry to make sure that we strike a good balance to have the system working in going forward.

Mr. Dixon: For some homebuilders, whether or not they get a lot in this lottery coming up this spring will mean that they do or do not have work this year, so I implore the minister to speed up his response and ensure that this change is made before March 28.

Last fall, we raised a number of other concerns with the land lottery system. We noted that releasing a very large number all at once and then not releasing any further lots for over a year had the effect of driving up costs in the construction industry. Further, we asked about the impact of the two-year building requirement and called for an overall review of the land disposition process. While we maintain that an overall review of the land disposition process is needed, we do think that this particular issue related to the eligibility requirement in the land lottery needs to be addressed quickly.

Will the minister agree, today, to correct this flaw in the land lottery system before the close of this lottery on March 28?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, what the members opposite said last fall is as follows: "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."

Now what they are saying is, "Hey, hey, hey. Forget those everyday Yukoners. Let's make sure that we get it into the hands of the contractors."

What I am saying is that we are working to make sure that we strike a balance, and at all times, we will work to get as much access as possible. There were concerns last fall that we release lots. There are concerns that we are releasing lots now. I think the point is that we should be releasing lots. It's getting ready for the building season. I am well aware that the situation has been raised and concerns have been raised. I am happy to work with the department, with contractors, and with homeowners or people who are putting their names into the lottery to be homeowners.

By the way, it's a lottery, so we never know who is going to be winning out of the lottery because it is a random draw. There's always a little bit of uncertainty around whose name is drawn for a lottery.

Question re: Fuel prices

Mr. Hassard: So, the skyrocketing price of fuel is crushing Yukoners and pushing them further into debt. On February 23 of this year, diesel fuel was \$1.612 per litre here in

Whitehorse, and today, that price has jumped to \$1.99 a litre. That's an increase of 38.7 cents a litre on diesel in just two weeks. It's clear that this year's budget did not even contemplate this runaway inflation crisis. There is simply no plan to help Yukoners. If the government doesn't adapt soon, Yukoners are going to suffer.

Luckily, it's not too late. The government can still do the right thing. They can drop the fuel tax in the territory and help Yukoners to continue to afford the necessities. The great thing is that they can do it and still be in a surplus, so will the government do the right thing and agree to drop the fuel tax?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I disagree with the member opposite in that there is nothing in this budget that contemplates inflation. Unlike the Yukon Party, which has now just woken up to this, we have been paying attention to these increases for over a year now. This has been going on in our budgets for five years now — making sure we provide a budget that ensures Yukoners have the most affordable lives in Canada. We do, actually, a lot about that.

Now, the members opposite can snicker about that because they really have been checked out on this. As I heard, during the briefings, the Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't even ask any questions on the budget.

We are in a good place right now. We're having huge conversations. We just met with all of the premiers today, talking about inflation and talking about what every jurisdiction is doing. We, right now, have the fourth lowest cost of fuel at the pump compared to the average. We're in a good place right now. We are making endeavours in every department to make sure that lives are affordable for all Yukoners. We're going to continue to do that, whether it's universal childcare, which the opposition will scoff at and laugh at, or whether it's making sure that every dollar of a Yukon-made carbon-pricing mechanism is returned to Yukoners, which, again, the members opposite flip-flop back and forth on, and they don't even know if they actually have a pricing mechanism for carbon as we saw being debated here in the Legislative Assembly this week.

So, we're going to continue to take a look at other jurisdictions. We're going to continue to work with our partners across the nation, and we're going to continue to urge federal government action as well.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and speaking of checked out, the Premier should look in the mirror. We are not in a good place when it comes to fuel prices. The skyrocketing price isn't just making life difficult for everyday Yukoners; it's going to harm the struggling tourism industry as well.

Tourism operators have already started planning and booking based upon a certain price for fuel. Not only that, but our tourism industry also relies heavily on highway traffic. But as we've seen, in just two weeks, the price of fuel has gone through the roof — an increase of 38.7 cents per litre for diesel in Whitehorse in just 14 days is completely unsustainable and it's going to send shockwaves through the economy.

What is the government doing to immediately address this, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Let me correct the record again for the member opposite. He only listens and hears what he wants to hear.

As far as fuel prices, we are very concerned — absolutely. But for the member opposite to say that there is only one thing that we can possibly do to make lives more affordable for Yukoners, I completely disagree with that.

We are working extremely hard on this. We have for five budgets in a row. We have a balanced budget because of that. We've offered some of the best programs for businesses during the pandemic, and we'll continue to be there for businesses.

Regardless of what the opposition hears in the Legislative Assembly, we are concerned; we're absolutely concerned about the skyrocketing costs of inflation — absolutely. It's great that they finally caught up and are starting to ask questions about it. We didn't hear any questions in the fall about inflation, even though in August it was a real concern.

Now, we met just today — the Council of the Federation — to discuss the increasing gas and energy prices that are being experienced globally. We are discussing some strategies that are available to deal with the significant impacts of these prices that have been put on all Canadians, and we're going to continue to explore short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions.

We discussed long-term energy security in Canada. The premiers are very interested in finding ways to reduce the financial burden on Canadians while reducing our dependence on other countries, and we will seek to have more conversations with the federal government about this extremely important issue.

Mr. Hassard: The only person not listening in here is the Premier. We're giving him options. Earlier this week, the Minister of Economic Development said that helping out Yukoners in the tourism industry who are struggling as a result of the skyrocketing fuel prices is just a boutique policy. Well, one local business owner reached out to me after that and said that the minister should pay his fuel bill for a week and tell him that it's just boutique.

The minister's answer doesn't cut it, and it's out of touch with Yukoners. People are in debt, people are struggling, and they are looking for the government to help.

If he needs another example, here it is: On February 23, diesel fuel was \$1.84 in Beaver Creek; this morning when we checked, it had skyrocketed to \$2.35.9 a litre in that community. That's 51 cents in two weeks.

So, will the government stop being stubborn and just waive the fuel tax for a year to help people get by?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker — and “fun with facts” at play here for the member opposite. Certainly, we are focused on making sure that we have a full tourism recovery. I want to thank the Yukon chamber today for hosting our cross-border session. We had members from the federal government, chambers, private sector — I think it's important to let Yukoners know that we're working very quickly and are focused on getting many people across our borders and into the Yukon this year.

I think that people across the world will be making decisions about how they use their vehicles and decisions based on the impacts of the crisis in Europe. It will be a true challenge, but as you've heard from the Premier, we're going to continue to watch and adapt as we go through this.

The point that I made earlier this week, saying that it was a boutique policy item — that was shared with me by a top and leading economist in the country, so I just share that with the House and I think that you will hear many people pass that on.

But again, we are going to continue to have the top programs in the country in place to support tourism. We're seeing great tourism numbers already in bookings. I just came from a meeting with the Yukon chamber, the Whitehorse chamber, and the First Nation chamber, and hotel owners are very excited about the bookings that they have that are going through for the summer.

So, I am looking forward to a good tourism season, and we'll continue to monitor and adapt.

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staffing

Ms. White: It has been four years since the government reluctantly took over the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, and I say “reluctantly” because, even after four years, the government still has no clear plan for what will happen next at the shelter. The staff at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter have some of the toughest jobs in the territory. Every day they act as therapists, custodians, social workers, health care workers, first responders, and more, and every day they show up to work to help people, and yet all of them have temporary or on-call positions.

Can the minister tell workers at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter what her plans are for their future?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased today to rise to speak about the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. The member opposite and I agree that the work that is done there is absolutely stellar. The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter brings a number of services to homeless, or street-involved, individuals. They operate the shelter — it's important for Yukoners to know that it operates as a low-barrier, 24/7 shelter and supportive living program. There are 25 beds available for emergency shelter, with an availability to support up to 30 additional overnight guests in overflow beds, if needed.

There are 20 units, as well, of permanent supportive housing — 19 of which currently have permanent residents in them — and a range of drop-in services for homeless and street-involved adults, including food services and other programming activities. There is currently one of those units set aside for self-isolation, but that is being reviewed all the time. The shelter has recently returned to its regular operations following the measures that were put in for COVID-19. I look forward to continuing to talk about the shelter.

Ms. White: In all those words, we didn't hear about the future of those staff. So, Yukoners who spend time at the shelter have formed deep bonds with workers. The relationships are grounded in trust and compassion, and it goes both ways. These relationships are that much more important, because we are

facing a drug-poisoning emergency. When one of their own dies by overdose, it is incredibly traumatic, not just for the people who use the shelter, but also for staff. As temporary and on-call workers, they are left completely vulnerable — paying out of pocket for clinical counselling, medication, and sick days. They are expected to go back to work the next day like nothing happened. This government has left workers at the shelter overwhelmed and under-supported for far too long.

Why is the minister refusing to fully support the workers at the frontline of the drug-poisoning crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, I think that, despite the fact that the question raises an extremely important issue about workers, relationships, the individuals who get services at the shelter, the operation of the shelter, and the improvements that we must continue to make there, it does not have all the facts correct.

What I can indicate is that the substance use health emergency is absolutely a critical move. It is a call to action for this government, for all governments in the Yukon Territory, and for all Yukoners. Far too many Yukoners are dying from overdoses and toxic drugs in our territory. We need to face this challenge with resolve and compassion. We must end the stigma of substance use so that people can get the support that they need. Some of that support must happen at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and, in fact, does.

The relationships noted by part of this question are of paramountcy to the Department of Health and Social Services. I can indicate that we sent counsellors and support people to the shelter in January when, unfortunately, there were deaths that occurred at the shelter. Fortunately, my friend across the way does not have the market cornered on compassion.

Ms. White: Again, I am concerned, because I am talking about the shelter staff, because they have temporary or on-call positions, yet this minister hasn't once acknowledged it.

Another example that comes to mind is the home care support aide worker at the shelter. It is a temporary position set to end this month. This is a critical position to make sure that people don't fall through the cracks. It helps connect folks to health care, housing, and so much more. This is only one example among many. In front-line work across the territory, from the sexualized assault response team to continuing care homes, it seems that this government would prefer to keep our most important caregivers and first responders trapped in forever-temporary positions. Because of this, turnover is high, and any relationships and skills that are created are lost every time someone leaves that position.

Why is the minister allowing so many of her department's critical workers to remain stuck in auxiliary-on-call and temporary positions?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think what is incredibly important to do is to acknowledge the work of the individuals who have the specialties and the expertise to do the kind of work that is required at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. As the member opposite may know, we have been working extensively with the staff who is at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. We have been clear with them that negotiations and discussions have

been underway to bring in other expertise with respect to how the shelter might be run and how the programs can expand.

We've been restricted, of course, by that through the COVID-19 pandemic and through the restrictions that have been required as a result of the services that could be provided there.

We have many discussions ongoing with the Council of Yukon First Nations, and with other experts in the field, about providing the services going long term. As a result, some of the individuals who work there have employment situations that I'm not prepared to speak about here, that may not be ideal or long term, but we have been very clear that their expertise is not only required, it's absolutely respected and that the work that they do every day is certainly not the work that others in our community can do. Our most vulnerable are served by their expertise.

Question re: Rent control

Mr. Cathers: We asked the Minister of Community Services if he would take action to prevent further evictions by repealing the poorly thought-out rent control policy. During his response, he said: "The rental index is one the other initiatives being taken with the focus on housing in the territory, including working with our partners across governments to increase housing options for Yukoners. We are trying to make Yukon affordable for Yukoners."

But he later contradicted his assertion that this policy helped affordability, saying: "We have shared our concerns about this policy with the NDP. If people are being evicted as a result of this policy, it is clearly not making affordable housing more accessible."

So, does the minister think his poorly thought-out rent control scheme is increasing housing options, or will he now admit that it has, in fact, led to more evictions?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We've heard from Yukoners about the need to work together in this House. That was the outcome of the last election. So, we formed a — we set a confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, and we're meeting the terms of that agreement, as per the signatures on the agreement we have set.

The rental index aims to offer stability in rent for Yukoners over the term of the confidence and supply agreement. Given the rate of inflation, we know that landlords may choose to increase rents as of May 15 by 3.3 percent, which is the rate of inflationary change measured by the consumer price index year over year.

I know there was some confusion in the opposition benches last week, but the actual rate of inflation over the term of the contract is 3.3 percent. That is the accurate number, and we know that you can't really rely on a lot of the things the Official Opposition says, but that is really what the rate of inflation is.

This means an additional \$33 per month where rent is currently \$1,000. We, of course, have heard from the landlord and tenants association about some of the issues with the rent index, and I will address that in further answers.

Mr. Cathers: In December 2020, the Leader of the NDP brought forward a motion about rent control. The Liberal MLA

for Porter Creek South, then-Deputy Premier, strongly denounced the idea of a rent control policy as irresponsible. He was later demoted, but when we warned the Community Services minister about the rent control policy last spring, he said they wanted the rent capped so that the NDP would prop up the Liberals. It sounds like the minister is more interested in keeping his job than in Yukoners keeping their homes.

Since then, many Yukoners have been evicted as a direct result. Dozens of rental units have been sold and permanently taken off the market. Given the harm this policy is causing, will the minister put Yukoners' interests ahead of partisan self-interest and agree to repeal the rent control policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am bit surprised by the assertions of the Member for Lake Laberge. I don't recall he and I having a conversation about the rent index. I know that I have spoken to landlords. I spoke to many landlords last spring, in the runup to putting in the rent index. We worked with our New Democrat partners on this. We knew going into it that there could be some challenges with the program. We decided together to go ahead with it anyway, under the terms of the agreement, and we are living with some of the consequences of that, yes, but we are also seeing some of the positive benefits as well. Rents haven't gone up, and now, this year, landlords can increase their rents 3.3 percent, which is a lagging indicator, of course, but here is where we are.

We are actually addressing the housing issue in the territory, which is actually a national issue, and somewhat driven by our remarkable economic growth in the territory, by building more lots and putting more housing on the market. My colleague, the minister responsible for housing, is doing an exceptional job getting more housing units lined up for Yukoners. That should help the supply in the territory and start to bring down prices for houses and also rental accommodation. That's the approach we took in the last election. That was in our platform document. That's where we are going with it. Our colleagues across the way wanted a rent index. They put that in the agreement; we are honouring the agreement.

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cathers: The minister and some of his colleagues have made it clear that they know that the rent control policy is bad policy. The minister also must know that the policy is hurting Yukon families that have been evicted as a direct result of it. Their confidence and supply agreement with the NDP says that rent will be capped at inflation, but this year, the Liberals capped the rental increase at 3.3 percent when their own website of economic indicators shows that inflation from January last year to January this year was 3.7 percent. Not only did the minister bring in bad policy without consulting, he isn't following the terms and conditions of the agreement. The government has not followed the terms of their CASA in several ways, including missing multiple timelines and doing things differently than in the agreement.

It is not too late for the minister to repeal rent control and prevent more Yukoners from being evicted as a result of it. Will the minister agree to stop causing the eviction of Yukon families and get rid of rent control?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I find the statement from the Member for Lake Laberge remarkable because, just last fall, the Leader of the Yukon Party endorsed the rent index. He actually stood on the floor of the House and agreed to implement it himself for exactly the same reasons. The Yukon Party endorsed the confidence and supply agreement last fall, absolutely and in its entirety — absolutely in its entirety, including the rent index.

I find it a little hypocritical to be standing here listening to the hectoring words from the Member for Lake Laberge when he and his colleagues all endorsed the rent index last fall.

Question re: Mandatory paid sick leave

Mr. Dixon: On February 1 this year, CBC covered the release of the Making Work Safe Panel recommendations. The first sentence of that article summed up the recommendations quite well. To quote from it: “A panel composed of Liberal and NDP MLAs, and members of the public, recommends making paid sick leave mandatory for Yukon-based private employers.” The panel was, of course, co-chaired by the Minister of Community Services, who is responsible for employment legislation. This recommendation has been deeply concerning to Yukon businesses. Many small businesses are struggling to emerge from the pandemic, and this announcement could not have come at a worse time.

Will the Premier agree to change course and set aside these recommendations from his employment minister to impose this massive new cost on small businesses?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is absolutely correct. Through the confidence and supply agreement, we struck a panel to look at making some permanent sick leave provisions for Yukoners throughout the board.

We heard from hundreds of Yukoners through the engagement that we put together. There was a lot of input into the whole plan. We have tabled recommendations to the government, as per our agreement in the confidence and supply agreement, and government is now considering what to do with those recommendations.

I know that there is a lot of concern in the business community. We have heard those concerns. We are actually working with the business community to assuage their fears. We have the recommendations before us. We are considering what to do. The recommended approach was to look at options to go forward on how to actually implement the report. We haven't made those decisions yet, and we will work with business to actually make sure that the recommendations are fair and reasonable, because one of the key pillars of that report was to not cause small business any harm. That was a key part of this whole plan. I know that the members opposite didn't refer to that, and I am happy to talk about this more in future answers.

Mr. Dixon: I would remind the minister that it was him who made the recommendations. I will quote further from the CBC article about the panel's recommendations — and I quote: “In a later press release, the Yukon government explained that the panel's recommendation will work towards a permanent territory-wide program.

“If the recommendations are adopted, the panel hopes the government can make the necessary changes to the Employment Standards Act by September.”

Mr. Speaker, this cannot come at a worse time for Yukon small businesses or our tourism industry. To quote the Yukon Chamber of Commerce in a letter to the Premier last month — and I quote: “... feel like their government is ‘kicking them while they are down.’”

So, we know that the employment minister is 100 percent in favour of this. He has made that clear today. In fact, he chaired the committee that made the recommendations themselves, but will the Premier push back against his minister and stop this massive new cost to small businesses from coming forward?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is important to share with the House the work that was done. There was good work done on this by private sector leaders as well as individuals who are part of the Legislative Assembly — that was step one. My colleague has said to me, because of the role of being chair, that now those conversations and consultations that should happen with the business community really should be led by a different department and minister, and I appreciate that and I believe that is true. The work that we are going to have to do is go out and ensure that we hear from everyday Yukoners as well as business leaders. We have heard comments from the Yukon chamber on this particular note, but also, I have had business leaders reach out to me to say that opposition members had said that this was a foregone conclusion, which is not correct, and I think that this has really caused some challenges and consternation in our community.

So, we're going to continue to listen to business. We are going to go through a thorough conversation. I think it's important to say that the sick leave provisions — I will report to the House — are very important. We are seeing significant uptake at this particular time in our current programs, but we also feel that we have to take a good look at how this program is run and make sure that it's done in an appropriate and credible way.

Mr. Dixon: I think that small businesses can be forgiven for wondering about this when the employment minister himself makes the recommendation to change the employment legislation.

I know that the government likes to remind small businesses that all is well in the economy and that they are doing fine, but we constantly hear from the business community that they are struggling.

In the words of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, they are facing many “... government-led policies, actions, proposals and consequences that are increasing the cost of doing business at a time when many businesses are hanging on by a thread...”

Coming out of the pandemic, the government should be looking for ways to make the lives of our small businesses easier, not finding new ways to impose red tape and increase costs.

Having chaired the committee that made and endorsed these recommendations, we know where the employment

minister stands on this issue — he's full steam ahead. But we are hoping that others in the government will put a stop to this attack on small business.

Will the government agree not to proceed with changes to the *Employment Standards Act* this fall?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We do have an excellent rapport with the chambers — plural — whether it be mining or businesses. We'll continue to work with the chambers, and we'll continue to offer, whether it be through COVID spending or other relief, some of the best programs in Canada. We'll continue with those great partnerships.

I'm just finding it really interesting to hear the member opposite — again, another part of the confidence and supply agreement that the member opposite wholeheartedly endorsed and now he's saying not to do it.

We heard the same with successor legislation. They campaigned on it, and then they criticized it being in the confidence and supply agreement. We're hearing also criticisms today that we need to get rid of more own-source revenue but, at the same time, be less needy toward the TFF.

They can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They can't say one thing and then do another, but it seems that they just keep on doing this. They would say anything to gain power. Going back and forth is completely ridiculous.

The carbon pricing was a great example. Successor legislation is a great example. Now, as they nitpick through all of the confidence and supply agreement provisions that they endorsed and now obviously they — that was, I guess, a tacit endorsement at best.

What we need is real leadership and real confidence, and that's what you're getting here from the Yukon Liberal Party. We'll continue to work with the business community and we'll continue to put budgets forth that make sure that lives are affordable for Yukoners.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 205: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 205, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Today, I rise in support of Bill No. 205, otherwise known as *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*. If passed, this bill will provide spending authority for the first two months of the fiscal year. As with the previous

years, this funding will ensure that the government has the necessary appropriations to the funds, programs, and services that Yukoners expect and that they rely on as well, as members debate the main estimates in the Assembly.

The 2022-23 interim supply bill will grant spending authority to departments for the months of April and May while this process of debating the mains is underway. The total value of the interim supply appropriation for 2022-23 is approximately \$410.7 million. This includes \$321.1 million in operation and maintenance spending, and there is also \$89.6 million in capital spending as well.

The main estimates for 2022-23 show continued investment in key infrastructure and our ability to leverage every available dollar through our positive relationships to deliver on key commitments made throughout the mandate.

It also shows significant progress on key priorities for this government, including advancing work on commitments outlined in *Putting People First* and also in *Our Clean Future*.

Our strategic investments in housing, wellness, education, and infrastructure will combine to meet the needs of our rapidly growing territory and will allow us to continue to invest in our territory's future as well.

This interim supply bill supports government as we begin on this work and provides critical operation funding in order to allow departments to meet their financial obligations at the start of each fiscal year. The bill ensures that government services continue and that employees, Yukon businesses, and government contracts continue to get paid until the 2022-23 main estimates become law.

The majority of the funds include one-sixth of the forecasted budget, as well as large payments due early in the fiscal year for items such as the comprehensive municipal grants, the Yukon Hospital Corporation contribution agreement, the Yukon University contribution agreement, social assistance payments, and funding to manage COVID-19-related expenses.

Yukon's comprehensive municipal grants are paid out on April 1 of each year. This bill will ensure that organizations, corporations, and other levels of government will have the money that they need to fund their operations. It also includes necessary funding for universal childcare and the first instalment necessary for the operation of Yukon schools.

While the numbers reflect more than one-sixth of the government budget, I will explain in further detail how these figures are determined during Committee of the Whole. We expect the *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* to receive assent by the end of the session, which will provide spending authority for the rest of the year.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker, and I will cede the floor to the opposition.

Mr. Cathers: Of course, we recognize that it is common practice for governments to bring forward an interim supply bill to ensure that there is continued spending authority if the budget has not passed by the end of the fiscal year.

I am not going to spend long in talking to this. We will delve into most of the areas regarding spending once we get

into the budget itself. I have also found that, based on past experience when attempting to ask the Premier questions about interim supply, he is ill-prepared or unwilling to answer them, and we have had to raise them again later, once officials are with him in the Assembly.

I will ask about a few areas that touch on matters raised by two of my colleagues earlier during Question Period that we did not really get responses to but which have a significant impact on Yukoners, and that is with regard to the government's vaccine mandate policy that the Premier made a vague announcement about, when indicating that they would be moving away from that on April 4, but that it might still apply in some areas.

When pressed to explain which ones, we haven't gotten a straight answer from the Premier or ministers. As my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — I believe was the one who asked about the inclusion in contracts being issued by government, of the requirement that contractors' staff be fully vaccinated, one question that we have is with contracts that are being enabled by interim supply. If those contracts are being issued either prior to April 4 or in the month of April, will there continue to be a requirement for vaccination of contractors' staff in those contracts?

We are also waiting to hear details on whether all government employees will be able to come back. The Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission had indicated that it might not apply to some employees, such as those in long-term care, I believe he specifically mentioned. We also know — and my colleagues and I have heard from Yukoners who are affected by this policy in areas including people who previously were EMS and fire volunteers who, due to the government's decision to apply the policy to them, we have actually seen some rural communities lose EMS coverage as a result of the vaccine mandate policy. Among the people who have contacted us, I recently heard from a long-time EMS volunteer, who is not continuing to serve at the moment because of a personal decision around vaccination, who is wanting to know if they are going to be able to get back into serving their communities, which he and others want to do. The government still has not provided that clarity, and the gaps in coverage are putting communities at risk so that when someone needs an ambulance, the response may be greatly delayed.

We have also heard from staff in NGOs, as well, who are affected by this. Just as with the initial vaccination mandate, how this applies to allied health sectors is not clear, and as colleagues of mine have raised, we have heard from people who run businesses in those areas who are wanting to understand what the rules will be for them. Again, their attempts to get answers from government are very frustrating. As I mentioned earlier during debate, in one case, I had someone in an allied health sector trying to get answers for weeks. I also raised his concerns that he had raised directly with government in a letter and received a non-answer from government. Of course, we know that it was literally — it was less than a day before the rules came in, late that night before the morning that it took effect, that government actually figured out who it applied to and issued the order-in-council.

So, it's interesting that the Premier is kibitzing off-mic. I know he doesn't like the questions, but there are hundreds of Yukoners who are affected by this policy, and it's really unfortunate that he doesn't seem to think that their concerns are worth talking about. One of the things I'm asking for is just clarity for these families who are affected by it.

I would also note as well, when looking across the country, that one of the questions we get from Yukoners is about how the Yukon is handling things different from other jurisdictions. We see a number of jurisdictions that had vaccination mandates in place for some government employees and have repealed them, such as Ontario, for example, and a number of other provinces that have taken steps down that road.

As well, while British Columbia has kept policies in place, it was interesting, I noted just yesterday, that there was an article in *The Globe and Mail* regarding a letter written by the chief medical health officer of Vancouver Coastal Health regarding that.

I just note for the reference of Hansard, this is on *The Globe and Mail* website. It notes that: "Vancouver Coastal Health's top doctor advised in mid-February that vaccine mandates, passports and segregated lockdowns may cause more harm than good..." and indicated that in correspondence to the president of the University of British Columbia.

It goes on to note: "The position by Chief Medical Health Officer Patricia Daly contrasts with provincial public-health policies that have kept many mask and vaccine requirements in place for the Omicron wave of the pandemic."

The article further goes on to note — it was a letter to the president of UBC from the chief medical officer of Vancouver Coastal Health urging the university to drop its plans to deregister students who refused to declare their COVID-19 vaccination status and that — and I quote: "In her letter to UBC's president, Dr. Daly argued that vaccines are not effective at preventing infection or transmission of the Omicron variant of COVID-19..." and said — and again, I quote from *The Globe and Mail* article quoting the doctor: "Therefore there is now no material difference in likelihood that a UBC student or staff member who is vaccinated or unvaccinated may be infected and potentially infectious to others," she wrote."

It further goes on to note that the letter was signed by the health authorities' four medical health officers.

Now, I would be remiss if I didn't note that, in that, this chief medical officer of health cited a study that has not been formally peer-reviewed at this point in time, but I would note that when the chief medical officer of Vancouver Coastal Health expresses a view like that, it is something that is just one example of chief medical officers of health who are acting in a way or giving advice in a way that is different from what we see here in the Yukon. It does raise questions about that, and those questions deserve answers from government about that.

So, again, I want to note that the study that was cited by the chief medical officer of Vancouver Coastal Health has apparently not been peer-reviewed, but the fact that all four health officers at that health authority co-signed the letter obviously indicates that they believe there is validity to the

concerns in there that the vaccination mandates are creating more harm than good.

I would just ask the Premier, when he rises, to actually clarify who the vaccination mandate is going to continue to apply to after April 4. Or, in light of the moves made by a number of provinces and advice, as I cited in that letter, cited by *The Globe and Mail* from the chief medical officer of health of Vancouver Coastal Health, is the government, in fact, going to consider not having a vaccine mandate in place at all after April 4?

I know that the minister has effectively responded to this earlier, indicating that they will get around to giving an answer, but as we noted earlier, this is something that is affecting the lives of hundreds of Yukoners. It includes employees of the Yukon government; it includes EMS and fire volunteers; it includes people who work for companies that take government contracts; it includes employees of NGOs; and it potentially includes people who work for allied health areas. We again are asking the Premier, for those hundreds of Yukoners and their families, to just provide clarity. Tell us who it will apply to on April 4 or if the government is simply going to follow the lead of a number of provinces and advice, such as that I cited from Dr. Daly, that suggests that the harm of these policies may be outweighing their benefit.

Ms. White: I think it's important to note that the interim supply bill is to make sure that the business of government runs when we do our work here.

During the briefing, I was told that it's 21 percent of the budget. Whatever isn't used in that time will, of course, carry through to the next time. It's important to note that this is the way that the biggest employer in the territory can still continue to employ people and programs can still run.

I look forward to passing this and getting through to the more relevant business of the day.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to my colleagues in opposition for their comments. Well, thanks to the Leader of the Third Party for her comments about the interim supply bill, as opposed to standing on any points of order as the Member for Lake Laberge goes on about everything else other than the interim supply bill — saying things like I'm not prepared to answer questions and then gives a question that has absolutely nothing to do — or a comment about an article that he read by a doctor who finally confirmed his bias. That's great, but we have doctors in Yukon who are part of the CMOH and whom we will rely on. I will even say — another gold standard that we have really great access to is Dr. Theresa Tam and also Dr. Bonnie Henry. It is extremely important to make sure that we do what we need to do to follow the recommendations from locals in these professions.

But I guess the member opposite has found somebody and took one part of an article — one line — and said it about three different times today to confirm his biases — duly noted.

As far as the question about a mandatory vaccination, we have been very clear that this policy was extremely effective back in those days of Delta — extremely effective.

As we said that — and we were very clear on the numbers of the increases in the first shots, second shots, and boosters — the Leader of the Yukon Party dismissed it. I guess the numbers still don't matter for that leader. He underestimated the number of vaccinations that occurred — widely underestimated it — and never corrected the record. Our records are factual. Theirs — it sounds pretty political, if you ask me. The same with the statement from the Member for Lake Laberge. Again, we are providing the strong leadership that is needed throughout this pandemic to keep the economy going and to keep Yukoners safe.

We know that the Yukon Party has consistently undermined public health advice here in the Yukon from Yukoners. They have made it clear that they do not support the recommendations of our chief medical officer of health —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: I think that the Premier is contravening two parts of our Standing Orders — Standing Order 19(i), the use of insulting language, and 19(g), imputing false or unavowed motives to another member. He knows very well that, in fact, we are simply asking questions, not undermining anyone except perhaps the Premier for refusing to answer questions from Yukoners.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I heard was the Premier responding to questions that the Member for Lake Laberge had posed. It was the subject that the member had raised. It was about some health advice from someone in British Columbia. The Premier is responding, talking about the professional health advice that we are given as a government. I think that this is what is being discussed.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order.

Hon. Premier, please continue.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess they can dish it out, but they can't take it. If they didn't pen these letters in the papers, I wouldn't be standing here saying that they are undermining our health care and our professionals here, but they did — they did.

They can't hear it either; every time I talk, they talk off-mic because they don't want to hear this. They want to dish it out, but they don't want to take it. They clearly don't want to take it, and it's a laughing matter to them, too. The man who just asked these questions is over there laughing with his colleagues because they are not taking any of this seriously.

They are not taking the interim supply bill seriously. They don't take the budget seriously or the Public Accounts Committee.

The Leader of the Official Opposition of the Yukon Party sets the date for Public Accounts. They are talking about budgets and finance. They are talking about fiscal responsibility. He sets the dates and then doesn't even go because he is on holiday. This is ridiculous — ridiculous. As they sit here and laugh in the Legislative Assembly, we are taking not only our budget seriously but the inflation that is going on very seriously, the mental health symposium, and the crisis that we're seeing when it comes to addictions. We take this job very seriously, and they are just scoffing off-mic and giving each other pats on the back for one-liners that are funny to them. We are going to continue to do what we are doing over here while they laugh off-mic.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I do my best to try to listen to whoever you give floor to, and there are times when I hear comments coming across that interfere with that ability to hear the person who you have given the floor to.

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

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that there is a point of order. The Premier was kibitzing off-mic while I was talking earlier; another member spoke while the Premier was talking in response to some of the rhetoric that the Premier was using, and it has happened on both sides of the floor. I don't believe that it is actually a point of order, despite the fact that the Premier likes to heckle but doesn't like it when the favour is returned.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, what I heard the member opposite say, off-mic, was to tell the Premier to "grow up". I find that insulting. I think that the Premier probably finds that insulting, so I actually think that this is an example of Standing Order 19(i), and what I really wish is that what we could do is that, when you give the floor to anyone in this House — it doesn't matter which side of the House — that person has the floor and we listen respectfully to that speaker.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Can all members from here on out please be respectful when a member has the floor? Let's please stick to the topic, and let's move forward.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Let me return to answering the member opposite's question that has nothing to do with the interim supply bill.

The vaccine requirements, again, aligned with the steps that we are taking in other jurisdictions right across the country to increase vaccination rates and to combat not only Omicron, but also the Delta variants. As of March 2, about 95 percent of

our public servants had attested to being fully vaccinated, and I want to say thank you for helping to keep our workplaces safe for our employees as well as for those who are accessing our programs and services.

We said this in the past as well. This was a successful, temporary solution to an extremely dangerous international crisis — a pandemic. In doing a mandate, the vaccination requirement that was announced on October 15, 2021 — between October 15, 2021 and February 28, 2022, 3,637 Yukoners received their first dose — an 8.3-percent increase. The second dose — 3,091 Yukoners received their second dose. That is approximately a 7.1-percent increase in the totals that we had before the vaccine requirement. There was a 43.5-percent increase for the booster — 18,989 Yukoners. We said at the time that this is a temporary policy. We also said — the last time that we got together with a press conference with the chief medical officer of health — that it's time; it's time to take a look at the mandate. It's time to take a look at those who are in health care, allied health professionals, volunteers who work inside of our most sacred institutions of health that deal with the most marginalized individuals as Yukoners. We are going to take a look at where a requirement would be important, but we are also taking a look at those who are not necessarily in those fields and saying that it's time — it's time to release this mandate. So, we will give more information on that.

There are a lot of conversations. The members opposite are saying that we haven't been clear, but yes, we have. There are conversations happening right now — conversations with the chief medical officer of health, the Public Service Commission, and Justice. We continue to have conversations with stakeholders right through the Yukon. This is important work. It is really important to understand how to make sure that, as we move forward, we have a health and social services system that continues to provide quality services, but we also have to make sure that the people who work there are safe — vaccinated or not vaccinated. We have to make sure that people are safe in our hospitals, and that's what we are going to continue to do.

The members opposite know that there's a press conference coming. We are going to give more information. We are working diligently to get that information out to Yukoners. We've been very clear on this.

We also know that, in British Columbia, termination happened for those who didn't attest — termination. So, the member opposite can pick and choose different jurisdictions and, if they were in power, what they would be doing as far as certain mandates.

I know that, all along the way, for two years, their opinions on what we should be doing and shouldn't be doing varied widely from medical health professionals across the country. I shudder to think where we would be right now if we didn't follow the science and we didn't follow the advice and make the policies based upon advice of chief medical officers, including Dr. Tam, including Dr. Henry, including our current acting medical health officer, Catherine Elliott, and her dedicated team and Dr. Brendan Hanley before her. That team is very sophisticated and professional.

I guess the Member for Lake Laberge is looking for a doctor outside of Yukon to take advice from to confirm his confirmation bias.

I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for allowing this conversation to continue and for getting us back on track.

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.

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 yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 205 agreed to

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 204, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Hassard.

Mr. Hassard: It is a pleasure to rise again today to continue my response to the budget that was tabled by the Premier last Thursday.

Today, I thought it would be important to reflect on what has been seen by many as a growing attack on small businesses in the territory by this government. Of course, it was discussed somewhat during Question Period today as well.

Over the last few years, we have seen this Liberal government, under the guidance of the recently demoted former Deputy Premier, really bring in more red tape and simply make it more difficult to run a business here in the territory.

We have seen businesses permanently close under their watch. We have seen costs rise. We have seen the government go on a hiring spree and actually start poaching employees from

the private sector. We have seen this hiring spree cause the housing market to skyrocket, and we have seen more and more regulations with little regard for the impact on the private sector.

Like Nero fiddling while Rome burns, the Liberals have sat back and rested on their laurels while hanging their hat on the macro GDP numbers, forgetting that the reason that the macro numbers are good is because they have massively grown the size of government over the last few years. The private sector now has been raising alarm bells about the Liberal government's attack on small businesses.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I'll quote from a February 3 letter from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce to the Premier — and I quote: "We are writing you to lodge concern with the 'perfect storm' that is being experienced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Yukon with a focus on the actions, policies, and proposals by the Government of Yukon (YG) that are crippling business..."

Mr. Speaker, that's the Yukon Chamber of Commerce making it clear that this Liberal government has created a perfect storm that is actually crippling businesses. The letter goes on to list a number of examples of government policies this Liberal government brought in that are hurting those small businesses.

In fact, they indicate that — and I quote: "... many businesses are hanging on by a thread and feel that their government is 'kicking them while they are down.'"

These policies are, of course: the paid sick leave provisions that the Minister of Community Services has endorsed; the growth of government, which we have addressed; the lack of a serious plan to address housing prices; the fact that they have ignored proposals by the chamber regarding more private sector involvement in liquor sales; their decisions to rent dirty diesel generators and jack up electrical rates to pay for it; and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

You don't need to go very far to find a small business willing to tell you that the Liberal government is making their life more and more difficult.

Now, the problem is that this government is either not listening or they just flat out don't care, perhaps even both, Mr. Speaker.

Why would they? They didn't miss a paycheque at all during the pandemic. They didn't have to shut down their bars or restaurants, putting their livelihood on hold for two years. They never had to worry, so why would they listen? That's why this budget was so disappointing to small businesses here in the territory. It was a massive missed opportunity to address issues of importance, such as inflation or support for businesses.

We talked today about the skyrocketing fuel prices. This budget does nothing to address this. Housing prices as well are skyrocketing, and this budget does nothing to address that as well. Food prices are skyrocketing, but there is nothing in this budget. We are shocked to see the budget so silent on these issues. It's not that they just ignore them; it's like the Liberal government didn't even consider them. It isn't hard to see this budget as anything other than being completely out of date before it was even tabled.

Where is the small business relief in this budget? I would like to quote from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in a March 3 press release about this budget that the Premier tabled — and I quote: “The Yukon budget provides little for small businesses hoping to see measures to reduce costs and help with recovery...” This is not really the rave reviews that one would hope for during a time of world economic crisis after businesses have struggled for two years.

Unfortunately, this is because the Liberals and this Premier in particular are so out of touch with Yukoners. That is why I will not be voting in favour of this large but very lacklustre budget.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to once again rise to speak to the 2022-23 budget and the bright future that we are building in the territory.

I want to thank everyone who was involved in the hard work of bringing a budget together this year. Our folks at the Department of Finance, for example, are extremely impressive individuals. They are very professional individuals, deeply caring about the territory. At this time of year, from the variance reports right through to the budget, I don't even know if they sleep. We are very grateful for the work that they've done to bring our vision forward and this plan to fruition. Thank you to everybody in my Department of Finance.

I want to take a moment again before getting into the budget to address the atrocities that we continue to see taking place in Ukraine. This is a more recent portion of Russia's illegal invasion — which, we must remember, started back in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea — now entering into its third week. It was definitely a big part of our conversation today with the premiers. Yukon stands squarely behind those who are affected by the events that are taking place in Ukraine, and we condemn Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustifiable attack on Ukraine.

The Government of Yukon continues to support Ukraine and Ukrainians by providing financial assistance, working closely with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to bring refugees to the Yukon and to use our position as a northern leader to hold Russia accountable in the circumpolar region. Such egregious violations of international law require firm action, and the Yukon, Canada, and much of the globe have definitely stepped up to the plate to support Ukrainians. May we continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, I was elected to represent the riding of Klondike, and since then, I have been very grateful to advocate for Dawson City and the territory at large in this Chamber and throughout the Yukon — and much more often, now that I have become the Premier, throughout Canada as well. We truly do call home the best place in the world, and I know that, despite the differences that we show in the Legislative Assembly, we all do have a deep love for our

territory. We all have a deep love for the communities that we call home.

Over 10 years later, I am still as committed to my community as I was when I first started knocking on doors. So, to my neighbours in the Klondike, I am so very much looking forward to joining you once again in larger numbers out and about in our gorgeous community as we see public health measures being relaxed. To my colleagues here in the Chamber, if it has been a while since you visited the former capital of the territory, I invite you all to schedule a trip to the Klondike — into the summer travels perhaps. Think about that as you look toward your summer plans. If you want a recommendation, I can tell you where to go to get a good meal or even really good, locally provided gifts or even life-changing experiences while you are up there with the folks who do an incredible job in the tourism industry. Please let me know; I would be very pleased to brag about Dawson and our business folks up there, just as I have full confidence that you will be so very pleased if you do the same and come up and see the riding and the amazing folks up there in the private sector.

As I stated last Thursday, budgets are about choices. Our Liberal government has chosen to focus government spending on responding to the needs of the present while also creating strong conditions for prosperity into the future. We are doing that by investing in education; we are investing in health care, and we are investing in social services, housing, green energy, and resilient infrastructure. We are investing in these priorities, and we are doing so to set up Yukon for even stronger, brighter, and more sustainable days, years, and decades ahead — all while producing a balanced budget that reflects the prudent fiscal management that Yukoners have asked and expected of their government.

Unfortunately, some members of the opposition do not seem to be inspired by the news that the territory is thriving and that our fellow Canadians in other territories and in the south would love to be in the position that we are in. The Yukon Party does not seem to be interested in the success of our industries, the resilience of our tourism sector, the vigour of our small businesses, and the resolve of our booming economy — all of which have been demonstrated remarkably through the pandemic and will continue in the next five years. This success is quite literally laid out in paper in this budget. It's too bad that the Yukon Party opposition can't see that.

I spoke extensively last week about how this budget will positively impact Yukoners in the short, medium, and long term. Despite my remarks, there are still many excellent investments in this budget that I was not able to address in a 66-minute speech in the Budget Address. Such is the nature of a 373-page budget that tries its best to express in graphs, projections, and sums — that ink on that page — that the brightest days for Yukon are ahead of us, that the economy is strong and it's the envy of the rest of the country and that our territory is growing and welcoming talented people, creative people, and imaginative Yukoners-to-be and newcomers, in contrast to some other jurisdictions that are fighting to prevent brain drain.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, we absolutely have work to do in the years ahead to ensure that the territory can reach its potential and that our government can fully meet the expectations that Yukoners elected us to achieve. With a record amount of capital expenditures that are identified and with our economy having exceeded expectations throughout the pandemic, the strongest GDP growth in the country in 2020, and the lowest unemployment rate in the country, I think it is exciting. This document is an exciting document and a road map for Yukoners for the years ahead.

Our colleagues across the way have described it as unremarkable, unexceptional, and lacking vision or innovation. They are making comments about the GDP now that they certainly didn't make when they were looking at their forecasts when they were in government. Again, if it's unremarkable and unexceptional — if that is true — then I think that the rest of the country would be thrilled to accomplish and obtain that kind of unremarkable or unexceptional growth, economic outlook, and the budgets that we have been able to present. A little bit of context to the rest of Canada is important as we take a look at our budget.

Yukoners remember what recessions look like and what a time of negative economic outlook looks like. We saw that under the Yukon Party in 2015. In contrast, the Yukon is now — under our Liberal government and the investments that we have made and strong relationships that we have fostered with First Nation governments, industry, and stakeholders — leading the nation in unprecedented growth of not just our territory's population and economy, but also vision and innovation. There is no lack of either on this side of the House.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has spoken about the need to address the impact of inflation and to take steps to ensure that inflation — which often occurs for reasons far outside of any small jurisdiction's control — does not make life unaffordable for Yukoners. I agree with my colleague across the way on that point, but I was disappointed that he did not see how our 2022-23 budget is, in fact, addressing affordability and economic vitality for all Yukoners. This is a budget that invests in affordable housing projects so that Yukoners, regardless of whether they live in Whitehorse or the communities, can access stable, affordable housing.

This budget invests in universal childcare and a territory-wide dental plan for uninsured Yukoners. This budget will help Yukoners mitigate the financial impacts of fighting climate change. People in the north and the south are learning that, thanks to fires, floods, and droughts, the climate emergency is not just a threat to the health and well-being of humanity, but a threat to the pocketbooks of individuals, businesses, and governments in the decades to come unless we mitigate and address climate change. Again, members opposite don't see that in this budget.

There is investment after investment in this budget that work to make lives more affordable for Yukoners, so on the contrary, I would say that this is front of mind for our government and for our departments.

With inflation, supply chain management, and cost of living becoming ever more common phrases around the kitchen

tables over the last few days and weeks, it is really important that every department in the Government of Yukon think very hard about how we can ensure that the actions being taken are making lives more affordable. We have been saying that since day one.

I know, as Premier and as the Minister of Finance, that this is happening. It is not just happening in the Department of Finance; it is happening across the government. I am encouraged by this dedication of all the departments which, together with the strong economic outlook that the territory has, we are being led in a very, very positive direction.

I know that the point that the Leader of the Yukon Party referenced in his speech was a letter penned by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. He shared in this Chamber some of their reactions and observations to the budget, and I welcome that. I thank the member for giving the chamber further time and focus here in this space.

Our friends at the chamber are helping to keep our economy moving forward, and our government has been very proud to support our local businesses with more supports for local businesses, for tourism, and for investments than many other territories or provinces. We have provided more than 500 businesses and organizations with over \$85 million in economic support throughout the pandemic. To me, that is not unimpressive.

I know that, on the website of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, they talked about the core message of this budget being the immediate actions that were taken by myself, the Minister of Economic Development, and the whole team. They go on to say that it's not only appreciated, but it provided a critical lifeline for many Yukon businesses and their employees. They go on to talk about, yes, we are not fully recovered from the unprecedented global crisis and that many Yukon businesses are experiencing a lot of issues because of that.

But they do go on to recognize the positive relationship that we have forged with the business community, with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, with the other chambers. I'll quote: "The Yukon Government has demonstrated time and again over the past year that they want to work together with business to build a more sustainable and competitive private sector."

I don't think the Yukon Party likes to hear that, because they sure didn't mention those quotes.

The Yukon Chamber of Commerce has an extremely important role to play in advocating for the needs of businesses in Whitehorse, just as much as businesses in Watson Lake or Dawson. We are encouraged to read that the chamber is pleased by the budget that we tabled. Our government looks forward to continuing to work with the chamber to ensure that our local businesses enjoy very, very bright days ahead.

Mr. Speaker, almost every Member of the Legislative Assembly has spoken to this budget in the past week, and I thank them for their comments. Most of those in opposition even had some good things to say about the budget. In a time where political rhetoric is steeped in division for division's

sake, I'm glad to hear that our colleagues across the way recognize the good, strong investments that we are making.

The Leader of the Third Party has been clear that the New Democratic Party will support the budget, and I thank their caucus for that support.

Even some Yukon Party members have made some positive comments about this budget. If they look further into the budget, past the speech, I think that they will find some more initiatives and investments that are worth supporting. There are investments identified in this budget for each of the communities that they represent in the House.

Given that the Yukon Party endorsed the confidence and supply agreement last fall and endorsed many of our platform commitments in the last election, I think Yukoners will find that the approach that our government has taken — a moderate yet progressive and financially responsible approach to government — has been prioritized. We prioritize growth. They're going to see that the majority of households and neighbours here in the territory feel that this is where we need to be.

Unlike the Yukon Party, we have been transparent, communicative, and open about important topics that Yukoners do care about, like climate change and the need for a carbon-pricing mechanism that fits a northern reality. The Yukon Party is still fighting among themselves on whether they believe in a price on pollution. It was not too long ago that the Yukon Party denied that human-made climate change was actually even real.

Earlier this week, the Member for Pelly Nisutlin was insisting that the Yukon Party is not supportive of a carbon-pricing mechanism, yet their platform included a carbon-pricing system. It doesn't seem like they can settle on a position.

They have proven to be unreliable on a wide range of issues, and their actions have not given Yukoners the confidence that their approach has changed.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, as I sum up, our modern, progressive, and financially responsible government has presented a surplus budget to Yukoners this year, and because of the Yukon Liberal government that they chose, Yukoners are getting sustainability, they are getting growth, strong leadership, and our territory is experiencing historic economic and population growth, as we work together for brighter days.

With that, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

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, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 204 agreed to

Bill No. 13: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022) — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 13, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is pleased to bring forward the *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)* for second reading.

The *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, often known by the acronym “SCAN”, or “SCAN act”, enables members of the public to file a complaint with the SCAN unit when there is a suspicion that illegal or dangerous activities are occurring habitually on a local property and negatively affecting the neighbourhood or the community. I think that it is important to repeat that just for a second, because all of the elements of this sentence must be dealt with in order for there to be an appropriate investigation and ultimate action under the SCAN act or the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. So, a complaint is necessary based on a suspicion that illegal or dangerous activity that is outlined in the legislation — and known as “uses” — is occurring habitually on a property and that it is negatively affecting the neighbourhood or community. Those are elements of the offence.

The use of civil remedies increases the public's access to justice by providing a confidential and timely means of seeking help for their neighbourhood. The SCAN unit supports community safety by responding to the concerns of Yukoners and investigating and, if appropriate, disrupting activities that are harmful to communities and to neighbourhoods. It is important to note that all SCAN unit activities are initiated by a complaint from an individual, after which the SCAN unit will

assess if the complaint can be substantiated. A SCAN unit will only take action if there is evidence of one or more specified-use activities occurring on the property.

As we discussed during the last Fall Sitting when some additional specified uses were added to the SCAN act, the SCAN act has been in force in the Yukon since 2006 and has never undergone a review. As this legislation empowers the SCAN unit's investigation activities, it is imperative that it reflect the changing needs of Yukon and our communities. During the 2021 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, our government committed to completing a review of the act that would result in a report being tabled here in this Legislative Assembly. This proposed amendment — the one that I am introducing here today in second reading — to the SCAN act would commit the Department of Justice to a review of the act. It will embed that commitment into the legislation.

The review would begin in 2023, allowing the department time to prepare and fit such a review into the work plans of all those who must participate and who might want to participate. I truly look forward to the review of this legislation and to making any improvements that will better serve Yukoners. I believe that Yukoners deserve to live in safe, healthy communities with legislation in place that does, in fact, support this. As such, I am very pleased to bring forward this bill to the Legislative Assembly. I appreciate having the time to introduce it on second reading.

Mr. Cathers: So, in reviewing this legislation, what I would note is that, last fall, there was significant criticism of government levied by us as well as the Third Party for the fact that the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* had been so long without a review. In an attempt to satisfy the Third Party, the minister made a commitment to a review of the SCAN act. Now we see a proposed change to the legislation that really is all about show and optics. The only thing that the proposed change does is to include a requirement, as stated in the bill: "Within five years after the day this section comes into force, the Minister must complete a comprehensive review of this Act and table a report respecting the review in the Legislative Assembly."

That's what the bill says. So, if this legislation passes and comes into force this spring, the government would not be required to table a report following a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* until 2027. To summarize, the minister has committed that a review will start in 2023, which — because of it being after the end of the agreement with the Third Party to support this minority Liberal government — will probably see a new Minister of Justice at that point in time and has tabled legislation that goes five years into the future, at which point there may very well be yet another election. We may have two election cycles before this bill would take effect, so the minister is attempting to bind the actions of not just her successor, but very likely her successor's successor as Minister of Justice, all of which could easily be changed by any government elected — in what will probably be two elections — by a simple amendment to this bill. This is, in effect, really not doing anything except making a show of

promising to review the act and table a review sometime on or before 2027.

By that point, the legislation would have continued to be used for another five years. The concerns that we discussed in the fall regarding its application — both in the previous form and with the troubling provisions included by the minister that would allow the government to confiscate the very same firearms covered by the Trudeau government's infamous order-in-council that were, in most cases, purchased as unrestricted weapons but then reclassified by government as prohibited weapons — any of the provisions of the legislation would not have the comprehensive review on them completed until about 21 years after it came into force, because these commitments to begin a review of the legislation and the contents of this bill itself are really proposals that the minister is trying to make commitments on, on behalf of future ministers of Justice, but are literally doing nothing that actually commences a review here now. So, we do have concerns with it.

I note that we don't disagree with a comprehensive review of the act. I do want to acknowledge and thank officials for the briefing and specifically note that they were acting under specific instructions from the minister. So, I'm not diminishing their work in any way by criticizing the policy direction of the minister and the government, which really is — I am wrestling to find words that would be parliament-appropriate, Mr. Speaker. But really, this is about making a show of commencing a future review well beyond the life of this government. It is really unfortunate that we have seen the government commence with this instead of bringing forward substantive changes or actually beginning the review of SCAN.

Ms. White: I don't think any of my colleagues will be surprised that I disagree with my colleague from Lake Laberge. I do appreciate that this is being brought forward because this is more than a commitment on the floor to say that this legislation will be amended. Again, it was passed and the world has changed significantly since that happened.

I think that, by the time this act gets reviewed and we see what works and what doesn't, it will allow for the next assemblies into the future to decide when that needs to happen again. I do think that this is critical, which is why it was a point for me last fall that the legislation needs to be reviewed. What this is, is that it strengthens that commitment, and unlike my colleague for Lake Laberge, I understand that it can take time. Of course, I am hopeful that it will be faster, but without that discussion, without that negotiation last year, we wouldn't be here now and we wouldn't be talking about a review. So, for that, I am pleased to speak in support, and we look forward to seeing what that review brings forward.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the comments from the other Members of the Legislative Assembly. I appreciate the indicated support from the Leader of the Third Party and

her comments not only today but our discussions previously with respect to this matter.

The accusation from the member of the Yukon Party is interesting. I am unclear as to whether or not the Yukon Party will be supporting this amendment, which will require a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. I have been accused of show and optics — actually, this isn't show and optics at all. What this does is create a law that will be requiring that the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* is reviewed. We are not doing things here in the Legislative Assembly for no reason. We are bringing in the amendment to this piece of legislation that will require that a review is done.

I guess I want to take just a second to also address one of the other issues about future ministers of Justice — not sure what is meant by that, but all laws bind future governments. They are about activities that are required or prohibited or permitted. All laws do that. That is what we are doing here. We are trying to change the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* so that there will be a requirement in that said act for there to be a review.

Also, the member of the Yukon Party's argument assumes that it will take five years to do a review. I think that is a faulty assumption, as noted by the Leader of the Third Party. These kinds of reviews — such work should be comprehensive, it should be precise, and it should be timely.

I have brought forward an amendment to the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* to embed in that piece of legislation the requirement to do this. I look forward to the support from the members of this Legislative Assembly so that this small change can show and embed the commitment of this government to do this work and make it necessary for future governments as well.

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.

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 second reading of Bill No. 13 agreed to

Bill No. 12: *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm pleased to introduce Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, for consideration in the Legislative Assembly.

The *Income Tax Act*, as most folks should know, is the most frequently amended piece of legislation in the Yukon's statute book. This bill represents the tenth amendment in just under a decade. Five of those amendments had been done under our government.

We are proud of those amendments because they have accomplished and delivered on many of our commitments to Yukoners. We lowered corporate tax and reduced the small business corporate tax to zero. We introduced tax changes to facilitate the delivery of carbon rebates to Yukon individuals and businesses. Additionally, we modernized the business investment tax credit. In addition to those substantive changes, each change in the last decade to the *Income Tax Act* usually had a host of technical and administrative changes.

These changes are often necessitated by even more frequent changes to the federal *Income Tax Act*. The governments of Canada and the Yukon have a tax collection agreement — I know that this is riveting stuff — that enables the Canada Revenue Agency to collect, administer, and enforce the Yukon *Income Tax Act* on behalf of Yukon. In return, the Yukon is committed to amending the Yukon *Income Tax Act*, where required and when required by Canada, to maintain harmonization with the federal act with respect to provisions of administration, enforcement, and collection.

Our *Income Tax Act*, which is a relatively short act, references the federal act 260 times. Since 2020, the federal act has changed in several areas through both the federal budget and as a result of COVID-19-specific measures. The continual harmonization of administrative and enforcement provisions is obviously important to the Canada Revenue Agency, as they are tasked with administering and enforcing the act as well. However, it is equally important to Yukon tax filers. If we do not continuously harmonize with the federal *Income Tax Act*, then we create two sets of potentially contradictory tax rules. This could put Yukon taxpayers at risk of being non-compliant with income tax provisions.

Many of the changes being proposed today are housekeeping in nature. I will speak to the specifics of the amendments in Committee of the Whole. At the same time, however, Bill No. 12 does afford us the opportunity to proactively address two other tax-related matters, which I will discuss in turn here.

First, I would like to go back to the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*, tabled as Bill No. 8 on March 11, 2020. Coincidentally, this was the day that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. In that bill, we fulfilled a commitment to expand the business investment tax credit to ensure that Yukon citizens can invest in local enterprise. Our goal was to expand and modernize the credit to increase participation to the full amount of the program. To accomplish this, we changed the annual company application limit of \$800,000 to a rolling limit where any company can apply for up to \$4 million in any four-year period.

This approach recognized the fact that a company's need for capital is rarely an annual event. Prior to the pandemic, we expected that there may be some pent-up demand for our improved program; therefore, we deferred the four-year period limit to not take effect until 2023.

Obviously, the pandemic is ongoing and has been very disruptive to businesses of all kinds. Today, in order to support local businesses, we are proposing to defer that January 1, 2023 initiation of the rolling four-year period condition to January 1, 2027. We remain committed to expanding participation in this program for the benefit of all Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

Finally, Bill No. 12 proposes to amend section 12 of the *Income Tax Act* to clarify and make explicit that refundable tax credits should not impact tax-sharing agreements with Yukon First Nations. Refundable tax credits are essentially program expenditures paid through the tax system. The Yukon First Nation governments that have entered into tax-sharing agreements effectively receive 95 percent of personal income taxes assessed for individuals residing on their settlement lands, which is fantastic. This proposed amendment to section 12 of the *Income Tax Act* is, again, a housekeeping amendment to provide clarity to the Canada Revenue Agency.

I would like to conclude my remarks by stating for the record that these changes, while important, have no fiscal impact for the government and consequently no financial impact on taxpayers either. I look forward to providing additional details on the miscellaneous changes during Committee of the Whole and to a fruitful discussion with members in the House.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier has indicated, as well as the briefing from officials indicated, that most of the amendments are housekeeping in nature. At this point in time, the others that make minor changes don't seem to be having a significant impact, so I look forward to hearing additional bits about this during Committee of the Whole debate. I don't have any additional questions at this point in time.

Ms. White: Today, in speaking in support of Bill No. 12, I thank the Premier for laying out the land as it stands, but we did receive excellent briefings from the Finance department officials. They walked us through how each of these things will work out. They explained that it was in four broad categories and that none of them represented any changes to tax policy or anything that would really affect individuals here, so we look forward to further debate in Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues opposite for their comments. I really do appreciate that they are going to save some of the questions for Committee of the Whole because it would really break Clarke LaPrairie's heart if he didn't have an opportunity to come into the Legislative Assembly and present on the *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*. With that being said, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

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 second reading of Bill No. 12 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): The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 13, *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 13: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to first take the opportunity to welcome here with me today Jeff Simons, the assistant Deputy Minister of Community Justice and Public Safety with the Department of Justice. Thank you for being here. With us here today is Andrea Bailey, who is with the legislative counsel office. She is a legislative drafter with the Department of Justice. Thank you for being here as well.

I want to take the opportunity to say a few words. My remarks earlier, upon second reading — during that period of time, I reviewed the legislative change that we are bringing to the House today with Bill No. 13. The proposed amendment would require that a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* be undertaken by the Department of Justice. My current remarks won't be lengthy, but I do want to address the bill in a bit more detail, as well as the context for this amendment.

To begin, I wanted to note the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* or the reference to the SCAN act and how it allows for the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit, which is authorized to operate under that act. The legislation was enacted back in May 2006 and is administered and enforced by a team of investigators known as the "SCAN unit". The unit responds to complaints from citizens about activities that are having adverse effects on their communities or their neighbourhoods. The act enables the SCAN unit to investigate complaints that are received from the public and to take any action when illegal or dangerous activities are occurring on the property and that those activities negatively affect the neighbourhood or the community, so there are a number of elements to that offence there.

It is important for me to note that the entire process is complaint-driven. It works through civil remedies rather than through any criminal sanctions. I think this is important to note because there were a number of comments when this matter was before the Legislative Assembly last fall, bringing forward questions — I want to be clear — about the criminal aspect of potential activities. This is not what we are dealing with here with this legislation.

The SCAN unit can resolve a complaint by doing a number of things. They can address the problem informally with a tenant or a property owner. They can send a formal warning letter or agreement to cease illegal activities. They can serve an eviction notice if it is issued by the landlord, or they can apply to the Yukon Supreme Court to close the property for up to 90 days through an order sought in that court, known as a "community safety order".

I mentioned that this legislation has been in force since 2006, and since that time, it has not been reviewed. We spoke about that earlier today. In the Fall Sitting of 2021, our government committed to a review of the SCAN act and this amendment would require the Department of Justice to complete that review. It would embed that commitment into the legislation. The SCAN act is an integral piece of legislation that has enabled the SCAN unit to improve and support community safety for 16 years. However, the Yukon has undergone significant changes in the past 16 years, and it is our responsibility as a government to ensure that our legislation represents the modern needs of Yukoners.

Our government has committed to working to make all Yukon communities safer and this is why we have committed to a review of this act. As I said earlier today, I look forward to the opportunity for this act to be reviewed and for improvements to be made, if so recommended on behalf of Yukoners and safe communities here in the territory.

Mr. Cathers: I would just begin by asking, first of all: When does the minister anticipate that this comprehensive review would start?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The review is intended, as I noted earlier, to be comprehensive and to be as timely as possible. I think I noted earlier in my remarks that it would begin at some point in 2023 so that it could be properly worked into the work plans of not only the department doing that work, but of participants who might want to take part in the review.

Mr. Cathers: The minister indicated that, although the legislation says five years, it doesn't mean that it will take that long for the comprehensive review to be done. How long does the minister anticipate that it will take to do the comprehensive review?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The commitment is that the review will be comprehensive, precise, and timely, but also, by definition, a comprehensive opportunity will be given for all those who might want to participate, bring forward comments or views about that, so I'm not going to guess how long that would take. I can tell you that we've had pieces of legislation, in my experience — and the member opposite might have different experiences — that have taken upward of a few years to do. For instance, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

revisions have taken an extensive period of time. There were a lot of people who needed to be collaborated with and partners that needed to work on the matter. I expect that there will be somewhat fewer people to do that, but we will be open to all participants who want to have something to say and contribute to the review of SCAN, so I'm not going to guess how long that might take, but I certainly don't expect it to take five years.

Mr. Cathers: I was hoping for more of an answer from the minister, but I guess that's as much as she's willing to provide at this point.

I will just note that, even for a comprehensive review, five years is an exceptionally long time for it to take to review a piece of legislation. Certainly, most legislative reviews are completed in a far shorter period of time, even with comprehensive legislation. Again, I do question the provision of that, but I guess the minister isn't going to provide a timeline of how long they actually expect the review to require.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I apologize. I don't know if there was a question at the end.

I don't disagree at all that five years would be an extraordinarily long period of time. It's not anticipated that that would take place. The difficulty in committing at the moment is that there is a legislative agenda set.

Conversations and the commitments have been made to start in 2023 based on the current legislative agenda and the workloads of not only the legislative drafters but, in this case, the employees, staff, and experts at the Department of Justice. Of course, there will be outside organizations participating in this as well. Committing them to a timeline would be difficult, but I anticipate, as we have done in the past with other reviews of legislation, that when it begins, it will begin in earnest and we will do our very best to get it before this Legislative Assembly, as required by this amendment, as soon as it is complete.

Ms. White: Just to follow up, when the minister talked about making sure that folks who wanted to participate would, is there an anticipation of what, for example, the communication — I realize that we are talking about something in the future and that we are trying to debate something here with a date that goes into the future, but maybe the minister could elaborate on how people will be reached out to. Last fall, we brought forward concerns of the Anti-Poverty Coalition, Safe at Home, the women's coalition, and others because the populations that they represent are often disproportionately affected by SCAN — if the minister could just let me know how we will make sure that all those organizations will be able to fully engage with the review.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Let me just start by saying that there is an engagement process that our government uses when activities like this are undertaken — reviews of legislation or new legislation or other opportunities where topics are appropriate for engagement with the Yukon public and others. I can indicate that this process would be used, of course. I can also indicate that we would anticipate direct invitations to many, if not all, of the kinds of NGOs that have been noted in the question, such as community members. I can anticipate the RCMP, for instance, and community

organizations that might have views about SCAN and certainly NGOs as were mentioned in the question. I can also anticipate direct invitations to all of them and to Yukon First Nation governments. I happen to know that many, if not all, First Nation governments are very interested in SCAN and the operation of SCAN.

In particular, some have used SCAN and cooperated with the SCAN unit in dealing with some of their properties, so obviously words, advice, and guidance from them would be incredibly important to say how they had that experience and whether it needs to be different.

We would also anticipate a callout to public — for opportunities for the public or others who might not have received a direct invitation to be involved. I can also commit that if, through that first set of engagement, there are organizations or individuals who come to light who we have not managed to speak with, then we would follow up through a second round of engagement to make sure that there is as much inclusivity as possible. Nobody wants to go down the road of doing a comprehensive review like this and miss anything or miss the opportunity for individuals and organizations to participate, so that we end up with the best possible legislation at the end.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, as noted, five years is an exceptionally long time for a review for legislation, and the minister had indicated that they are not even going to begin the comprehensive review until next year. Again, I do appreciate that there are other priorities that the department might be working on, but if this is an important issue — and some of the concerns raised last year regarding the potential unintended consequences of this and the harms that it could have on other people in the household are issues that could continue to occur, there is, I would argue, some reason to actually make this a priority, rather than something that the comprehensive review would not start until after this government is likely no longer still in office, because of it being past the end of their confidence and supply agreement with the NDP.

Certainly, for legislation, I am familiar with timelines that are typical for legislative reviews, and there are many pieces of legislation that go out for public consultation in a matter of weeks or a matter of months. To have a period of years involved really suggests that it is not a priority, and it is certainly possible for legislation to have a review and then have another review, if additional work is necessary. We don't believe that it is appropriate for legislation that can result in serious issues — such as people, based on the civil standard, being prevented from using their homes or property or having things confiscated from them — that it should wait until 21 years after the legislation for a review to occur.

As we have indicated earlier, we do believe that the legislation itself has value and has been valuable, but there is also, as all parties in this House have acknowledged, the potential for unintended consequences from it and unintended harms; therefore, we believe that a review should actually be made a priority, not put on the backburner until 2023, and that it certainly should not have a situation — as envisioned in this legislation, if it comes into force as written — where it would not require a comprehensive review to be completed and reported back to this Assembly until 2027. That report would not require the legislative changes to come forward, too, so that could take even longer. We could easily get into well beyond 20 years after the legislation was changed before those changes occur.

With that in mind, I am pleased to rise to propose an amendment to improve the bill and make this a priority.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be amended in clause 2 at page 1 by deleting the word “five” and inserting in its place the word “two”.

I have the requisite copies of this, as well.

Chair: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by Mr. Cathers, the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be amended in clause 2 at page 1 by deleting the word “five” and inserting in its place the word “two”.

Is there any debate on the amendment to clause 2?

Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, I believe that the amendment speaks for itself. It provides a reasonable timeline for review. I would also just note that, in anticipation of what the minister might say in response, if exceptional circumstances were to develop that delayed a review, just as with the reporting deadline of committees established by this Legislative Assembly, it is possible for the minister to come back and request an extension here.

We believe that two years is a reasonable timeline for the review of legislation if indeed reviewing it is a priority, as we believe it should be.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I think that I will ask for a five- to 10-minute recess so that I can review the idea brought forward by the member opposite and have a conversation with my caucus.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I wasn't aware that the member opposite would be bringing this amendment. He didn't mention it at second reading and hasn't mentioned it to me before. It might be an interesting idea, but I want to be realistic about the

amendments that are being brought to the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*.

I also want to note that the attitude is interesting to me. They don't want to give me five minutes to talk to my caucus, but the Yukon Party government had 14 years in which at no time did they even talk about whether or not SCAN should be reviewed and whether or not they would do it, yet all of a sudden, it is an urgent matter.

I don't disagree that it's an urgent matter. That's why I brought this amendment to the Legislative Assembly, to the floor of the House. I have made conversation and commitments here that I don't anticipate it taking five years, but I want to be realistic about the legislative agenda.

It might be that the member opposite suggests that we would do a quick or a sloppy job in respect to this review, and I think not. I think that a piece of legislation like this — the age of this legislation, but more importantly the effect that it can and does have on communities — should be properly and thoroughly reviewed. As a result, I do not expect that this amendment brought forward by the member opposite is agreeable to my caucus.

Ms. White: As there are three parties that are involved in this decision, I'm requesting an opportunity to discuss it with my caucus. I'm asking for a 10-minute break.

Chair: Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Chair: Is there any further debate on the amendment to clause 2?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I appreciate that this act is an important act. I can say that, when I have met with my own communities, we have talked about the concern, specifically — lately, it's around opioids, but there is a lot of conversation about the importance of this act.

We have talked about some of the challenges that the act has faced in terms of acceptance. One of the things that I think it is important to do is, for all pieces of legislation, to take the time to look at the act and make sure that it is achieving what it needs to do as best as possible. In this situation that we have in front of us, with the act as it reads, there is the intention to begin that review right away and, in order to do that review, we are trying to give it enough time in case it takes that time. I think that I heard the minister, when she spoke even at second reading, talk about the importance of trying to do it as diligently as possible, but what this amendment would do is that it would bind in a way that may not make for success in that review. The challenge that I have, as we bring forward an amendment like this, is that, even with the intention that I hear in the amendment as it is proposed, it is trying to get to an outcome sooner. However, if that outcome is not as well done, then the challenge will be that the act remains without that diligence.

In my experience with the public service, they work very hard at trying to do these reviews. There are challenges around them, and I think that we should have more trust in the public service to do its work, to work with the public, and to allow there to be a focused review on all of the issues that exist under the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*.

What this amendment that is in front of us could have as an unintended consequence is that the review would be not as deep and not as able to make significant recommendations for the improvement of the act.

I just suggest that we should allow for the act as it stands and not support the amendment but, of course, take the feedback that the members opposite have that, if it is possible, to do that review in a shorter period of time and still do it well, but not to bind the public service and the public with that feedback.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is a very important bill. We all know that. It has also been a contentious bill and we totally understand the need for a five-year review.

Again, this is an amendment on the fly. It's a hostile amendment brought forward by the members opposite to prove a point. I know that they are smarting from what happened yesterday. I get it that they are flexing their muscles, but we have to think about what is really at stake here, which is an adequate, measured, and thoughtful approach to this piece of legislation to make sure that it is properly reviewed.

Right now, we are in the midst of a number of different crises, and I think that it is reasonable to say that we have five years to perform this review. I know that we have been in conversations with the Third Party on this matter. We don't even have the ability to contemplate the implications of this amendment that was made fast and loose, on the fly, as is normal by the members opposite. The Member for Lake Laberge is a legal enthusiast but has proved his inability to draft legislation properly.

I really have some real problems with the amendment as proposed. I think that, for the sake of the community at large on such an important piece of legislation, we really should do our best to give the review time enough to get it done properly. I know that the members opposite don't think these things through this way. They just like to react or do things without any thought of the implications to the civil service, to the piece of legislation ahead of us, or to society as a whole. There is little consultation. They don't consult with First Nations, they don't consult with communities, and they certainly haven't consulted with us or the Third Party in making this amendment today. They are just deciding on the fly that this is something that they want, so they are flexing their muscle.

I can understand that, but I don't think it makes for good policy. I don't think it does this House any service when they do this and put a real stress on the civil service, which has been working so very, very hard through this pandemic to deal with so many different crises, and yet here the Yukon Party is again showing utter contempt for the people who are keeping this territory moving. They are serving the public in so many ways, yet they just can't —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The Member for Whitehorse West has been on one of his more notable tirades in contravention of

Standing Order 19(i), using abusive or insulting language. He is also contravening Standing Order 19(g), imputing unavowed motives to another member in suggesting that any member of our caucus is insulting the civil servants who are working on this.

Madam Chair, I would urge you to have him rein in his comments and perhaps actually talk about the matter that is in front of us, which, by the way, would be Standing Order 19(b).

Chair: Mr. Streicker, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Standing Order 19(i) says that we should not use insulting language, including sexist or violent language. So, talking about other members having contempt is saying that they are not being respectful of the public service.

Chair's ruling

Chair: In raising a point of order, I ask that members not characterize another member's debate as a tirade.

I believe this is a dispute between members. I will review Hansard and return if necessary.

Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate your thoughtfulness on this matter, Madam Chair.

As I was saying, the Yukon Party opposition, with this motion this afternoon, is showing contempt for the civil service, which has been working so very hard through this pandemic to keep Yukoners safe. They actually deal with so many different legal matters.

To then force them to go from — you know, we're not even out of the pandemic yet, as a matter of fact — and then to force them to go in and do a full review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* within two years is just, well, frankly, cruel and unusual punishment.

We have said that we are in support of a five-year review of this piece of legislation. I think that's fair. We are certainly agreeing to put in a review. I know though for a fact that what we're talking about is a review of legislation. In that spirit, I will say that I know for a fact that the Yukon Party failed to do legislative reviews of their legislation when they were in office. So, it's sort of laughable that they would be trying to force a two-year review on us on the fly with no consultation, when they themselves flouted the law on reviews with such gusto.

So, I really think that this is, again, a bit of sour grapes. They're smarting from their debacle that happened yesterday, and so this is their way to try to make sure that we put through a very quick, without any consultation again, amendment to the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* — again, a piece of legislation that is supported by Yukon First Nations. They probably would not know that, because they don't tend to talk to First Nations about how important these pieces of legislation are, but we do, and we know how important it is. We know that they want this piece of legislation. In fact, they — so, this is part of the whole package we're seeing here.

I really think it behooves us to do the right thing and to do a much more measured and reasonable approach to this piece of legislation, which would be a five-year review.

That's where we are today. I think I look forward to anybody else who might have thoughts on this matter.

Ms. McLeod: Well, obviously, I want to thank the minister for sharing his thoughts on the opposition parties, but I think — I think the government has forgotten the intent of this piece of legislation. It serves the people. It has nothing to do with the civil servants or the government members or the opposition members. We are here to serve the people. It wasn't that long ago when it was the talk of Whitehorse that this bill was being misused to eject people from their homes.

So, I know that my community has some problems with this bill and its application. So, to say to them that they should relax and trust us, that we will get it done in five years or sooner, if we can manage it — it just isn't good enough — I'm sorry.

So, I think that you all need to step back and remember who is affected by this bill and give that just a little more thought. This isn't about: Did we notify you about the amendment? Perhaps the government should have thought a little more closely about how long five years is to people. It is a long time to have a problem with a bill.

So, I am going to end my comments there. I just want to remind the government who they serve.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that what we have done is we have gone through a process in the fall really around this legislation, and it was focused on the fact of what we have heard from our community members, really about making sure that we have safe communities, as well as from a number of First Nation leaders — conversations that came up over and over again in multiple Yukon Forums — and it was focused on the fact that this was a strong piece of legislation. Earlier today, we talked about the fact — and I think that the Leader of the Third Party spoke eloquently to the fact that the mechanism, although within a five-year period, could be triggered previous to that.

So, when we look back at the historical nature of legislation, previous to the last mandate, what we have seen is a tremendous amount of work that we have had to do to ensure that the legislation that was passed under the previous government then had the right tools in place. In most cases, that meant that we had to have the regulations that accompany those pieces of legislation put in the toolbox, so to speak.

I think that our people within the Department of Justice have done an incredible job. We have not only asked for them to play catch-up on years and years of legislation — a great example would be the *Condominium Act, 2015* — which we have asked them to essentially go back and look at that original piece of legislation and come back to make sure that it could be put in place in a way that could work for a modernized real estate market and to ensure that it was something that could work for Yukoners.

Over and above that, we just went through two years of a pandemic where, as it pertains to CEMA orders, we were also in a position where every time that we worked on a particular order, the department would then have to go back, confer with multiple departments and, under amazing stress and pressure, bring that to light. We have asked for so much from these individuals.

Now, luckily, we are in the midst of coming out of the pandemic. We are going back to the work that we had to do and trying to play catch-up on regulations. Again, we are now asking that, in 24 months' time, we will have to come back to do this work. We are talking about the people, and the Member for Lake Laberge always likes to — we didn't get a Magna Carta reference today, but certainly we usually do. I think that, in this particular case, what we are talking about is making sure that we do legislation for the right reasons. When you go back and you are quoting something from 1210 or 1250, and the beginning of this — maybe we could go back to Hammurabi's Code too. But what we are talking about is building good legislation and good regulations.

I think that it is pretty obvious to see today that we are here today because of yesterday. I think that what we watched yesterday was a flawed attempt to bring forward a piece of legislation. I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition did a good job and, under a difficult position, with grace, brought in an amendment —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Point of order, Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: Under Standing Order 19(b), the minister is certainly not speaking to the question under discussion. He has gone off the road and hit a ditch again. I would urge you to remind him to actually talk about the topic, which is not just the SCAN legislation, but a proposed amendment to clause 2 of the SCAN legislation.

Chair's ruling

Chair: I ask that members please stay focused on the topic.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am simply just trying to speak to the policy and what the catalyst was for this policy decision for the work on the amendment today. Again, I think that it was a policy tow truck that was trying to get yesterday's legislation back out of the ditch. That's fair. We can move on.

Again, we can have discussions before we come in here during the day. We can talk about why we need to make certain changes. In this particular case — you heard from the Minister of Justice — we have the opportunity to go back and to do a review before that five-year mark. Really, the five-year mark is quite standard.

In successor legislation that was written under the previous government, such as the forestry act — that was a standard piece that was put in place. If we go back and we think about — even things like the work that we have to do with First Nation governments — say, the chapter 22 — it was a five-year review. This is a standard clause.

Today, I don't think that it's appropriate for us, without even getting into the reasons — I think that they are very obvious to everybody in this room and they are very obvious to all the public servants who are listening today — why we are

where we are. I don't think that it's a good use of time for the public and the public dime.

With that, I'll end, but I really hope that we can just continue to move on and make sure that we get the work done that we set out to do today.

Chair: Is there any further debate on the amendment to clause 2 of Bill No. 13?

Shall the amendment carry?

Some Hon. Members: Count.

Count

Chair: A count has been called.

Bells

Chair: All those in favour please rise.

Members rise

Chair: All those opposed please rise.

Members rise

Chair: The results are seven yea, nine nay.

Amendment to Bill No. 13 negatived

Chair: Is there any further debate on Clause 2?

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 12: *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's my pleasure to be here speaking to Bill No. 12, otherwise known as the *Income Tax Amendments*

Act, (2022). I'm very honoured to be joined here today with Clarke LaPrairie from the Finance team. Thank you very much for being here today, Clarke.

As I indicated in the second reading, the *Income Tax Act* is a living document. Unlike most statutes in the Yukon statutes book, the *Income Tax Act* is updated on a nearly annual basis. Our *Income Tax Act* and its federal equivalent do essentially the same thing.

For individuals, corporations, and trusts, they define what is income, what deductions are allowed before calculating taxes, and what credits can be applied against the resulting taxes. Both acts also deal with matters of administration, enforcement, and compliance.

Now, despite doing almost the same thing, our act is 77 pages long, and the federal equivalent is 3,304 pages long. That's almost 43 times longer, Madam Chair. Just because you asked me to make this interesting, I'm giving you some good stats.

How do you explain the legislative alchemy? Well, our act, like most provinces and territories, is heavily dependent on the federal act to define many aspects of tax legislation and focuses itself on eligibility and then the application of Yukon-specific rates. In an attempt to avoid the duplication, our act refers to the federal act, as I mentioned earlier today, almost 260 times.

If you consider, for example, the medical expenses credit, that credit would exist in both acts.

Our credit takes up to two paragraphs of the act, one of which is a single sentence long. To simplify, it says that if you qualify for the federal credit, you would get an equivalent Yukon credit, to which Yukon rates would apply.

The federal medical credit section of the federal act runs 19 pages, as Canada has to define all of the complexities of what qualifies as a valid medical expense, so you can just imagine. Given the length and comprehensive nature of the federal act, as well as the dependence of our act in remaining harmonized with the federal counterpart, one can see that frequent federal changes often necessitate corresponding Yukon changes.

The Government of Canada and the Yukon have a tax collection agreement that enables the Canada Revenue Agency to collect, administer, and enforce the Yukon *Income Tax Act* on behalf of the Yukon. In return, the Yukon is committed to amending the Yukon *Income Tax Act* when required by Canada to maintain that harmonization with the federal act.

For our part, the agreement with Canada requires Yukon to make amendments to the *Income Tax Act* from time to time on a best-efforts basis. What are best efforts? Well, as the phrase implies, it is a very high legal standard for this kind of agreement. It's a more onerous standard than other standards such as reasonable efforts used in other bilateral agreements. In practice, that brings us to today's bill, which satisfies these requirements of a very high legal standard for types of agreements such as this.

I will shortly go through in detail the specifics of the federal changes, where the catalyst is for this bill. First, however, I do want to point out that we are taking the opportunity, while presenting this bill in the Legislature, to also

make several housekeeping changes to our act, in addition to those that are being required by Canada. Additionally, we are taking this opportunity to provide yet another form of indirect COVID-19 supports in the Yukon.

So, this bill is divided into two parts. I will start with part 2. In the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*, we fulfilled a commitment to modernize the business investment tax credit. One of the improvements included sets a new limit for how much a company can raise under that credit. Under this new limit, a business could raise up to \$4 million in capital through the program in any four-year period. Prior to that act, there was an \$800,000 annual limit, and this approach would recognize that raising capital, as we said earlier, is not an annual event, and it was time to take a look at that again, based upon the sophistication, as well, of some of our homegrown businesses here in the Yukon. Prior to the pandemic, we expected that there would be some pent-up demand for the enhanced credit, and we wanted to also increase awareness of the program.

This is why we temporarily deferred the introduction of the rolling four-year-period criteria, and that was to allow for a greater amount of capital to be raised each year. The *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020* deferred the four-year-period criteria to 2023. That allowed businesses to raise \$4 million each year until that coming into force date. Madam Chair, those plans were tabled in the shortened session, as you remember, just before a global pandemic was declared.

As we all know, a lot happened in the last two years since the pandemic began. Different businesses have been impacted by COVID-19 in different ways and to differing degrees. Some of them might have had opportunities or plans to expand previous to March 2020. They might have had to take some of that preparedness into a different direction, due to the devastating impacts of the pandemic.

So, that is why, in order to support local businesses whose plans to raise capital were disturbed by the pandemic, we are proposing to defer the affected date for the modernized rolling limit out to January 1, 2027.

The second part of Bill No. 12 accomplishes this by amending the coming into force provision of the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*.

I will now discuss part 1 of Bill No. 12, the *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, which amends the Yukon's *Income Tax Act*. Before I begin there, I want to point out that these administrative amendments, while important, are not fiscal in nature, meaning that they don't impact any of the revenue the government will receive, nor do they have any impact on the amount of taxes that have to be paid by taxpayers.

I will go through and explain part 1 in the order that it presents itself in the bill as we read along.

The first section of the *Income Tax Act* to be amended is appropriately section 1. This is the section that deals with interpretations. More precisely, we are amending a portion of paragraph 1(7)(j). Paragraph 1(7)(j) is a substitution table to be used whenever our act directs the reader to read a federal section as if it were part of the Yukon's act.

One would read the relevant federal section keeping in mind the substitutions in this table. This paragraph is being

revised, and it will allow another provision in our act, or regulations, to override the paragraph and therefore the use of a substitution table.

This consequential amendment is needed to support revisions to the amendment of subsection 6(49) of the act, which I will discuss shortly.

The effective date of this change will be January 1, 2022. Again, this is the same date proposed in the amendments to subsection 6(49). I will discuss the rationale for that date when it gets to that section of the bill.

Next, section 3 of the bill amends section 4 of the act. This is an ordering provision for personal income tax credits. These provisions specify the order in which various provisions of the *Income Tax Act*, such as deductions and credits, are to be applied when calculating an individual's tax liability for the year. Effectively, these ordering provisions are mainly relevant to the minority of taxpayers who do not need to use all of their credits in a particular year to bring their taxes payable to zero.

We are also proposing the removal of the reference to section 14 of the act, as that section has been repealed.

In addition, we're proposing to add a reference to section 12, which deals with the First Nation income tax credit. The intention of this amendment is to better articulate what has been more of an administrative practice for the last 30 years, which is to ensure that the First Nation income tax credit is included in the proper order when calculating an individual's tax payable.

We're now moving along to section 4 of the bill. This section proposes to amend many of the administrative aspects of section 6 of the *Income Tax Act*. Moving to section 6 of the bill, we are proposing to amend subsection 6(49) of the act. Subsection 6(49) incorporates federal section 120.4 in our act. So, federal section 120.4 deals with tax on split income. So, tax on split income is a concept that you're all probably very familiar with — or maybe not. It might not be familiar to everyone, so bear with me. I will attempt to explain what tax on split income is prior to explaining why and how the related section of the Yukon *Income Tax Act* is changing.

So, split income involves allocating the incomes of a business, often a small business, to various members of a family. The types of income that can be split take various forms. The two most common forms are salaries and dividends. The tax on split income rules are complicated and are meant to avoid aggressive tax avoidance strategies by the tax filer.

Basically, if any split income is deemed by the rules to be beyond what is reasonable for one's involvement in the business, then the top marginal tax rate will apply for the portion of the income subject to the tax on split income. Some of the rules have been in existence for a long time to deal with splitting strategies, such as paying large dividends to minors, for example; however, in 2017, as you recall, Canada significantly tightened the various rules to subject more distributed business income to that tax on split income.

Subsequent to those changes, the Canada Revenue Agency reviewed the related sections in every province's and territory's income tax acts. With the possible exception of British Columbia, they noted a problematic, but not common, area in

most income tax acts. In the scenario where the business owners live in the Yukon and the family member receiving split income lives somewhere else in Canada, there should be a provision in our act to attribute that tax back to the territory. The amendments in subsection 6(49) in paragraph 1(7)(j) are modelled on British Columbia's *Income Tax Act*, which directs the split income back to the source jurisdiction — in this case, the Yukon.

I will now move on to an amendment to clause 6(54)(b)(ii)(C), which proposes to correct outdated references to the federal subsection 110(1). This change is related to foreign tax deductions that are attributed to Yukon taxpayers for foreign stock options by referencing the correct and updated sections. They are of a housekeeping nature.

We are committed to strong and positive government-to-government relations with Yukon First Nations, so let's turn our attention to section 4 of the bill, which amends the First Nation tax credit to ensure that we are living up to our tax revenue sharing commitments with Yukon First Nation governments. The Yukon territorial government effectively shares, as I said earlier today, 95 percent of the personal income tax collected on settlement lands with 11 of 14 Yukon First Nation governments. In the 2020 tax year, the value of the sharing is estimated to be approximately \$3.4 million and is based on residency of Yukon First Nation settlement lands.

Before explaining the amendment to section 4, it will help if I explain how these tax-sharing agreements with Yukon First Nations are administered in practice.

So, every year at tax time, individuals who are residing on settlement lands calculate their First Nation's tax credit, which is equal to 95 percent of the tax that they would otherwise pay to the Government of Yukon, and this credit serves two purposes. First, the amount of the credit becomes the amount of tax that they must pay to the Yukon First Nation governments. Second, the credit reduces the amount of tax that they must pay to the territorial government by the same amount that is paid to the First Nations. As you can see, the credit effectively transfers 95 percent of an individual's tax to the Yukon territorial government to the Yukon First Nation governments. Now, importantly, the value of the credit determines the amount of tax that is shared with Yukon First Nation governments.

A review by the Canada Revenue Agency in 2019 indicated that section 12, which determines the First Nation's tax credit, was ambiguously written. So, we attempted to clarify section 12 through the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020* by creating a new subsection, so that is subsection 12(1).

The intention was to clarify that the amount of tax to be shared with Yukon First Nation governments should not be impacted by refundable tax credits. Refundable tax credits are Yukon government expenditure programs paid through the tax system for administrative efficiencies, so it wouldn't be appropriate to deduct this amount of credits from the amount of tax shared with Yukon First Nation governments.

I will stop there, seeing as I am running out of time, Madam Chair. Seeing the time, I would also move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike 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: 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. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

In addition, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, 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: 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 papers were tabled March 10, 2022:

35-1-40

Child Rights Impact Assessment – Bill No. 11, Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022) – Child and Youth Advocate Office and Child Rights Impact Assessment of Bill No. 11, Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022), letter re (dated March 10, 2022) from Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (Speaker Harper)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 48

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, March 14, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 14, 2022 — 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: Before we begin the proceedings, the Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion was not placed on the Notice Paper as the action requested in the motion has been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 309, notice of which was given by the Minister of Community Services.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Public Libraries March Break Take 5 program

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise to tribute Yukon libraries' March Break Take 5 program, which runs until March 31 at participating libraries around the territory. We are fortunate to have a public library in most of our communities — 15 across the entire territory. Yukon public libraries are continually coming up with fun and informative programming and events for children and adults. During the March break, kids are looking to be entertained and have fun. Mr. Speaker, they don't have to look very far. As well as at participating libraries, the activity sheet can be downloaded from yukon.ca/libraries.

March Break Take 5 is a free, self-led activity and contest for Yukon children and youth. Read, move, make, care, and learn — participants just have to complete at least one activity in each category. For instance, read a new chapter of a book, picture book, or comic book or read aloud to a family member or pet. Move — play a sport or build something out of snow. Make — cook or help cook a meal, or make some art or music. Care — do something good for the planet, or do something nice for a pet or family member. Learn — try something new, learn a new word or phrase in a Yukon indigenous language, or set a goal and write it down. When they return their sheet with at least five activities completed before April 1, they will be entered into a random draw to win one of five \$25 local gift cards. For those who complete the entire sheet of activities, there is a chance to win a grand prize — one of two \$75 local gift cards. As I said earlier, it runs out on March 31.

As always, anyone who needs more information can e-mail the Whitehorse library at yukon.ca or call 867-667-5239, or visit yukonlibraries.ca/libraries or yukon.ca/libraries for more information. Participants are asked to ensure that they have permission from a parent or guardian to do these activities,

including the use of tools, equipment, or the Internet. You can also visit Yukon Public Libraries' social media accounts to interact with library staff and find out about programming and services.

Beyond borrowing books, these public libraries allow Yukoners to access learning opportunities, work spaces, and meeting rooms and make connections within the community. I am truly amazed by the passion that Yukon library workers put into their communities.

I welcome all Yukoners to visit their local library anytime — March break or any other time of year.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Yukon Public Libraries for their work in keeping young learners engaged and inspired during their time away from school with their March Break Take 5 activities.

Children are asked to log their activities this spring break in true bingo style — under five categories, each of which get the kids moving, thinking, and doing in a different way. “Read”, “Move”, “Make”, “Care”, and “Learn” are the categories. Most, if not all, of these tasks will be fun for kids and allow them to get the most out of their spring break. Of course, this is an opportunity for parents to have the kids help with household chores, help cook a meal, read to a sibling, or do something nice for the family.

This program includes some pretty fun tasks. Some are aimed to get kids moving and thinking. Others bring out creativity and thoughtfulness. Remember to submit forms to your local library by April 1 for a chance to win a prize. There is a prize for those who complete one task in each category and a grand prize for someone who completes all 20.

Thanks again to Yukon libraries. We encourage all families to get involved.

Applause

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP shares the enthusiasm of our colleagues and the territory around reading, activity, and libraries. Libraries — we love them. Their fantasy-filled space is open to everyone in the community, a place to take a break from the stress of life or study for an upcoming midterm, a place to meet new friends, explore new worlds, or simply get out of the cold for a little while.

Libraries are a centrepiece in any community where parents go for a much-needed break while their kids socialize, learn, and play, where travellers can connect with home, and everyone can let their imaginations go wild.

Shelves are overflowing with knowledge and the art of generations, taking us to faraway places, teaching us about the past, the present, and what could be in the future. Books teach us lessons on how to interact with each other and how to be ourselves. Books teach us about love, about acceptance and our differences. We don't need to look far to learn about the power of reading with a child and how it can lead to lifelong learning.

This year's March Break Take 5 challenge from the Yukon libraries is a delight. Asking young people to complete one

activity in each of the five categories for a chance to win a prize or, for those who are truly ambitious, completing all 20 activities for a chance to win the grand prize is so much fun.

Thank you to those who dreamed up this adventure, which encourages reading, moving, making, caring, and learning. Thank you to our librarians and everyone involved, ensuring that these special places will be here for generations to come.

Applause

In recognition of Pi Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Today is Pi Day, March 14 — or, as one local teacher called it, “the ideas of March”.

Pi Day is a day for lovers of math — “philomaths”, some people call them. I call them “awesome”.

Pi Day is a day to celebrate numeracy, the ability to understand and work with numbers. Math is so important for students — and adults, for that matter — for everyone. Math helps to unite us to understand the world around us, from the simple to the sublime.

Given that this is a tribute, let’s have some fun with numbers. When I say “fun with numbers”, I do not mean that phrase in the pejorative sense where people mislead with fancy statistics. For the record, it’s the people part of that equation that usually goes sideways.

No, I mean let’s take a minute, or 3.14, to celebrate math and numbers in the pure sense of exploration and wonder. Let’s begin.

In this Legislature, we have one Speaker, 18 MLAs, three clerks, and one Sergeant-at-Arms, for a total of 23 people. Even though there are 365 days in a year, the odds are just better than 50:50 that, with 23 people, there are at least two people who share a birthday. My birthday is 10/27/1962.

Pi is a transcendent, irrational number meaning that the digits go on forever and ever without pattern — 3.1415926 — and this, in turn, means that you can eventually find all patterns of numbers in the digits of pi as it stretches out. For example, you can find my birthdate at position 5,338,294, and it can be found an additional three times in the first 200 million digits of pi.

Our first record of pi dates back about 4,000 years. To put this into context, infinity appeared in math about 2,500 years ago. Zero, the reciprocal of infinity, arrived about 2,000 years ago. Our modern decimal numbering system is even more recent, arriving from India via Arabia.

Archimedes, one of history’s most acclaimed mathematicians, was the first to estimate pi to two decimal places, 3.14. At the time of the gold rush, pi was known to more than 500 decimal places. When I was born in 1962, it was more than 100,000 decimal places. Today, we know more than 68 trillion digits of pi, which, if printed, would fill all the shelves of the 15 Yukon public libraries many times over.

By the way, at the time of the gold rush, the Indiana state legislature introduced, and nearly passed, a law stating that pi should be 3.2 — full stop. I’m happy to report that, in the end, the geeks won that day.

Pi Day is the International Day of Mathematics. The theme for 2022 is “Mathematics Unites”.

The beauty of math is that you can go from zero to infinity in a blink — faster than the speed of light squared. From beatboxing to the beating of hummingbirds’ wings, from fractals to fusion, from commerce to comets, from parables to paradoxes, from “time flies like an arrow” to “fruit flies like a banana”, numbers are the truth and mystery beneath it all — from simplicity, complexity, and beyond, in 3.14 minutes.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party to pay tribute to Pi Day.

Today, across the world, people are baking pies and sharing math facts, and it is a delight to see. For many of these people, their enjoyment of pi and math started with a teacher — a teacher who worked hard and creatively to make math fun — so today I would like to thank those educators.

Learning about numbers and number concepts starts very early, so I would like to start by thanking the early childhood educators who encourage their students to explore the world and to engage with a sense of wonder as they learn about counting and measuring. Then there are the elementary and high school educators who gave their students the tools they need to understand everything from carpentry to finances to baking. To all of these educators, know that the work that you do is so valuable, and thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a document that shows the Yukon Party leader’s tacit support for rent indexing as part of our confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party.

Ms. White: I have for tabling an article from the *The New Yorker* dated November 8, 2021, entitled *What It’s Like to Fight a Megafire: Wildfires have grown more extreme. So have the risks of combatting them.*

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move:

THAT this House congratulates Yukoner Graham Nishikawa on his guiding of Canadian Paralympic legend Brian McKeever during the 2022 Beijing Paralympics.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the Yukon Energy 10-year renewable electricity plan as endorsed by all parties during the 2021 election.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make emergency texting services, such as “TEXT with 9-1-1”, available in Yukon.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community safety planning program

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to rise today to speak to an important step forward in making Yukon communities safer. Yukon First Nation governments, organizations, and citizens have been working very hard to address safety issues in their communities and they have expressed a need for a structured and dependable community safety planning program and funding that will help enhance safety for them and their families.

Yukon government has worked with our communities and listened to the perspectives of Yukoners across the territory. We have committed to creating a community safety planning program that would meet the needs and ensure that communities can serve their citizens so that everyone can feel safe and valued.

I am now proud to announce that the first phase of the new community safety planning program will be available to Yukon First Nation governments and will support local community safety assessments, planning initiatives, and implementation. We know that First Nation governments are best suited to understand the needs of their communities and that community safety planning is integral to the safety and well-being of northern and remote communities.

Our budget over the next eight years identifies a total of nearly \$3 million to advance community safety initiatives. First Nation governments will be able to access up to \$200,000 each to support the creation of their community’s safety plan. Funding will need to be spent within a three-year window. The First Nation governments could apply for funding on more than one occasion, up to a maximum of \$200,000.

It is important that communities lead their own assessments of local safety concerns, as they know the issues that burden their community and how to address them. That is why they will lead and identify ways to mitigate the issues that they face and to implement solutions that work for their citizens. The program, which will be developed in collaboration with First Nation communities, will offer clear criteria, outline the steps to apply for funding, and ensure equitable access to funding for all Yukon First Nation governments. Information on how to apply, specifics of what funding can be used for, and more information on how the program works will be available later this year, following work with our partners.

I would like to note that our work will not stop here. The second phase of our work will design options for municipalities, local advisory committees, and even neighbourhoods to enhance community safety. The Yukon government will be working with partners to explore funding models on how we can best support those organizations,

advisory committees, and neighbourhoods to make their communities safer.

Thank you to the leadership of the Department of Justice, Yukon First Nation governments, municipalities, and Yukon organizations for working together to make Yukon communities safer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to respond to this statement and to the continued success of the committee safety program, as well as the additional elements announced today.

It was in the spring of 2016 that, along with Chief Doris Bill and Premier Pasloski, I was pleased to announce that the Yukon government would provide more than \$1.4 million in funding, over three years, for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community safety liaison officer pilot program. We are glad to see that the program — which started thanks to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation in Whitehorse and was supported by a previous Yukon Party government — has come so far. I also want to recognize Gina Nagano for her work in developing that original program.

This was a great idea, and we are thankful that it has spread to other communities. The people behind the original project and those who are continuing to grow the program and initiatives related to it deserve our thanks and gratitude. It is great to see the program become noticed on a national level, thanks to Gina Nagano and her team at the House of Wolf.

On behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, I congratulate them for winning an Arctic Inspiration Prize. We understand that the prize money will not only go toward developing more programs, but will help host the first of its kind indigenous safety summit in Whitehorse in August.

No matter where you live, crime affects everyone, and the pandemic has put an additional strain on our communities and individuals. To see programs like this take centre stage in helping to address community safety is welcome news, and we wish them ongoing success.

I would, though, also like to address the concerning increase in crime that we have seen in recent years. Many Yukoners are concerned about crime in all communities. We have heard from business owners who are expressing their concern about break-ins and thefts, particularly in Whitehorse and the surrounding area. You don’t have to look very far to see reports of break-ins at small businesses or individuals having their vehicles broken into. Sadly, this is becoming more common. This is unacceptable, and a strong message needs to be sent that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated in our communities.

While we do want to acknowledge and recognize successes today, it is also clear that government needs to do more to work with communities, including Whitehorse, to address the growing amount of crime, including increasing resources for the RCMP.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for her statement, and we congratulate the ongoing leadership that we see from Yukon

First Nation governments in making Yukon communities safer for everyone.

We have all seen the success of the community safety officers, like those in Kwanlin Dün or the aunties in Teslin. Of course, we saw the recent AIP award to the indigenous-led community safety partnership program developed by House of Wolf & Associates. But what does it really mean?

From my own settler perspective, it means that Yukon First Nations are taking the lead to address the root causes affecting their communities. This is a beautifully powerful action — one that, with Yukon government financial support, rests well within the justice recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

We agree that Yukon First Nation governments are best suited to understand the needs of their communities. We're interested to see how this newly announced program will continue to support them. We're also interested to see what happens with the second phase of this work that will happen with both municipalities and others.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: By empowering communities to respond to the unique challenges that they face, we are helping to create a safer territory for everyone.

In 2021, we made a promise to Yukoners to continue our work to help make neighbourhoods, communities, and our territory safer for them and their families. We promised in our platform that we would enhance community safety planning programs and develop a consistent approach to funding community safety planning activities across the territory. I'm happy to say that we have begun to do just that.

Starting this year, Yukon First Nation governments will have access to critical funding to develop community safety initiatives that will be tailored to their community and respond to their unique priorities and concerns.

In addition, by providing this funding to Yukon First Nation governments, we are fulfilling an action item in Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy that calls for support for community safety assessments, plans, and implementation, because we know how they work.

We will continue to work directly with Yukon First Nation governments on how the funding may be used to increase safety in their communities. Work is already underway to strengthen safety in Yukon First Nation communities.

Just over a week ago, an Arctic Inspiration Prize was awarded to Gina Nagano and the team at House of Wolf for their development of the Indigenous Community Safety Partnership program.

This first of its kind, indigenous-led community safety program is helping Yukon First Nations address root causes of intergenerational trauma and violence in their communities through traditional ways of teaching and justice, with the help and hard work of their community members.

So far, House of Wolf has worked with five communities in the Yukon under this program: Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Teslin Tlingit Council, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Selkirk First Nation. The House of Wolf team will continue to develop more training for

its programs and host the first indigenous safety summit in Whitehorse this summer.

We will continue to work directly with Yukon First Nation governments to identify and address the issues in their communities. Over the coming months, we will continue to explore options for safety planning initiatives for municipalities and local advisory committees.

Thank you again to the Department of Justice and the Yukon First Nation governments, all the community safety officers, and other Yukon organizations for their dedication to making Yukon communities safer. I truly look forward to our continued shared work to ensure that every Yukoner feels safe in their community and in this beautiful territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Fuel prices

Mr. Dixon: The inflation crisis continues to hurt Yukoners. Last week, the chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon explained the impact of high fuel prices for the tourism industry. He said — and I quote: “It is a hit to the cost of production of tourism products at every level and that can't be ignored.” Unfortunately, ignoring it is exactly what this government is doing. We have suggested waiving the fuel tax for the year, but the government has refused.

So, what will the government do to help Yukoners with the soaring cost of fuel, or will it continue to simply ignore this problem?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I would like to thank TIAY — the tourism industry association — for the work that they have been doing and the constant dialogue that we have had the opportunity to have with that association, as well as the Yukon chamber, the Whitehorse chamber, and others that are supporting tourism here.

It is important to note that the programs that we have put in place over the last two years have helped to make sure that we can sustain a tourism industry, whether it was our summer program last year with incentives and rebates — and then throughout the winter. We are keeping a strong eye on what is happening. For any tire traffic that is coming, it's not only the price of fuel that they're paying here, but the price of the fuel in a number of other jurisdictions. All the while, that is being driven up by what we are seeing in the cost of oil overall.

Again, we are going to continue to work with the industry. We are going to continue to make sure that we support them and continue to monitor what's happening here as we move forward.

Mr. Dixon: The chair of TIA went on to say that for most tourism operators, it's too late to raise prices to offset the cost of more expensive gas. He said — and I quote: “They'll take the hit on top of the huge hit they already took from COVID...”

This is another knock against our already struggling tourism industry, but the government could significantly cushion that blow if they chose to. They could simply waive the fuel tax for the year to help our tourism industry get back on its

feet. Why is the government refusing to take action to help Yukoners address the rising cost of fuel?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is important to share with the Assembly and with Yukoners that we understand the sensitivity that is around this and the impact, but I think that it is also fair to say that, no matter where you live on this planet, if you decide to go on vacation this year, you will have costs that have increased because this is not a regional issue; this is a global issue being driven by many, many factors.

So, again, we have looked at our inflation increase to date here in Whitehorse. I think that it is the second lowest in the country. Again, we are making sure that we can support and incentivize — which we have, all the way through our tourism industry. We will continue to work and listen to what they are saying. I was in dialogue with Mr. Hartling shortly after his interview that morning and we will continue to listen to advice that they give us.

Mr. Dixon: It is interesting to hear the minister say that he understands the impact of this on the industry and yet he is still refusing to act. We know that the Minister of Economic Development has already ruled out waiving the fuel tax as nothing more than “boutique”. The Yukon Liberal government is starting to stand out for their inaction. We know that Alberta has already waived their fuel tax. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, their energy regulators have invoked special tools to push prices down. South of the border, a growing number of governors and state lawmakers across the US are calling for the suspension of gas taxes to provide relief. Even President Joe Biden is considering suspending gas taxes, but here in the Yukon, the Liberals and the Minister of Economic Development dismiss helping Yukoners as “boutique”.

So, if the Liberals won't waive the fuel tax, what measures will they take to help Yukoners address the rising cost of fuel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't think that the Minister of Economic Development is dismissing anything. I think that he is working extremely hard on short-term, medium-term and long-term solutions, including taking a scan of all the other jurisdictions in Canada and monitoring what they are doing with their current gas prices, which is interesting information.

Again, we have the lowest gas tax in Canada. That is not to say that we are not doing anything. Since hitting a 30-year high in August of five percent, inflation in Whitehorse has fallen back to 3.7 percent. We have been monitoring this situation for close to a year now. Our budget that is presented in the Legislative Assembly is full of initiatives and programs that are designed to make sure that life in the north is affordable. We have been saying that for five years.

The members opposite have presented us with an option. We are working on all fronts to make sure that we have long-term, short-term, and medium-term solutions that complement the work that we have already been doing to keep things as cheap as we possibly can for how much it costs for everybody, including affordable childcare, including cutting the small business tax right to zero, and including raising the minimum wage and doubling medical travel. That's where we are, and we are going to continue with solutions in the short, medium, and long term.

Question re: Cost of living

Mr. Cathers: This Liberal government, we've seen, is actually working on making efforts to increase the cost of living for Yukoners. The cost of living is going through the roof for Yukoners, and another significant part adding to that rising cost is insurance. Many Yukoners have seen their insurance rise over the past number of years. In 2020, the Liberal government doubled the tax on insurance premiums, which is contributing millions of dollars to these skyrocketing increases. This increase, brought in by the Premier, amounts to a \$4-million tax increase, and this is a tax increase that every single Yukoner has to pay when they insure their home or their vehicle. Will the government consider undoing the significant tax increase that they brought in just as the pandemic began?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is interesting because, you know, when it comes to affordability, one only needs to look at our electricity rates. Yukoners are understandably concerned about the recent increases to electricity rates, and they can thank the Yukon Party for that. The largest factor that caused the recent rate increases was the LNG plant from the Yukon Party — that they borrowed to bring online. They delayed putting the project to rate before 2016 and basically delayed paying off the credit card that they ran up at that time.

The member opposite brings up an interesting perspective right now. We are, as I mentioned earlier, continuing to explore options in the short term to make sure that we continue to lead the nation when it comes to affordability. We've done that over the last five years. As I mentioned earlier, we reduced the small business tax to zero. What this budget does not include is any increases to taxes. There are no increases to taxes; there are no new taxes in this budget.

Again, we are discussing long-term energy security in Canada. Premiers are very interested in finding a way of reducing the financial burden on Canadians. We are working on a national level, and we are trying to reduce, at a national level, our dependence on other countries, but here locally, we have a suite of options to make lives affordable for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I do have to remind the Premier that, in fact, tens of millions of dollars in electrical costs are directly due to Liberal decisions.

In 2020, the Premier told the Legislature not to worry about increasing taxes on insurance premiums because all the insurance companies are in Ontario and Québec, but, unsurprisingly, he was wrong.

In their 2021 tax review, the independent firm KPMG warned that this would happen. They said that while the insurer usually pays insurance premium tax, some provinces and territories, including Yukon, make the tax payable by the insurer or policyholder when the coverage is obtained from an insurer who is not licensed in the particular province or territory.

This, of course, is bad news for anyone who needs insurance in the Yukon. Every person who has insurance here is now paying more as a direct result of the Premier's \$4-million tax hike.

Will the Premier acknowledge that his deliberate decision to double the taxes has implications for Yukoners and agree to

undo his tax hike to help Yukoners struggling with the cost of living?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we heard the member opposite trying to connect these two things in the past, and he is the only one who can find some kind of connection between the two. Again, what we're doing is we're investing heavily in this budget to make sure that life is affordable for Yukoners — \$17 million for community housing, \$27 million for lot development, \$11 million in initiatives for residential construction projects like the proposed Kwanlin Dün First Nation subdivision expansion in Copper Ridge — an exciting project. There is over \$10 million for mixed use when it comes to a 10-building project in Old Crow — so in rural communities as well. This is just one of our departments' work.

We could talk about our inflation outlook. We could take a look at every single department and how they are making lives more affordable.

The member opposite is trying to connect two dots that are not connectable, and we are absolutely alive and aware to the situation as far as insurance rates. But to make that connection, he's definitely connecting things that aren't connected.

So, again, we will continue to make historic investments to create programs and services for Yukoners to make sure that their lives are more affordable.

We're not done there with the budget. The budget has been produced, and then there is a conflict in Ukraine. So, we are absolutely aware of the situation that is happening in Ukraine and why things are more expensive. We will be working on more things on a shorter term.

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the Premier is all over the map with his response. One thing that he was right about is that I did warn him that insurance companies would pass on his tax hike to their customers.

The rising cost of insurance affects businesses, organizations, and individuals. We have heard from them all that insurance costs have been increasing significantly. This is a particular challenge during the pandemic and due to inflation. However, the Premier and his government decided to hike the tax on insurance premiums right as the pandemic was setting in.

This Liberal tax hike is increasing the cost of living. Anyone with common sense knows that if government raises taxes by millions of dollars on insurance companies, they are going to charge their customers every single dime of it.

Will the Premier agree to undo his tax hike and help Yukoners with the rising cost of living?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon. I have to begin by saying that, once again, the Yukon Party is proving unreliable as a source of information. This doesn't have to do with any tax increase; it has to do with catastrophes across the western hemisphere, specifically in Canada. We just saw the mudslides in BC. We saw roads, bridges, and railways getting wiped out. We are seeing the effects of flooding in the Southern Lakes. We are seeing all of these catastrophes — a lot of them brought about by global

warming — landing on and driving up our insurance rates. That is really one of the drivers.

Here in the Yukon, my team in Community Services and I have been working with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to identify ways that we can reduce the insurance burden on condo owners and other residential properties. I am working with the Department of Justice to identify ways we can work to change our legislation to actually bring some costs down. We are also working with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to identify other sources of insurance in Canada so that the competition will help to bring these costs down.

We have heard from landlords on this issue. We are working very closely with them. I have every confidence that, over the coming months and years, we will have a much broader range of insurers for Yukoners to draw on.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. Blake: It has been six months since the territory's only public walk-in clinic closed. The only option that Yukoners are left with is to go to the emergency room. From prescriptions to blood work, they have to spend hours waiting at the hospital for basic health care. The minister had months to realize that walk-ins should not fall on the shoulders of one clinic only, because if they close their walk-in services like the River Valley clinic had to do in August, the entire territory is left without this essential service. Yukoners need a public walk-in clinic.

Will the minister finally direct her department to work on opening a public walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The *Putting People First* report, as we all know, found that approximately 21 percent of Yukoners do not have access to a regular health care provider. As we implement the recommendations from that report, we remain committed to expanding access to primary health care services.

In fact, it is the commitment to that report that would allow government to consider opening a walk-in clinic because currently, of course, medical practitioners are private business owners and many, if not all — except for a few exceptions in particular programs — are not employed by the Government of Yukon.

We are currently working toward opening a new walk-in clinic here in Whitehorse. The initiative is just one piece of the work that we are doing to expand primary health care and to respond to the *Putting People First* recommendations.

Ms. Blake: We need health care from birth until death. From family doctors to counsellors, optometrists, dieticians, and nurse practitioners, so many health care workers can fill the gap in primary care. In Yukon communities, nurses and nurse practitioners are the ones who are keeping residents healthy, but they are overworked and understaffed.

After years of failing to hire health care workers, this government is failing to come up with a new plan. How many community nursing positions remain unfilled in the territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The focus of this government on *Putting People First* and a true transformation of Yukon health care are absolutely critical so that individual Yukoners can have

the best possible people-centred care that they deserve. Our government is aware that some local physicians have closed their primary care practices. I am certainly aware of the concerns that we have with recruitment and retention of physicians and of nurses. It is our top priority.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has impacted recruitment efforts and resulted in some additional staffing pressures here in the territory. For example, between 2017 and early 2020 — so pre-pandemic — there was about a five-percent vacancy among primary health care nurses within the Community Nursing branch. During that period, no agency nurses were required. Certainly, we have a different situation now here in the territory. Due to the pandemic, there is difficulty in recruiting, and vacancy rates are fluctuating — certainly higher than five percent at this time. The pandemic has significantly impacted our ability to recruit nurses, physicians, and other care providers — but again, not just in this community. We are working hard to solve this problem for Yukoners every day.

Ms. Blake: Some Yukoners have been waiting for years to have a routine health checkup. Some Yukoners have given up on seeing a doctor altogether. This has grave consequences for the health care system. How many serious conditions are late to be detected because Yukoners are unable to have regular blood work or doctors' appointments? If this government has learned anything from the pandemic, it should be that public health is essential.

Does the minister believe that leaving Yukoners without proper access to primary health care is acceptable?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the tone of the question, but of course, I don't believe that having Yukoners without primary health care is acceptable, and nobody on this side of the House does. Frankly, we've been working very hard to make sure that it is not the case.

We continue to explore options to connect Yukoners to primary health care services. I take some issue with the concept in the question that there are Yukoners who are waiting for things like regular blood work. Of course, a delayed opportunity for people to see a medical practitioner unfortunately sometimes has the effect of people not receiving the care that they need when they need it. We are working extremely hard to make sure that this is not the case.

I mentioned earlier that we're working with the medical community to focus on having an opportunity of a walk-in clinic here in Whitehorse to help with some of the individuals who are not able to attend there any longer. I would like to thank the medical practitioners who are prepared to work on this project with the Government of Yukon. They are concerned as well about providing primary health care for individuals here in the City of Whitehorse and other places. They're working together with us to solve this problem. We're working strongly to recruit new medical practitioners.

Question re: Mental health services for LGBTQ2S+ community

Ms. Tredger: All Genders Yukon Society funds low-barrier mental health services for trans, non-binary, and two-spirit Yukoners and their families. This service is critical

because health disparities in the LGBTQ2S+ community are staggering.

A recent Canadian study found that two-thirds of trans teenagers had seriously considered suicide in the last year.

All Genders Yukon's funding for mental health service is literally a lifeline but, due to inadequate funding from this government, they have had to cut back therapy appointments to just one appointment each month. When a child is suicidal, going to therapy once a month is just not enough.

Given the mental health risks faced by the trans community, how can the minister believe that having access to one therapy appointment a month is adequate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm not going to speak about anything specific to an individual patient, which the question seems to lead to. What I am going to say is that All Genders Yukon received some funding during the COVID-19 pandemic that has been reduced, but their overall funding has, in fact, been increased. I will get the numbers for the member opposite and hopefully be able to resolve her concern with respect to that particular aspect of it.

Community-based mental health services are a priority for this government, and with the creation of the mental wellness hubs, there is now a network of mental wellness support workers, counsellors, and mental health nurses providing services and care for Yukoners in all communities, including here in Whitehorse.

Staffing across the mental wellness hubs is an ongoing process. This leads back to the question previously asked, and we are meeting operational needs and delivering important, necessary services to Yukoners.

I would like to thank the individuals who work with the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services unit here in Whitehorse, as well as the individuals who work in the hubs and the staffing. We truly know how difficult the last few years have been. We know that individuals are coming to you and asking for help and that you are providing the services you can.

I will continue my answer.

Ms. Tredger: In this government's own LGBTQ2S+ action plan, they commit that they will: "Improve access to supportive mental health and wellness services for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners."

If the government really means these nice words, why is the funding, no matter how they add it up, so inadequate that essential services need to be cut?

Will the minister put the money where her mouth is and commit to better funding for All Genders Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm honoured to stand today to speak to our relationship with the LGBTQ2S+ community. I thank the member opposite for her question, and I take note that there were other concerns raised in general debate earlier this week. My colleague and I will be following up on those specifics.

I want to say that, when our government took office in 2016, there was no relationship with the LGBTQ2S+ community. I, along with the Minister of Health and Social Services at the time and the now Minister of Health and Social Services, sat down and started a dialogue and a relationship. It

resulted in the first action plan for the LGBTQ2S+ community — ever — in the Yukon and the first consultation that ever happened with the community.

I am really proud that we were able to contribute to the formation of the first Pride Centre. There is money in this year's budget, last year's budget, and in the year to come — again, providing funding where there was no funding at all.

I will be happy to continue to build on my answer going forward and to speak to the member opposite at any time.

Ms. Tredger: This just doesn't add up. On the one hand, this government says that they support the LGBTQ2S+ community and they want to improve their access to mental health services. On the other hand, Yukoners who have some of the highest risks of suicide are seeing their therapy appointments cut.

Again, if a child was suicidal, would anyone here be okay with them getting just one therapy appointment a month? I can't imagine that the answer is yes.

So, how can the minister justify underfunding critical mental health supports for the trans, two-spirit, and non-binary community in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, thank you for the questions and bringing this important question to the floor of the Legislative Assembly. Our government has worked with the LGBTQ2S+ community over the last many years. We have changed a number of pieces of legislation. We have introduced the first action plan that the Yukon Territory has ever seen, and we have provided funding where there was no funding. We now have core funding for Queer Yukon. Last year, we provided \$500,000. This year, we are providing \$425,000, and there is money next year. We are also providing funding specific to gender gear, which is coming from Health and Social Services specifically.

Some of the actions that we have taken are: expanding health care insurance coverage for gender-affirming therapies, procedures and surgeries, including supports around this work; providing HIV pre-exposure and post-exposure medications at no cost; integrating inclusive language into a new official Government of Yukon communication style guide and changing our language in important laws that govern our territory.

We are committed to inclusion and working with the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Question re: Flood preparedness

Mr. Hassard: Last week, we asked some simple questions about flood preparation in light of the notably high snowpack numbers recently announced by Environment Yukon. Unfortunately, rather than provide Yukoners with assurances about flood preparation, the Minister of Community Services used his time to launch attacks on the Yukon Party. It became clear that even the minister's colleagues were getting uncomfortable with his antics, so we would like to give him another chance to actually answer the question.

The Village of Carmacks would like to see an engineering study on flood mitigation in Carmacks and for government to support the construction of a berm or dyke similar to that of

Dawson. Does the government support this idea? If not, what other steps are being taken to address the flooding concerns in Carmacks?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the member opposite this afternoon. We just had more snow this last weekend, so the flooding is going to be on everyone's mind. The Community Services team at Emergency Measures is working very, very hard to ensure that we are prepared for this year's flood season. I hope that it doesn't materialize — we don't know — but right now, the snowpack is certainly raising people's awareness.

We are working very hard to make sure that we have sandbags. We have 300,000-plus sandbags in Community Services ready for this year's flood. We have really good relationships, as I mentioned on the floor before. I have met with Brigadier-General Godbout about this coming season. We held meetings last week with municipal officials to hear what their concerns are and to start work on addressing them.

We are still in early days, Mr. Speaker. It's March, and we know that the flooding usually happens in May and June. We are working very hard to have the material, the safety measures, and the understanding of what communities want. We will address those concerns as they come forward.

Mr. Hassard: So, no answer for the folks in Carmacks.

Another community that has faced flooding concerns is Mayo. The recent data from Environment Yukon highlighted that the Stewart River Basin had one of the highest snowpacks for this time of year. Mayo has faced flooding issues before for several reasons, and the community has been pushing for a more permanent solution to protect the community.

Has the government supplied the community with flood mitigation supplies for this year? What steps are being taken to address the longer term issues of flooding in Mayo?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's important that Yukoners understand — and I understand the importance of this issue to Yukoners. I understand the questions coming from the opposition benches.

I want to speak to Yukoners and let them know that Community Services, last year, faced some of the worst flooding we have ever seen in the territory. We rose to the occasion. We launched the largest flood mitigation in Yukon history. Mr. Speaker, we are well prepared for this year. We have all of the knowledge that we gained last year, and we're not letting that slide. We're not sitting on our hands and not taking all the lessons learned from last year and not applying them. That's not the way this government works.

So, we have listened, we have evaluated what happened last year, and we are preparing for the worst this year, even as we hope for the best.

Last week on Friday, as I said, we had an officials meeting where we heard the concerns from all municipalities, and we're going to address those concerns as we go forward.

You are absolutely right. We do have a lot of snow throughout the Yukon this year. We're doing flood mapping in every Yukon community, Mr. Speaker. That's not something that we have done before. We're going to continue to work to make sure our communities are safe, just like we did last year.

Mr. Hassard: So, I guess there are no answers for the folks in Mayo either. Mr. Speaker, I'm asking about permanent solutions so that we don't have to go through this every time we get stuck in this situation.

Now, the survey data from last week makes it clear that Teslin is also at risk, with 42 percent more precipitation than normal. As we saw last year, the community of Teslin faces flooding a lot earlier in the season compared to other regions. This means that it's important for the government to take steps to engage with the community earlier.

So, will the government commit to engaging with the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council early enough that measures can actually be put in place before potential flooding begins and help the community with long-term solutions rather than one-off emergency repairs?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe it was just last Friday that the department met with all communities to discuss exactly this. Again, I want to commend the minister responsible for his work last year and again for his preparedness this year as well, working with all communities.

Last year, more than 200 people from across the Yukon government, as well as flood specialists from Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and approximately 100 members of Canadian Armed Forces, were actively engaged in flood responses and mitigation. Last year, not one single residential property was lost. It was very inspiring to see families and to see organizations all coming together to support Yukoners in the time of need.

Our government is actively monitoring the situation — the snowpack and the precipitation as well. We have already engaged with impacted residents, and we will continue to do so — up until even Friday of last week.

This budget contains \$3.7 million for flood remediation and recovery. Also, the Department of Community Services has a lot of regular meetings with their liaison officers and their minister and with communities, First Nation governments, and also the municipalities. We will continue that good work as we prepare for this year's season.

Speaker: Time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 14: *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to bring forward the *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)* for second reading today.

Our government is committed to modernizing Yukon's legislation so that it works for Yukoners and Yukon organizations. I am delighted that we are honouring this commitment to Yukoners through an update to the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*.

I am pleased to introduce the proposed amendment to the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*. Currently, narrow language in a provision of the *Legal Profession Act, 2017* is causing administrative difficulties for the Law Society of Yukon and ultimately then for Yukoners.

To remedy this issue, the Department of Justice is proposing the following amendment to the act: The proposal is to amend language in subsection 151(2)(a) to ensure that out-of-territory corporations that incorporated in another Canadian jurisdiction but that are registered and in good standing in the Yukon may be permitted to provide legal services here in the territory.

We are also proposing to amend the naming requirement provision in the *Legal Profession Act, 2017* to allow the Law Society of Yukon to issue permits to out-of-territory corporations. This change is required to allow the society to resume the permitting of corporations that are incorporated in other Canadian jurisdictions. The current inability to do so creates access to services and access to justice ramifications for Yukoners.

The proposed amendment will allow the Law Society of Yukon to fully implement their new legislation as was originally intended. The amendment before us today is necessary to support the Law Society of Yukon's policy objectives and, more importantly, the public interest.

Our government is very proud to bring forward this important legislative amendment to improve the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*.

Mr. Cathers: I won't be long in speaking to this. This legislation is correcting an error that government made in previous legislation that they brought forward. I understand that this was brought forward by the law society, so we don't have any concerns with this proposal.

Ms. Blake: I rise to indicate support for the amendments to be made.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that the member opposite feels it necessary to characterize this as correcting an error. In fact, it is correcting a situation where the wording does not support the way in which the *Legal Profession Act, 2017* was intended to be used in relation to corporations. I don't have any trouble with that. In fact, I am happy to bring forward this

amendment so that this legislation will be improved and in its best form to serve Yukoners.

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.

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 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to

Bill No. 15: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm pleased to be able to speak today about our government's proposed *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*.

As many members of this House will know, miscellaneous statute acts are used for housekeeping changes to legislation. This can include fixing numbering errors or language errors or inconsistencies, such as where one word is used interchangeably with another in an act and needs fixing or clarifying for consistency. It might also mean amending incorrect references to other acts or fixing consequential legislative change emissions or other such technical changes, including renaming an organization that has changed its name as we see in this piece of legislation.

In the fall of last year, the Department of Justice placed a call-out for amendments asking that any small amendments that met the test noted — that I have mentioned, noted above — for inclusion in the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*. This call, together with items that had already been identified by the legislative counsel office that are in need of being corrected in legislation make up the contents of this amending act, which is Bill No. 15.

This kind of legislation is introduced periodically as resources are available, and some members may be aware that there is often corresponding or sometimes a corresponding process for regulations.

Since the changes are not of a policy nature, the Minister of Justice is the minister who brings these kinds of bills forward on behalf of the government. It is my responsibility to ensure accuracy of legislation on behalf of the Government of Yukon. It is my pleasure to bring forward this bill for consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

I look forward to providing more details about the amendments that are being suggested here and answering any questions that the members may have during Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this is all minor housekeeping. It's interesting that the government chose to prioritize this instead of getting into departments or legislation where there are many questions that we would ask on behalf of Yukoners. This is minor housekeeping and correction of errors.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for bringing this forward and thank those folks who had to go through the legislation to find these spelling mistakes. It is a reminder to us in this House that when they come through, we have that opportunity. Knowing that we've missed ours, adding "nurturing" and added "register" instead of "registrar" is a testament to someone's proofreading skills that they were caught and brought forward. We look forward to a quick debate on this and moving it along.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I too agree that the individuals who not only work with this legislation every day, but draft it when the policy work is done and it's being brought forward to achieve many options for Yukoners are a separate breed and those who must be thanked — in particular, I am going to note that, in the last two years, we have asked an extraordinary amount of the diligent individuals at the legislative counsel office because, in addition to all the regular work that is of government and on behalf of Yukoners, they have had the responsibility of drafting orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and other directives that have been required under the *Public Health and Safety Act* as well and have been required for the purpose of the emergency that has been COVID-19.

I say “has been” very carefully. It is certainly continuing, but it is incredibly important that I take this opportunity, as has been noted by the member opposite, to note that their work is extraordinary and that getting to these kinds of clarifications is just as important and as hard work as all of the work they do, although probably a little bit less exciting. We are very pleased to present Bill No. 15 so that their work can be as accurate as possible.

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.

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 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 15 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): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act 2017, (2022)*.

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. I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 14: Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to first take a moment to welcome Will Steinburg and Andrea Bailey, who are here from the Department of Justice to support me this afternoon, if there are any particularly technical questions. I appreciate them being here. They both worked on this legislation and actually the next piece of legislation that we will be discussing as well. I would like to thank them for being here.

In my earlier remarks, I reviewed the proposed change that is being requested with this bill to amend the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*, which we are taking into Committee today. It is a testament to our government’s commitment to working with our partners to improve access to justice for Yukoners.

Through the proposed amendment, we continue to ensure that Yukon’s legal professionals are well-supported by the modern legislation and a regulatory regime. The amendment supports the healthy operation necessary for the Law Society of Yukon to process and ensure access to legal services for the Yukon public.

The *Legal Profession Act, 2017* received assent in 2017 and came into force on February 6, 2020 after the associated regulations and the Law Society of Yukon’s updated rules were prepared and approved. The *Legal Profession Act, 2017* is intended to support the increased mobility of legal professionals and to take into account the prevalence of legal service providers who are incorporated here in the Yukon and elsewhere in Canada.

The folks who support me here today are probably way too young to know that I worked on the original mobility agreement for Yukon lawyers to be included — in particular, lawyers in the north to be included in the mobility agreement of the law societies across the country. It was really a truly inspiring opportunity, and it was fantastic because we needed to protect the law societies in the north as well as provide services and mobility for lawyers across the country. We did that by having a northern solution.

As currently drafted, some language in the *Legal Profession Act, 2017* is causing administrative issues with regard to the permitting of out-of-territory corporations that provide, or intend to provide, legal services in the Yukon Territory.

With this context in mind, through Bill No. 14, we are specifically proposing to amend the relevant provisions of the *Legal Profession Act, 2017* that will, first, amend the language

in paragraph 151(2)(a) to ensure that out-of-territory corporations that are incorporated in other Canadian jurisdictions that are registered in the Yukon may be licensed to provide legal services in the territory. This provision will amend the naming requirement provision in the *Legal Profession Act, 2017* to allow the Law Society of Yukon to issue permits to out-of-territory corporations.

While the society's executives were given broad rule-making powers under the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*, in order to self-regulate the legal profession in the Yukon Territory, it is the view of the Law Society of Yukon and the Department of Justice that a legislative amendment is required here.

It is important to note that the Law Society of Yukon currently has 475 members, 300 of whom are non-resident members. A substantial percentage of these non-resident members operate as professional corporations in their home jurisdictions. Registration as a corporation here in the Yukon by non-resident members cannot be accomplished without the proposed legislative amendment. For all of these reasons and to ensure that we continue to fulfill the Government of Yukon's commitment to improving access to justice, this legislative change is required.

I am pleased to present the proposed amendment to the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*, and I look forward to questions and further discussion from the members of this House.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Justice that the Chair report Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*.

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: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 15: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to welcome back Will Steinburg from the Policy branch at the Department of Justice. As well, joining him is Andrea Bailey who is a legislative drafter in our legislative counsel office. Thank you to both of them for joining me today.

I won't be long, but I think that it is important to speak just briefly about what is before us today. I would like to thank my colleagues here for the opportunity to stand. In my earlier remarks, I discussed the need for a new miscellaneous statute legislation and how this bill will correct errors or issues across several pieces of Yukon legislation. I will just quickly remind members that miscellaneous statute acts are used for housekeeping changes to legislation, such as fixing numbering errors, language errors, or inconsistencies, or in the case of a couple of these provisions in this particular legislation, changing the name of an organization. This might include amendments to where one word is used interchangeably with another, or there may be a need for making something consistent or references to other acts that are not correct. Another example includes a consequential legislative change.

I am pleased to discuss Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Amendment Act, 2022*, with members today as it aligns with our priority to set a balanced legislative agenda that considers political priorities and legislative drafting capacity and the importance of making laws accurate. As the changes are not of a policy nature, as the Minister of Justice, I get to bring this bill and bills of this kind forward on behalf of the government. It is my responsibility to do that and my pleasure to do so today.

It is important for me to note that none of the provisions being discussed today will affect spending of public funds, changes of any person's rights as set out in Yukon laws, or create any new offences.

I will also note that this latest version of the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022* is small and amends 25 Yukon acts.

At this time, I would like to just speak a little bit more about the details of what the bill is proposing.

Likely the most notable change through the bill is the replacement of the text "Agreement on Internal Trade" with the text "Canadian Free Trade Agreement" across a number of acts, including the *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, the *Chiropractors Act*, the *Dental Profession Act*, and the *Judicature Act* and the *Optometrist Act*.

This specific change in terminology comes from the recent replacement of the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States with a new, updated version of the international agreement.

Another notable terminology revision is the update of the name change from “Yukon Teachers’ Association” to, quote: “Yukon Association of Education Professionals”. This is found in the *Education Act*, the *Education Labour Relations Act*, and the *Teaching Profession Act*.

Other revisions to legislation in this bill include updates to outdated references or incorrect references, such as within the *Coroners Act*, the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, the *Motor Vehicles Act*, the *Notaries Act*, and the *Societies Act*. These are also minor in nature, such as updating the reference to the “*Legal Profession Act*” to be replaced with “*Legal Profession Act, 2017*”.

Most of the remaining amendments that I have not touched on that are proposed in this bill include minor corrections of typos, such as correcting the spelling of “Royal Canadian Mountain Police” within the *Animal Protection Act* or with correcting the spelling of “necessities” within the *Children’s Law Act*.

Finally, other amendments include the addition of a missing preposition or the removal of unnecessary words to provide further clarity within legislation. An example of this includes adding the missing preposition “by” to a provision in subsection 6(2) of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

As members can see, these amendments are minor and editorial in nature and seek to correct errors within several pieces of legislation.

I am pleased to bring forward a bill of this nature in order to amend these 25 Yukon acts and to provide more clarity for Yukoners. I look forward to the comments and questions.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*?

Ms. White: Just before we move through, congratulations to the two staff members here because, through you, we will have passed two of the quickest pieces of legislation in the history of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

I do really appreciate the care that would have had to go into this. As I was saying off-mic before, as a product of French immersion, I spell terribly in both languages. Some of this would have been stuff that I would have done, such as missing the “s” in “transfer” or “register” instead of “registrar”.

I appreciate that someone had to go through all of these 25 pieces of legislation with a fine-tooth comb. Congratulations to the two officials here for what will be a record passing of this bill.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

Ms. White: 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. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 15 read and agreed to

Deputy Chair: It has been requested by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, there is unanimous consent that all clauses and the title of Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 25 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that the Chair report Bill No. 15, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 12: Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022) — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe I have 13 seconds left, so what I will do is cede the floor to the member opposite. I will reserve the opportunity to complete my notes when I rise to my feet again.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, we will get into the back-and-forth debate. I just wanted to finish my notes here. We were talking about the fact that refundable tax credits are Yukon government expenditures programs paid through the tax system for administrative efficiency, so it would not be appropriate to deduct those amounts credited from the amount of tax shared with the Yukon First Nation governments. That’s where I left off last week.

Just continuing on that, unfortunately, the amendments to section 12 did not provide the legal certainty that we had intended to convey to CRA for their administrative purposes.

Today we return with a newly proposed version of subsection 12(1) that will be retroactive to the day initially indicated in the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*.

These proposed changes will not have any impact on the total amount of tax payable by Yukon citizens. It is purely an administrative correction and provides the necessary clarifications for implementation by the Canada Revenue Agency.

Moving along in the bill, I would like to now discuss the amendment to section 21.

Earlier on in the pandemic, in order to provide COVID-19 relief, subsections 153(1.02) to 153(1.04) were added to the federal *Income Tax Act* to provide eligible small employers with a temporary wage subsidy for a period of three months, from March 18, 2020 to June 19, 2020. Section 21 of our act would be retroactively amended to March 25, 2020 to include the temporary wage subsidy related to those sections that I just listed out of the federal *Income Tax Act*.

As you may have noticed, by the effective date of March 25, 2020, this temporary wage subsidy was one of the first forms of business relief in Canada. It allowed eligible businesses to retain the payroll withholdings that would normally be remitted shortly after the pay period to the federal government. It was a quick and efficient manner to provide liquidity in those early and very uncertain days of the pandemic. These proposed changes of Bill No. 12, our *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, ensure that Yukon businesses that benefited from this federal program are not considered offside with respect to the portions of remittances that they received.

So, the amendment to section 28, entitled “Application of federal provisions returns, payments and interests”, simply deletes a reference to the repealed federal act paragraph — specifically paragraph 104(23)(e).

Next, the amendment to section 52 is simply a correction to a reference in the federal act. Section 52 revolves around the application of federal provisions related to inspection, privilege, information return, and corporate execution. Since section 52 was written, the federal act has been expanded to include sections 231.6, 231.7, and 231.8, which are not covered by our current language.

The proposed amendment in section 52 fulfills our obligation to Canada to align our act with theirs.

We are now moving on to section 57, which is being amended based on a legal review of all provinces’ and territories’ income tax acts with respect to data sharing between the CRA and Finance Canada. As a result of advice that we received from CRA legal services, the CRA stopped sharing information relating to provincial tax programs with Finance Canada, and Finance Canada has asked the provincial and territorial governments to amend their acts to allow the CRA to share this information with Finance Canada solely for the formulation and evaluation of fiscal policy.

The CRA already shares the vast majority of tax information with Finance Canada since most tax information is collected by virtue of the federal *Income Tax Act*. This limited amendment will allow CRA to share tax information that is

collected by virtue of the Yukon *Income Tax Act*. An example would be information pertaining to the Yukon child fitness tax credit, which is provided under the Yukon *Income Tax Act*.

Next, we are proposing to amend section 60, which is the information and evidence section. The world has gone digital over the last few decades, and it sometimes takes a while for government agencies to adapt to these changes. The federal act was recently amended to allow CRA to deliver notifications to a bank or a credit union electronically where appropriate. This amendment, required by our tax collection agreement, aligns our act with this new process.

This brings us to the final amendment of the bill and possibly the easiest amendment to explain. Over the last few years, we have made a concerted effort to remove gender language from acts when there is no specific reason to have gender language. We have done a very good job of this in this regard, but we are not perfect. There are two remaining gender references in section 62 of this act. This proposed amendment corrects those instances. These amendments are important to ensure that all Yukoners see themselves reflected in the laws of government, regardless of their gender.

That concludes my description of all of the proposed amendments on the bill. I appreciate that, while the *Income Tax Act* is written as a series of basic, simple, logical expressions — Boolean logic expressions — it may appear convoluted to infrequent readers of the act or to those less familiar with the tax legislation. Matters of administration, compliance, and enforcement, especially related to taxes, may not be front of mind for too many people.

I would like to remind everyone, however, that the *Income Tax Act* generates in the neighbourhood of \$100 million annually for the territory. At times, it can be a complicated act, but we have obligations both to Canadians and also to our taxpayers to ensure that it stays current and effective in matters of administration, while also ensuring that our legislation remains fair and sustainable for taxpayers and remains up to date.

I would like to finish where I started by talking about the pandemic. The changes that we are making here in Bill No. 12 with respect to business investment tax credits are just some of the many initiatives that are undertaken to support the local economy.

While it may not appear as glamorous or as straightforward as direct loans, grants, or fee waivers, we are proud of these changes and of all of our initiatives over the last two years that have helped local businesses, workers, and individuals throughout the pandemic.

Finally, I would just like to thank the officials in both the Department of Justice and the Department of Finance who have put together these amendments.

At this point, I welcome any questions, and I will do my best to answer them as clearly as possible.

Ms. White: Just for anyone who hasn’t had the ability to have a briefing from the tax legend himself in the Assembly, it is those briefings that make this so much more clear. As the Premier pointed out, unless you’re steeped in tax law, it can be complicated.

One of the things that I would just like to thank our official for — and, of course, the Department of Finance — is that, when we were given the initial briefing, we were given it side by side, so we had the old part of the act and then the changes for the new act and what that would explain. I might just put out a pitch that, if that were publicly available somewhere, someone could actually go through and make those comparisons — only because the language that we are changing really makes sure that we are meeting our obligations with the Government of Canada. But those side-by-side comparisons make it really easy to understand why those are being made.

Just not to embarrass myself, I don't have specific questions mostly because of those briefings. I would say that I really thank the department and the officials, and especially the official joining us today, because it was through their level of understanding and professionalism that they were able to make it so clear — and not have a bunch of questions being asked in a way that didn't do the changes justice. Thank you for those briefings, of course.

Chair: Is there any further debate on Bill No. 12, *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

Ms. White: 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. 12, *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 12 read and agreed to

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 clauses and the title of Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, read and agreed to

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 13 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Before I move this, I would like to again thank Clarke LaPrairie for showing up. I think that there is going to be a new expense in Finance and a new title under his door, something about being a legendary guru or something. We will make sure that we make the adjustment and change to his title.

With that, Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to rise in Committee of the Whole to speak to Bill No. 205, otherwise known as the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*. I am joined today by my deputy minister, Scott Thompson.

If passed, this bill will provide spending authority for the first two months of the fiscal year. Members will be familiar with this bill as it includes funding that will ensure that the government has the necessary appropriations to fund the programs and services that Yukoners expect and rely on as we debate the main estimates.

As with previous years, the 2022-23 interim supply bill will grant spending authority to departments for the months of April and May while this process is underway. The total value of the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23* is approximately \$410.7 million. This includes \$321.1 million in operation and maintenance spending, and there is \$89.6 million in capital spending. This interim supply bill provides critical operational funding in order to allow departments to meet their financial obligations at the start of each fiscal year. The bill ensures that government services will continue and that employees, Yukon businesses, and government contractors continue to get paid until the 2022-23 main estimates receive assent.

The majority of the funding includes one-sixth of the forecasted budget, as well as large payments due early in the fiscal year for items such as the comprehensive municipal grants, the Yukon Hospital Corporation contribution agreement, Yukon University's contribution agreement, and COVID expenses for critical supports needed at the start of the fiscal year.

Yukon's comprehensive municipal grants are paid out on April 1 of each year. This bill will ensure that organizations, corporations, and other levels of governments will have the money that they need to fund their operations. It also includes funding for the universal childcare and money to fund Yukon's schools for the first two months of the fiscal year.

I would be pleased to provide members with an overview of what is included from the numbers perspective.

I mentioned legislative grants. This year's interim supply bill includes \$37.4 million in that area, the largest of which includes \$21.1 million for the comprehensive municipal grant. The amount of \$10.3 million is there for grants in lieu of taxes for municipalities, \$840,000 for post-secondary student grants and childcare subsidies, and \$3.7 million for social assistance payments.

Now, beyond these grants, contribution agreements to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon University make up \$41.1 million and \$7.3 million respectively.

Non-governmental organizations also depend on these payments to continue their operations without interruption. Under Health and Social Services, this bill will also include one-quarter of the grants and contribution agreements with NGOs, as well as a further \$8.4 million in funding to meet capacity for managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is also \$8.5 million, or one-quarter of the RCMP and 911 contract values, included in the interim supply bill.

Lastly, there is \$9.5 million included in this bill as part of funding for universal childcare and \$13 million to meet agreements, purchases, and contracts in Yukon schools.

This is just a snapshot of some of the bigger ticket items that are included in the interim supply bill and may fall outside that one-sixth allocation.

The remaining amounts are largely operational and fall under a standard two-month distribution of funds.

As we expect the *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* to receive assent by the end of the session, we will provide spending authority for the full year at that time. While I welcome questions related to the interim supply bill, I hope that members can keep their questions about the *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* to that debate.

Passing this interim supply bill definitely helps to ensure that services are still provided to Yukoners while we have that comprehensive and fruitful discussion.

Mr. Cathers: I'm going to keep it brief here today in the interest of getting on to other items and will save additional questions for debate on the budget itself rather than on interim supply.

Ms. White: As I said in our second reading speeches, I appreciate the importance of government being able to do the work that they do running the programs and making sure that the public servants who do that work are able to be paid, and that's an important part.

I also mentioned that it is 21 percent of the budget and that it's set for that two-month span. Again, that was through the excellent briefing of the Deputy Minister of Finance who is joining us today.

But making clear that this is to make sure that the business of making the lights turn on and the doors open continues — I look forward to further questions in general debate on the budget as a whole.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 205, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all

clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 205 read and agreed to

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 clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 and 2, and Schedules A and B, deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to begin by thanking each of the members who rose to speak on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, in the fall of 2021. Between sessions, representatives from the Association of Yukon Communities and Yukon government worked intensely together to share their processes to levy, collect, and remit taxes, examine differences, and look for efficiencies.

Municipalities support the climate-saving intent of this program and came to the table in the spirit of partnership. As partners, municipalities are willing to take on an additional workload and absorb some of the associated costs; however,

they cannot shift the entire burden to municipal taxpayers. This is something that I heard in my community tour last year. It is something that my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, heard as well on his comprehensive tours of the communities.

The working group brought forward recommendations to the oversight committee of elected officials that the Yukon government and participating municipalities share the program costs that municipalities could incur. The Association of Yukon Communities unanimously endorsed a funding model to offset a portion of the administrative costs. Provided the legislation before us today is passed, the departments will work together to determine budget needs for the program and implementation details to build the program, in addition to drafting regulation and working with municipal partners on bilateral program agreements.

As for the legislation before us, taking action against climate change is imperative. The *Our Clean Future* strategy sets out tangible, achievable goals to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Because 121 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were produced from heating homes and buildings across the territory in 2019, we know that changes to homes and businesses will have a big impact. The purpose of this bill is to make changes to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and the *Municipal Act* that will enable the creation of an energy-efficiency retrofit program through which Yukoners have access to funding repayable through an annual local improvement tax.

The amendments in this bill will enable the government to regulate a retrofit program, recover the funds through the local improvement tax process, and enter into agreements with municipalities to levy and collect the tax and remit it to the Government of Yukon.

Retrofits such as smart electric heating systems and biomass heating in commercial buildings will reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions while saving Yukoners money on utility bills.

But these types of changes to existing buildings are expensive. While the changes will add value to buildings and result in a more comfortable and more efficient home and business, the upfront investment in technology, labour, and materials is not immediately offset by monthly annual or energy cost-savings. Amending the *Assessment and Taxation Act* will expand the definition of “local improvement” to include energy retrofits in order to enable a new program. It will authorize the Commissioner in Executive Council to make regulations and allow the program elements and processes to be set in regulation.

The act clarifies that the minister has the authority to construct and fund local improvements outside of municipalities, but where municipalities are involved, the act ensures that a bylaw is not required for the levying of a tax for these items, that money owed by a property owner under this program becomes a tax on the property, and that municipal taxes are paid before the local improvement tax.

Amending the *Municipal Act* will introduce the retrofitting program, define retrofits for energy saving, and enable the

Government of Yukon to work with municipalities to make this program available within their municipalities. Because a municipality is the taxing authority for property contained within it, this local improvement program can only be undertaken when the municipality has agreed to levy, collect, and remit the tax to the Yukon government.

The new division includes the Government of Yukon’s responsibility to calculate the amount to levy, sets deadlines to provide information to the municipality, and specifies a municipality’s authority and obligation to collect and remit the tax. Some housekeeping to correct an error and remove a repealed item will also occur.

We heard in the working group discussions that municipalities found the remittance deadline too tight. We heard that in the House just last fall. The Yukon government agreed, and I will be tabling an amendment to the bill during line-by-line debate to extend the remittance deadline from 15 days to 91 days. Last fall, we weren’t sure if Community Services and Justice could actually do this work on such a tight deadline, but they actually really did an amazing amount of work and got this revision before us just recently. I’m more than happy to talk about it today.

With these amendments, enabling an energy-efficiency retrofit program to operate the program regulation policies can be developed.

Madam Chair, this moves the Government of Yukon another step closer to completing the actions to mitigate climate change outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

That’s all I have for my opening remarks. I look forward to questions.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in Committee today and speak to this.

Obviously, the path to getting here to Committee was a bit unusual, relative to previous bills, as it was tabled in the fall, passed at second reading, but then set aside and not called in the Fall Sitting, while the government undertook the work that the minister has referenced with AYC and with municipalities. Obviously, we have a number of questions about the work that went into that. It is interesting to hear from the minister in his opening remarks that there is an amendment coming from the minister. So, we will see the minister amend the bill that he tabled last year, ostensibly to improve it, but I am sure that when the amendment itself comes at line-by-line debate, we will have a chance to debate it more thoroughly.

To begin today, I would like to ask a few questions about exactly the work that has been done. When we left off in the fall, there was a commitment from the minister to the Third Party to do some work in exchange for the support from the Third Party at second reading, which allowed the bill to stay alive and on the Order Paper, so I was wondering if the minister can explain his understanding of what the threshold is for achieving that support and if he could explain the work that has happened so far to achieve that with the AYC and with municipalities. So far, I don’t think that we have seen anything publicly come out of municipalities or the AYC, and so I am interested to hear what the minister views as an acceptable level of support from the AYC and municipalities or any of those

individual councillors or mayors. As we know, in the last Sitting, there was sort of a battle of tabling documents where there were a number of letters tabled from various municipalities expressing support or concern with the program. As my colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin reminds me, there was more concern than support at that time.

I am wondering what we should look to in order to understand whether or not support has been achieved. Is there a letter that we can expect from the AYC or are there motions that have been passed by municipalities? What does the minister understand to be the threshold needed to achieve support for this bill today, and has he achieved that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Official Opposition this afternoon. When we left off last fall, my good colleague from the Third Party had asked that I demonstrate a good working relationship with municipalities. We struck a working group with municipalities that started to meet in early January. They met several times — I believe at least seven times — in the intervening weeks to go through the proposal and to work out costs. The working group came up with a report, which I believe exceeded 70 pages in length. It went through all of the potential interactions that a municipality might be able to see in a worst-case scenario for one of these applications.

They worked out a recommendation for us to deal with the workload. Like they said, they wanted to make sure that they were adequately compensated for that. They agreed to share some of the compensation with the Yukon government in a spirit of collegiality. We received the document at a leadership level of leaders within the Association of Yukon Communities who then reviewed the document and approved it. It went back to the Association of Yukon Communities two weeks ago. The association voted on the recommendations as presented by the working group and approved by the leadership group and unanimously supported the recommendation and the recommended approach to compensate municipalities for their work on this program.

I believe that this met the threshold of the arrangement we had with the Third Party, so we are very happy that we were able to really work so well together in the spirit of cooperation to deal with the climate emergency that so many municipalities have declared, as has the Yukon government. That's where we sit right now. We have a motion that was passed by the Association of Yukon Communities a couple of weeks ago at their meeting, which was just held. It was dated March 7: "The Association of Yukon Communities (AYC) board of directors met on March 5, 2022 and the following motion was carried: Motion BD22-06 THAT the Association of Yukon Communities endorses the recommendations of the Better Building Program Working Group and Oversight committees. Carried Unanimously. The AYC looks forward to written confirmation from your office regarding the final recommendations of the working group." We are drafting that up. That is from Gord Curran, the president of the Association of Yukon Communities.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that and I appreciate the minister's response. I haven't seen that motion, so his reading

of it today is the first I had heard of it, but one thing I did note is that the motion appeared to me to be conditional on the government's acceptance of the recommendations of the working group.

My question is whether or not the bill, in its current form — or perhaps the bill as it will be amended by the minister as he indicated in his opening remarks — reflects and accepts all of the recommendations made by the working group and therefore fulfills the requirement of the motion that was passed by the AYC on March 5.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

So, just to go back over the working group, the working group included representation from the City of Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Haines Junction, Dawson City, the Association of Yukon Communities, as well as Yukon government participants from Community Affairs, Property Assessment Taxation, and the Energy branch. The working group met six times in January and February 2022. I believe that there was a seventh meeting after we reviewed the recommendations. The oversight committee consisted of the mayors of the City of Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Watson Lake and the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the two departments in the Yukon government that will be overseeing the program. The oversight committee met three times in the same period to provide direction and to discuss the recommendations.

The working group identified that the introduction of the better building program will add volume and/or complexity to the existing municipal tax processes, as we discussed last session. The working group examined what is proposed for the program and what could be adjusted. We found out that the one-time administration fee of \$500, based on the domestic water well program, was inadequate. I had heard that in my community meetings as well as from municipalities last fall, especially for a debt-collection process that could span 15 years.

Municipalities represented on the working group analyzed their taxation processes and determined that better buildings would create eight to 10 hours of new work per project. That is the estimate that came out through the forensic — I would almost call it a "forensic analysis" — of the processes and interactions with the public that this might generate at the municipal level.

As I said, as partners in the program, municipalities were willing to absorb some of those costs but not all of them. We saw that, and we actually agreed as a group to test these assumptions — to actually do an audit of what the actual costs were after two years of project administration. So, we are going to come back to this in a little while and have another look at it to make sure that they are getting compensated adequately for the program that they are implementing on our behalf.

All parties agreed that the price to administer the program is meant to offset costs and is not a revenue stream, so we came to an agreement per file, and then we agreed that this was not to actually bring revenue into the municipality but would just cover the costs of administering the program.

So, in answer to the member opposite's question, nothing in the legislation needs to change to address the recommendations of the working group that the AYC put together, other than the time frame. We heard last fall that municipalities were concerned that having to remit payment to the Yukon government in early July was just too onerous a time frame to meet on behalf of the municipalities.

At the time last fall, I committed to looking at ways we might be able to bring an amendment forward that would provide more time. I wasn't sure at the time whether Community Services and Justice, given the incredible workload that they have been under through the pandemic, would be able to do that, but I put it to them. Justice and Community Services rose to the challenge and actually got that amendment in place. The amendment that will be proposed today will give municipalities that additional time they asked for last fall so they can remit the money to the Yukon government and have a little bit more time and not meet such a hard deadline.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's thoroughness in his answer. However, just to be clear, I would like to step back. I appreciate that he has begun to explain some of the timelines, fees and such, and the financial details of the program.

Before we get there, though, I just want to understand a little bit more about the process.

The minister has referenced two separate committees — one oversight committee and one working group. I'm wondering if he can start by telling us who was on the oversight committee and what their terms of reference were and then explain who was on the working group and what their terms of reference were.

I'm aware of the working group from the letter that he tabled on November 21 last fall, but at that point, the committee had not been struck and the terms of reference had not been achieved.

So, to begin, can the minister let us know the names and positions of the individuals on those committees and what their roles were?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The terms of reference for the better building program oversight committee and working group were assigned and approved on January 11, 2022. It provides some background that just shows that the Government of Yukon committed to consulting with municipalities and the Association of Yukon Communities on regulations and implementation details for the better building program in advance of the legislation passing in the spring of 2022. The oversight committee and working group are short-term entities made up of municipal Association of Yukon Communities and Government of Yukon representatives. The purpose of the oversight committee is to determine the scope of discussion based on proposed themes to provide overall direction and to endorse the agreement and recommendations developed by the working group.

The purpose of the working group is to develop recommendations and an opt-in agreement between the Government of Yukon and each participating municipal government that adequately addresses the administrative

workload and removes barriers to municipal participation in better buildings using the local improvement tax mechanism. The working group will examine what is proposed and what could be adjusted while adhering to the general objectives of the better building program and the themes and scope prescribed by the oversight committee.

Both committees should strive to find imaginative, novel, reasonable solutions that make the delivery of energy retrofits using the local improvement charge mechanism better while easing the administrative burden on municipalities. That was the direction. As I said, as of March 7, the Association of Yukon Communities' board of directors carried Motion BD22-06 — that the Association of Yukon Communities endorses the recommendations of the better building program working group and oversight committee.

The member opposite also asked for a list of folks who are on the committee. I will say that on the working group was the acting city manager of the City of Whitehorse, the CAO of Watson Lake, the CAO of Haines Junction, the executive director of the Association of Yukon Communities, the director of Community Affairs for Community Services, the director of Policy for Community Services, the director of Property Assessment Taxation for Community Services, the manager of the Energy branch for Energy, Mines and Resources, and a policy analyst with Community Services.

There were other members added. The CAO of Dawson City was added due to an illness of another member, and the director of corporate services for the City of Whitehorse was also included on the committee.

On the oversight committee, it was the ministers of Community Services and of Energy, Mines and Resources, as I said, the Mayor of Whitehorse, the Mayor of Watson Lake, and a councillor in Haines Junction.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answers there very much. He has addressed the membership of the committee for sure.

Just one point of clarification — at the outset of his answer, he was reading what he had first described as the context of the working group. Can I just ask him for clarification? Was that just the context, or was that indeed the terms of reference that he was reading from? If it was not the terms of reference, is he able to simply table the terms of reference at some point? It doesn't have to be today, but perhaps in the coming days if he could table the terms of reference for the working group.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Madam Chair. It was just a contextual piece — the very first. Then I did go through and give the terms of reference piece as well. So, there were two components there. The first one was contextual. I just went into climate change. I didn't read the whole thing.

The second piece was the terms of reference, which actually contextualized what the working group was going to look at and come to agreement on. They did actually go through and drafted a report that, as I said, exceeded 70 pages. It was quite in depth. That formed the basis of our discussion and eventual agreement between the municipalities and the AYC and us. The AYC has endorsed that document.

I would be happy to table that document if I can get permission to. I will talk to my colleagues at the AYC and see what their thoughts are.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer there and the clarity around the context versus the terms of reference. I won't belabour it, but it would be great if he could table the terms of reference that the working group used.

The minister has also referenced a motion that was completed by the AYC executive on either March 5 or March 7 — I wasn't clear — but was that motion delivered to the minister by way of letter? If so, can the minister please table that letter?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, it did — it was actually March 7. It did come as a letter from the president of the Association of Yukon Communities. I would be happy to table the letter.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer there and the commitment to table that. That would be very helpful.

Based on his reading of the motion that was shared with him, my understanding is that the AYC endorsed the recommendations that were made by the working group. So, the AYC hasn't endorsed the bill per se; they have endorsed the recommendations that the working group completed.

Can the minister tell us: Has he responded to the letter indicating that the government fully supports the recommendations that were made by the working group? Does the government support all of the recommendations that were made by the working group?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

So, yes, the government does certainly support the recommendations. That was what was communicated to the Association of Yukon Communities. We are in the process of responding formally to the AYC. I have communicated to them that we have accepted the recommendations as well, and that is why they went forward to their meeting. I have this letter now and am drafting a formal response to that letter.

However, I will say that the bill that we are currently discussing today enables the program. There are still some details to work out — certainly in the regulations. We have a draft regulation that I believe the committee has seen. We also have bilateral agreements because this is only an enabling program and enabling legislation. As I have said from the very outset of this discussion over this bill, it is up to every single municipality to decide whether this program is something that their community or their citizens would want, and they can then opt into the program. When they decide to do that, we will sit down with the municipality and, with each one, strike arrangements that meet their unique needs for their community. That is how the program will roll out.

What the passage of the bill will allow is for the Yukon government to provide the program to unincorporated communities outside of municipalities. So, Yukoners who live in rural settings can actually access the program and the tax authorities will be able to deliver the program that way.

Where the tax authority is a municipality, they have to represent their own needs and interests in those to their citizens.

I've said that on ATIPP and I've said that in other discussions we've had in this House. They are responsible governments in their own right, so I have every confidence that they will represent the interests of their citizens, as responsible governments, as they come forward and elect to opt into the program. There is no obligation for them to deliver the program if they decide it's not in their interest.

That's the basis of the discussions to come.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for the answer.

So, the working group has produced recommendations. The AYC executive has passed a motion endorsing those recommendations. The president of the AYC has sent a letter to the minister explaining that motion endorsing the recommendations. But the minister indicated that he hasn't responded yet — or at least responded by letter yet — to the president of the AYC.

So, in some other way, has the minister communicated to the AYC that the government supports, agrees with, and is implementing the recommendations of the working group?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Absolutely. I responded to the e-mail that the president of the AYC sent to me informally and I also had a conversation with the president of the AYC — just at noon — to tell him that the bill was coming before the House potentially this week, that I appreciated the work that he and his group had done on the recommendations, and that we support them. He wished me well. He and I had a good talk this afternoon even, so we have had at least one conversation about that, as well as the informal acceptance of the letter that he sent to me.

Chair: I ask that members please speak up when asking questions or answering the questions. Thank you.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that explanation.

At this point, my understanding then would be that the AYC has received the minister's acceptance of the recommendations and therefore they presumably are then satisfied with the bill.

So, in order for us to understand the implementation of those recommendations and whether or not the bill really captures — or the program that will be developed captures — those recommendations, it's difficult for us to make that assessment without the recommendations themselves. I think the minister referenced this, but I'll ask again just for clarity.

Is the minister able to share with the Legislature the recommendations that the working group made? Is he able to table them or provide members with a copy of the report, either the lengthier report, which the minister has referenced, or any sort of shorter, abridged document?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I did say that I would that I would be happy to share the recommendations of the Association of Yukon Communities working group. I said that I would have to talk to the association itself before doing so. I made that commitment moments ago.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for his commitment. I appreciate that he should check in with the AYC first. I understand that very much.

I will move on to the proposed structure of the program. My understanding from the minister's comments is that there

are two streams to the program; there is a residential and a commercial stream. Can the minister describe the difference between the two, and how each will work?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, there are two streams. The residential stream is available to homeowners. It includes thermal enclosure, insulation upgrades, improved ventilation, and new windows as well. Combined, these measures must surpass 20-percent energy improvement in home energy consumption as verified by the Energy branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, though I have made the commitment both to the Association of Yukon Communities and to others that in building this program, once the bill passes, we will be able to start to dive in and actually start building the program in finer detail. We are going to look to make sure that it is as inclusive as possible. We really want to make sure that people are improving their homes and that they are seeing savings in energy bills. We have been talking on the floor of the House for many days now about how those costs are rising. This is one tangible way that people can use to actually reduce their energy consumption, so we are going to make sure that it's as expansive as possible.

There is also a commercial stream, which includes retrofits for existing buildings that improve overall energy performance in the following categories: thermal enclosures, windows, insulation, and fuel switching to biomass and/or HVAC and/or recommissioning.

The main difference between the two intakes will be that the residential package is capped at \$50,000 for homes. It's \$100,000 for commercial properties. Commercial properties have a higher threshold. They are entitled to more money.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer. There was a lot there, so I just want to drill into some of the details to make sure that I have it right.

I will start with the residential program. The minister indicated that the maximum amount that would be available to a residential homeowner was 20 percent of the assessed value of the home. First of all, can the minister confirm that? Can we start with the minister confirming that it is 20 percent of the assessed value of the home?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

I will correct the record. It is 25 percent of the assessed value. The 20 percent that I referenced just earlier — 20-percent energy improvement in home energy consumption is what we are striving for. We are looking at that. We are going to see what the uptake is with that threshold, and if the uptake isn't there, we may be able to alter it in some way, shape, or form as we design the program. The initial goal is 20-percent energy consumption, and it is based on 25 percent of your assessed value.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the clarification from the minister. I believe that he also said that the amount would be capped at \$50,000. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is correct.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. The work that the minister listed as being eligible included thermal enclosures, windows, and heat pumps, I believe. I may have missed some,

though, so can the minister repeat which types of work are eligible for this?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: At the moment, as I said, the program has not been fully designed yet because, of course, we don't have legislation yet to allow the program to proceed, but the broad strokes about the program are that it will be a thermal enclosure, so insulation upgrades, improved ventilation, and new windows as well. Those are the things that we are going to focus on to try to save 20 percent of their heating costs.

Mr. Dixon: Is 20 percent a target or a cap? So, a project is ineligible unless it reaches a 25-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions or a 20-percent increase in efficiency — I am not sure which it was, but is it a cap or is it a floor? Is that something that the homeowner needs to be able to meet in order to be eligible, or is it just a target that they are using to guide their program development?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. The 20-percent threshold is a goal. We are looking to prioritize the retrofits. We have committed to trying to get 1,000 of these retrofits done.

We want to make sure that we get the best return on the investment that we're making. We're going to try to give priority to those retrofits that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions the most for the homeowner.

So, the 20 percent figure is a guide, but we want to have some sort of aspirational goal that will allow us to prioritize which projects we fund so that we get the biggest return on the investment. The goal here is to actually reduce the territory's greenhouse gas emissions and make the homeowner see tangible benefits from the improvements that they are making.

So, these are the aspirational goals of the program and that's what we're striving to do. We want to make sure we prioritize those projects that are going to see the biggest return on residential or commercial retrofits — that actually pay real benefits to the homeowner or the business involved and that actually reduce the territory's greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer.

I guess what I'm trying to understand is whether or not there is a minimum increase in energy efficiency that needs to be achieved in order to be eligible. The reason I ask that is that there is obviously a big difference between doing a complete thermal enclosure project and replacing a single window. I'm wondering if there is any minimum threshold — if one were to apply to have a single window upgraded from a single pane to a high-efficiency, triple pane window, would that be eligible, or is there a minimum threshold that the project needs to meet in order to be eligible?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, there is a front-end energy audit that is going to be done on people applying to the program. So, that is going to go through and we will go through your house and say, "If you do this, you will see these savings. These are the things that we're recommending you do."

We're going to strive — because we're looking for deep energy audits to make sure that this program actually results in meaningful change for Yukoners on both their heating bills as well as their greenhouse gas emissions in the territory. We are going to suggest, through these audits that we do, the things that

need to be done. If it came down to one window that needed to be replaced, we would probably direct that individual to one of our other programs that might be able to step in. This is for deeper, broader, and more meaningful — and the goal that we're trying to reach in the initial tranche of assessments is to hit 20 percent of energy savings for the homeowner as well as for our territorial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer.

My question, I guess, speaks to sort of the target audience here or the target client here. Obviously, if the target is a 20-percent increase in energy efficiency, then obviously the goal here is targeting older homes, particularly, I would expect, those in rural Yukon, given the fact that, if you look at the homes in Whitehorse, a house built last year in Whistle Bend would probably struggle pretty mightily to reach a 20-percent increase with a single project like this. But for a house in rural Yukon — say in Watson Lake — that was built in the 1970s, a 20-percent increase would be more attainable.

So, I'm wondering if the minister can speak to the disparity between Whitehorse and the rest of the Yukon in terms of uptake in this program. It seems to me that the target is older homes and probably those in rural Yukon, but I would like the minister to explain that a little bit and whether or not that 20-percent increase is going to guide the program in a particular direction.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to say right off the hop that this isn't an urban/rural divide. As a matter of fact, my colleague and I have travelled through rural Yukon. We have spoken to municipalities throughout the territory. We have heard from mayors about the potential issues with assessed value. We have said to those mayors that we are going to assess the program criteria and try to accommodate, when we are dealing with these municipalities, their individual, unique needs. That is part of the beauty of the onboarding process. When municipalities decide to come on to the program, we will assess the needs of the program for the municipality.

I don't think that this program will be of much use to people who have bought homes in Whistle Bend or brand new homes in the territory because we are seeing a change in the territory to much more efficient homes and better building materials. More efficient homes — people are demanding it, so those are happening. The member is right that what we are seeing are homes in rural Yukon that are older and will need to be upgraded. We are also seeing those homes as well in Whitehorse — in Hillcrest, Valleyview, Crestview, and up in my neck of the woods in Granger and Logan. All of those places have homes — and some of the 30-year-old homes will have efficiencies that we will seek to improve through this program.

The program, again, seeks to get the best value for money. We do that by assessing the home and doing the best retrofits that we can to lower your heating costs and lower your greenhouse gas emissions on an individual basis. If we do this right, as I think I said earlier today, it's 121 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions that we are targeting at reducing. That is the goal of the program. It is not an urban/rural thing. It is certainly an older home issue. Some homes are not as efficient as they could be. We are seeking to put the money

where it can best be used to reduce the heating costs of Yukon residents and generate the best results as far as greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Dixon: Just so that I have the process understood, my understanding is that the first step that a prospective client would need to take would be to seek an energy audit. The energy audit would presumably come back with a list of proposed actions that could be taken to the house to make it more efficient.

To use my sort of thinking on that, it gives a menu of options to the homeowner. Does the homeowner then pick off the menu which aspects of energy retrofits they want to pursue and then apply, or does the government require all of the things identified in the energy audit, or a certain number of them, to be included in an application? So, yes, if the minister could explain how that would work.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am going to endeavour to provide an answer to the member opposite. I do appreciate the questions that he is providing this afternoon, but I will also preface my remarks by saying that we have not yet completely built this program, because frankly, we haven't got legislation through this House that allows the program to proceed. The good folks at Energy, Mines and Resources and at Community Services are not going to do all the work without having a bill through the House that they can actually do the work for.

We've got the outline of a program, but there are still details that need to be worked on, of course, because we don't have legislation. As soon as the legislation passes the House, then we will put pen to paper and actually start to figure out a lot of the details.

That said, Energy, Mines and Resources does a lot of energy work already, so this isn't new for them. The loan program is a little bit new. The delivery system is a little bit new, but they have experience in delivering these types of retrofit programs.

The member opposite is correct. There will be an energy audit. It will start a conversation with the homeowner who will get a list of actions that, if they take them, will save X amount of energy on the back end if they were to do it. If, in doing the actions — there may be 10 items on the list. If they do five of them, maybe they will make the 20-percent threshold. If they do one of them, they won't make the threshold and they may be passed over in favour of another applicant who actually is getting a lot closer to the 20 percent. We are going to prioritize those doing the most energy retrofits of the program.

We are looking to use the money to get the best return for homeowners and the best return in terms of our climate and the action plan. We will work with them. It's entirely up to the homeowner whether they want to opt into the program. If they want to get a loan, they want to make sure that they maximize their energy savings, but it is entirely up to the homeowner whether or not they proceed with the program and what they feel comfortable doing. That said, if they are doing one window, the assessors and the good folks at Energy, Mines and Resources will find other avenues for them to meet their goals — if it is not quite as intense of an energy saving or renovation as others on the block.

That sort of lays out in very broad terms how this program will resolve on the ground when the assessor does the work of looking at the properties in question.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's explanation.

What he said was that if a homeowner gets an audit and they decide to proceed with an application that is somewhat limited — say it only achieves a five-percent increase or they only want to proceed with certain upgrades or improvements to their home — they may — in his words, I believe — be passed over in favour of another applicant.

So, does that mean that there is a fixed number of spots per entry? If so, what is anticipated to be that limit on the number of applicants per tranche?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to be clear. The goal of this program is to get as much money toward major renovations of residential and commercial properties as we possibly can. There will be audits of the program. They will identify savings. The goal is to get as close to 20 percent per property as we possibly can in greenhouse gas savings. That's the goal.

The limit on the program will be, first of all, the program commitments, which is \$50,000 per residential upgrades and \$100,000 for commercial upgrades and the budget that we allocate per year of the program. The target over the 15 years will be close to \$40 million in loans and investment in greenhouse gas reductions throughout the territory. That's over 15 years.

On an annual basis, it will be, of course, less than that, but it will ramp up as the program hits — more municipalities sign on and more people start to take the program. It will be assessed after two years to see if, starting from a municipality level, the fees that we're paying to municipalities are covering the cost without a profit motive — just to cover the very cost of administering the program.

But it's not like — if you come in and you have the assessment done and they say that, if you fix that bay window, it will save two percent and they put in an application to fix the bay — that's not what this is for. There is a whole suite of energy retrofits that are offered by Yukon Housing Corporation and Yukon Energy, Mines and Resources. This is the latest component of that. If you are not meeting the threshold of 20 percent or close to it, we'll probably direct you to another avenue to actually get that done — maybe the Yukon Housing Corporation repair or grant program. Other programs will be leveraged. Other opportunities to fix those assets that you have will be brought in by the good folks administering the program.

But the goal is to save greenhouse gas emissions and get the best return on the property owner's investment and the government's investment to save money for your heating costs and to reduce the territory's greenhouse gas emissions. That is really what this program is about.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer, but I do seek a little more clarity because he said that this is not the program for changing a single bay window or achieving only a two-percent increase, but that the target is 20 percent. Ultimately, the government will have to write some sort of threshold into their policy to give guidance to those who are administering the program to accept an application or not.

I guess my question is: Will the 20-percent threshold that the minister has indicated as their target become a firm threshold that needs to be met in order for an application to be successful? If not, what will that threshold be? Or will there be discretion left to those administering the program to accept anything that they think is close enough to 20 percent to be reasonable? If so, that leaves a lot of discretion to someone administering the program. It would be useful to know whether or not there will be a firm threshold or if it will be left to discretion, and, if so, how much discretion will be left to program administrators?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I can only take the questions — and they're good questions — from the member opposite this afternoon.

I have to commend his genuine interest and thirst for knowledge about this program, which is so important to the *Our Clean Future* document that we have brought before the territory. It is guiding our efforts to tackle climate change in the state of emergency that we declared.

What I will say is that he is looking for specifics about a program that doesn't have specifics attached to it. It has broad strokes, but in reality, until the legislation that is before us this afternoon passes, there is no program. The legislation enables the program. The legislation enables municipalities to sign on.

So, there are details that still need to be worked out in the coming months, once the legislation passes, as to how we actually meet the broad goals of this program, which is to provide a grant of up to \$50,000 to people who own residences and up to \$100,000 to people who own businesses to reduce their heating costs, the amount of fuel they burn, through improved energy retrofits and to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that the territory is making.

The goal, as stated — we think that 20 percent is a good number to start with as an aspirational goal in designing this program, but when we go out and actually assess properties and see the uptake from the program, we will begin to see how many people can actually achieve the 20-percent goal — how many applicants are hitting 10 percent, maybe, or 15, 30, or 40 percent. We just don't know because this is a new program for the territory — brand new.

We have set an initial target of 20 percent saying that, if we can improve homes or businesses to save 20 percent of their heating costs or improve their homes or businesses by 20 percent, this is a real goal. When we do the assessments of these homes, we'll see what sort of targets and improvements can be identified in these homes to actually make the needed and necessary and much-vaunted improvements to the homes.

Now, I flagged earlier that in rural communities and smaller communities, the assessed tax value of the homes may actually be less in some of these communities and may require that, in the agreements that we strike with the municipalities — these individual and unique agreements with some of the municipalities — we have to reassess in some of these places how we actually deliver the program in their communities. I have said that to the mayors of these communities — that we are open to that negotiation to make sure this program meets

the needs of their communities. That is, again, something else that we will strive to do in our negotiations going forward.

As I said, I applaud the member opposite's thirst. This is an exciting program. I can only take his questions as sincere interest in a program that has yet to be firmly established. I look forward to providing more details on the program itself once we get the legislation through the Legislative Assembly and then start to look in technicolor at what the program delivery will look like in specifics.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's comments, but I should point out that it was the government's decision to bring this bill forward today to debate it. We had heard last fall a number of concerns about what the program that would come from this bill would look like. Now we're told that the AYC has provided some recommendations but that they are not able to be tabled or shared with us yet. The government has said that there are a number of things that this program will achieve in terms of greenhouse gas emissions reductions, but they can't tell us anything about the program yet. So, it makes it difficult for us to judge the government's actions here without the government having done some of this work.

So, things like understanding what the actual recommendations are, from the AYC to government, would have been extremely helpful. I think that the minister should quickly seek the approval of AYC to share those recommendations so that we as legislators can actually understand whether or not the commitments that the government has made have been met.

So, I appreciate that the details of the program aren't finalized yet and aren't in place, but this minister has, a number of times, made some commitments around the targets for the uptake in a program, even though it doesn't exist yet. So, I will ask again for him to sort of explain that a little bit more.

What is the target uptake for the program on the residential side? What does the minister anticipate that the government will need in terms of resources to meet that demand or that target, and when I say "target" — we have talked about energy-efficiency targets. What I am talking about is the number of applications per year. How many Yukoners are going to be able to take this program and reach a successful application? What is their goal here? We have heard a number of times the minister referencing the amount of greenhouse gases that he anticipates this program will reduce. How is that being determined? What is the level of uptake that the minister anticipates?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to be clear. Language matters, and I heard the member opposite say that I haven't provided any information this afternoon. I don't think that is quite accurate. While I am trying not to get into the weeds too much about the specific program details, I have provided quite a bit of information this afternoon to the member opposite about the better building program and the goal. The goal is to cut our greenhouse gas emissions, targeting about 121 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions that are currently captured by the home heating and commercial heating industry.

We have stated as well that the Association of Yukon Communities is in support of the program. I said that in my

opening remarks. Where we were having issues was how they get compensated for administering the program on behalf of the Yukon government over the course of 15 years. That was their main concern. We have struck an agreement on that front. Through our participation in this leadership committee, we have come to an agreement.

The recommendation was made and forwarded to the AYC. The AYC passed a resolution to endorse our approach — the recommendations. I said that I would check with the Association of Yukon Communities, and if there are no hurdles or problems, I will certainly table the information that the member opposite has asked for. I have said I would do that. I have talked about the aspirational goal of the program, which is to save 20 percent. The goal is to try to strike a 20-percent reduction in heating costs and greenhouse gas emissions after an assessment is done by the assessors within government, who will then work with the homeowner to determine the best way to approach these energy retrofits and make that investment in their homes.

What are they comfortable with? What level of loan are they willing to take on, with the goal of getting it toward 20 percent, which is the aspirational goal? Why 20 percent? Because that is really the sweet spot in terms of managing reduction in your costs of running your home and actually reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

If they are going to do more — 30 percent — great. If we are not seeing any that are hitting 20 percent after the assessments are done — if the majority are sitting at 17 percent — then we will have to look at the program and fix or alter it. That has been my MO for years. I know the member opposite has seen it with many programs. Get the program active, working; let's do it, assess it, and retool it as necessary to make sure that it works for Yukoners, that it works for municipalities and the Association of Yukon Communities, and make sure that it works well for the Government of Yukon as well. That's the approach.

The sweet spot is 20 percent, and that is the goal that this program itself — one of many available to Yukoners — and one of some that are available to Yukoners is there. I will say that the program target has been clear from the very beginning. We are looking to get up to 1,000 residential and commercial buildings assessed and improved by 2030. That's the deadline for this. We are looking at trying to get 1,000 of these projects out the door, and the retrofits going — 1,000 retrofits by 2030.

We are not going to get — certainly not this year — I don't even know if we will be able to make the target this year, because, as I said, last year we were hoping to get the legislation through and build a project, and maybe we can't hit this building season.

At this stage, it's unlikely that we're going to hit the 2022 building season, or maybe in the late building season into the fall, hopefully we can get some out the door. But then, starting next year, we'll get going and a more robust assessment and loan program will hit Yukoners, provided that municipalities come on board. Again, it's up to the municipalities to opt in. Until they do, we're looking at rural Yukon.

So, I can't really say how many per year. I know the aspirational goal is to get 1,000 of these loans out by 2030. I know that there is a lot of interest in the program. We'll see what happens later this year — if this legislation passes in the community — and then, going forward in other years, how many of these loans will get out the door.

But the goal is to get 1,000. So, if you are looking at 2023, seven years, 1,000 — the math is somewhere around 150, I would bet. But that's the goal and it depends on the capacity within YG, the interest within the community itself, and the municipalities coming on board. So, there are a lot of variables — whether or not there is some other global catastrophe that intervenes that we can't seem to get enough of these days.

I'll leave it there.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister tell us what the department is using as an estimated value for each application? They must have done some sort of study to understand the fiscal picture. So, I would like to know what they are estimating each application will be on average for this program.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, the estimates came out of *Our Clean Future*. We used an energy modelling company to take the average cost of the average home, and the renovations that you typically might get to, to get the best reduction in your greenhouse gas emissions. I am sure you can understand that it gets fairly technical fairly quickly, but what they have assessed is that the average home retrofit that we are looking at is about \$50,000. That is the average, so that is the number we use. That is what they used to do the modelling — up to \$50,000. That is what the energy modelling company came up with, and that is what we have used. Of course, commercial properties are a little bit more expensive that way, so we upped it to \$100,000 for commercial properties. That was based on estimates done by an energy modelling company that was looking at *Our Clean Future* and has looked at the Energy Solutions Centre — the type of retrofits that they have been doing in the past — and that is the information that we have used to come up with the numbers in the program.

Mr. Dixon: The minister said that the target by 2023 is 1,000 residences and commercial buildings. So, if the average is \$50,000, then we would anticipate the uptake to be around 100 to 125 per year, depending on whether or not this year is successful or not, so we would need to see a budget of about \$5 million to \$6 million annually. Is the minister aware of any money in the budget currently to accommodate this program in this budget year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: For this year, with some optimism that we will be able to get the deals with municipalities in place — or with a municipality or some municipalities — and that we can begin designing the program and moving it forward, we actually have \$785,000 in the budget this year for the program. That is the initial offering, given that it is a lighter, shorter year. Next year, we will ramp it up, of course, and see what the intake is and then work from there.

We didn't expect to be hitting 150 applications right off the hop. This is going to require the assessments as well, which can be time-intensive. We are going to work to get this program off the ground this year — that is the goal — with a modest

\$785,000. Then, in future years, we will increase the number of loans that we get out the door. That is the approach we are going to take. It's going to be gradual and then will improve and increase over the coming years.

Seeing the time, Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West 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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Finally, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, 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: 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 5:28 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 49

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, March 15, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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

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NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier 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

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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
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 — 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

Speaker: Would members please join me in welcoming the Speaker for the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and Member for Mackenzie Delta, Frederick Blake Jr.

Speaker Blake was elected in 2011 and was re-elected in 2015 to the 18th Legislative Assembly. Speaker Blake is interested in seeing the differences and similarities between the NWT and Yukon assemblies. Welcome, Speaker Blake.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In commemoration of the Alaska Highway tribute, we have, from the Transportation Maintenance branch and the Transportation Engineering branch, Jonathon Rudolph, Amy Tyrrell, Angie Dickson, and Josée Perron. Thank you for joining us today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have a number of business leaders and those supporting business leaders here today for a tribute to a number of business anniversaries. Today with us from Air North, we have: Michael Bock, catering and cabin services manager; Rick Nielsen, chief operating officer; Ben Ryan, chief commercial officer.

From Pelly Construction, we have: Jennifer Byram and a well-known, famous hockey player from the Whitehorse hockey league and the Edgewater franchise, Brent Cooper.

From Yukon Soaps, we have Donna Hogan, who is Joella Hogan's — the owner — mom, as well as Louise Clethero, her aunt.

Thank you for coming today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Alaska Highway 80th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Today I rise to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Alaska Highway. This project forever changed the Yukon, and, of course, it was remarkable to look back and consider how fast it was done. In February of 1942, the United States Army approved a plan for the construction. It

was approved by the US Congress and then by President Roosevelt within five days.

Construction began within weeks, with hundreds of pieces of construction equipment arriving by train at Dawson Creek in mid-March. More than 11,000 soldiers in the US Army Corps of Engineers were involved. They lived in camps in Alaska, British Columbia, and the Yukon to build a highway from different directions with a plan to meet in the middle. They worked night and day.

The entire 2,400-kilometre project was completed in just eight months. In fact, given the extra light afforded them from the midnight sun, 643 kilometres of the highway were built in July alone. The project was built under the urgency and crisis of the Second World War. While it was mainly the US Army that built the highway, they were not alone. We should also remember the role played by indigenous guides. One of them was the late Liard Tom, who, among others, helped guide the US Army through the bush and along trails and traplines. Notably, Liard Tom's great-granddaughter Melissa Carlick currently works with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

The impact of the construction on Yukon First Nations cannot be understated. In the years during and following construction, irreversible changes occurred in the lives of First Nation people living along the route. Such changes occurred in two broad areas: first, in the relationship between First Nation people and their land and, second, in the long-standing and social institutions associated with kinship.

The construction changed the ethnic balance in the Yukon where First Nations quickly became a minority within the Yukon. We must remember that Yukon First Nation elders overwhelmingly maintain that the Alaska Highway brought alcohol abuse, epidemics, and an alarming amount of violence, grief, and further social disruption to their societies.

As well, it is also important to remember that about a third of the US soldiers who worked on the highway were African American. It is said that the efforts of the African American regiments were the driving force for desegregation of the US military, which occurred in 1948.

The Alaska Highway is a remarkable feat of engineering. The scale and speed of this endeavour is one that Canada may never see again. It is fitting that I am reading this tribute during National Engineering Month.

From the muskeg that swallowed road-building equipment whole to the thawing permafrost, engineers had to tackle the challenges that came with building on northern terrain, particularly in terms of intermittent permafrost, and we are still dealing with those challenges today.

Today, the Alaska Highway, of course, looks quite different. For example, it is no longer gravel and it is a lot wider than its original 12 to 18 feet. However, it is still a vital trade route and indispensable connection to our neighbours in British Columbia and Alaska.

Today, once again, it is important that we take time to mark the 80th anniversary of this significant and complex piece of the Yukon's history.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 80th anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway, also known as the “Alcan”; it’s often called that.

The Alaska Highway, roughly constructed in less than eight months in 1942, is to this day considered a remarkable feat of engineering. The highway was constructed as an emergency war measure in order to provide a military supply route to Alaska. American troops and civilian workers worked with thousands of pieces of equipment, steam shovels, blade graders, cable blade graders, tractors, bulldozers, cranes, snowplows, trucks, and much more.

Groups of engineers and crews worked along the highway starting at numerous points and were averaging about 13 kilometres a day. This pioneer road spanned from Dawson Creek to Big Delta, Alaska, over 2,300 kilometres. The highway underwent further work throughout the years beginning the next year, in 1943, when the road was upgraded to a gravel-covered highway and permanent bridges were constructed.

In April 1964, Canada took over portions of the highway from Dawson Creek to the US border. It was open to unrestricted travel in 1947.

Many changes impacted the corridor in a number of ways and have had a lasting effect on the entirety of Canada’s northwest. The highway affected settlement patterns in the region.

With a route to the north and the ability to move goods, communities began to spring up, and the population of northern BC and the Yukon began to grow. The sustainable access provided by the highway allowed for the integration of the region into the national economy. To this day, it is Yukon’s main trade link with other jurisdictions. The arrival of geologists and prospectors in turn supported mining production in the territory, which has flourished over the years. The construction of year-round roads to Mayo and to Dawson eliminated the need for the sternwheelers, ending the era of Yukon’s historical river transportation, and most went to road.

In 1953, Whitehorse became the capital of the Yukon, officially taking over the title from Dawson City. Since 1977, road improvements on the Shakwak portion of the highway system have been funded through the United States-Canada Shakwak agreement. Since the funding for the maintenance was exhausted, we have been actively lobbying the governments of the United States and Canada to ensure that secured funding is put in place for the road upgrades and continued maintenance.

The Official Opposition, and certainly my constituents in the riding of Kluane, are happy to see the United States government authorize funding for the reconstruction of Shakwak again. So, we look forward to seeing the Yukon government move forward with securing an agreement on this project and to the much-needed work to be done along the Alaska Highway.

I would also close by recognizing and thanking all of those individuals who have had a hand in building and maintaining

the Alaska Highway over these 80 years. It is a crucial part of Yukon’s highway network, connecting communities together and keeping us connected to the rest of Canada and Alaska.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I am pleased to pay tribute to the 80th anniversary of the construction and opening of the Alaska Highway. As we acknowledge the significance of the building of the highway, it is important that we reflect on the history through clear and not rose-coloured lenses. There were winners and there were losers. It was an amazing feat of engineering and labour. There were huge benefits, and there were also huge, often hidden, human costs.

Like any significant historic event, the richness of history is enhanced by our willingness to explore the good, the bad, and the ugly of our history. In the last decade, the public has become more aware of some of the lesser known stories of the Alaska Highway; some of those have been mentioned here. One that comes to mind for me is the 4,000 black American soldiers who were sent north to build this highway and contributed greatly to its successful construction. Their treatment and the conditions that they lived and worked under have only recently been acknowledged, and it is good to see in the last few years that their contributions have been honoured.

I would also like to acknowledge the impact on First Nation communities, for whom the highway brought drastic social and economic changes. Along with jobs for many, there were losses from diseases such as measles, dysentery, jaundice, whooping cough, mumps, tonsillitis, and meningitis. These introduced diseases resulted in the deaths of many First Nation children.

The Alaska Highway’s legacy is a complicated one. Today, we remember and celebrate this road, which has had a profound impact, both good and bad, on Yukoners past and present. It provides the route for many of the goods and services that we depend on from down south. It brings tourists to our communities. It provides Yukoners with business opportunities and jobs. While celebrating, I hope we remember, and also take lessons from, the building of the Alaska Highway and consider those lessons as we invest in the projects of today and tomorrow.

In recognition of local business anniversaries

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to a number of iconic Yukon businesses celebrating anniversaries. This includes Air North, Pelly Construction, Yukon Soaps, as well as Yukon Brewing.

Air North is celebrating 45 years of high-quality service as Yukon’s airline. From bridging communities through convenient travel options to transporting the supplies that remote Yukoners need, Air North is truly interwoven into every aspect of our territory. An airline unlike any other, Air North sets an example for what I truly believe should be the standard of quality air travel. We are all fortunate to have this local service providing all of the travel needs that bring Yukoners and friends and family together.

Congratulations, as well, to Pelly Construction, celebrating 35 years in the Yukon and beyond, from the early beginnings, building the Dawson City riverside dike, to the runway in Antarctica, to servicing the Yukon's mining industry. Pelly is a premier mining contractor and construction company that has consistently delivered excellent service throughout the entirety of its history.

I also want to acknowledge the success of Joella Hogan and the Yukon Soaps Company, which has been handcrafting soaps for Yukoners for 10 years. Operating out of the Village of Mayo, Yukon Soaps Company contributes to the economic diversification, both in the community and the Yukon as a whole. Through her work, she is also contributing to the social and cultural fabric of our territory by connecting people to culture and to the land.

Lastly, Yukon Brewing is celebrating 25 years of providing Yukoners with high-quality adult beverages. In 1997, co-founders Alan Hansen and Bob Baxter created a craft brewery in Whitehorse that would service the north with quality beer and spirits while contributing to our local economy. Yukon Brewing is a fantastic example of a simple idea being grown into a household name through hard work and commitment to quality and superior customer service. I look forward to seeing all the creative concepts that they have come up with in the years to come.

Congratulations to all four of these excellent northern businesses on their milestone anniversaries and for their contributions to our communities while providing the high-quality products and services that matter to Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to congratulate several businesses that deserve to be recognized for their longevity, service, and success. Air North — 45 years our Yukon's airline. It's the best little airline that caters to people and their life situations. If a traveller has a special request, the crew and staff will do everything they can to accommodate. Situations beyond their control, like a worldwide pandemic, are handled with realistic solutions. Well done, Joe Sparling and your amazing family and team. Here's to many, many more years of flying northerners, visitors, and business clients to their destinations.

Pelly Construction — 35 years. Well-known throughout Yukon as a leading mining and construction company, they provide expertise in mine site development, mining, and reclamation. They are a family-run business that prides itself on quality, integrity, and results. Keith and Jennifer Byram embody this statement.

Yukon Brewing — 25 years. Originally known as Chilkoot Brewing Company, owners Bob Baxter and Alan Hansen have proven to be masters of their craft. By creating a number of award-winning beers and Two Brewers spirits, they have established a devoted customer base made up of Yukoners and visitors alike, and they are always experimenting with new products. I love the product names and designs.

Yukon Soap Company — 10 years — is a small, rural soap and essential oil company owned and operated by Joella Hogan.

We gave her a wonderful tribute in this House when she won the award for Indigenous Business of the Year. From her business in the heart of the Yukon — Mayo — Joella incorporates local herbs and berries into her products. They are truly her own creation. Kudos to Joella and her team.

Yukoners know the importance of supporting local, and we have stressed it more and more during the past several years. It is an honour to say that these companies are the absolute best when it comes to supporting local events and charities. Even when belts have to be tightened, they are always stepping up to give, share, and support.

No matter what year each company is celebrating as being in business, whether it's one to 50, congratulations and keep on keeping on. Small and medium businesses are the backbone of our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. White: I'm pleased to pay tribute on behalf of the Yukon NDP to Yukon Brewing, Pelly Construction, Yukon Soaps, and Air North. Each of these businesses was started with an idea and a desire to actively invest in work in the Yukon. We have heard from my colleagues in the House about the history and successes of these businesses, and there is indeed much to celebrate.

I wish to acknowledge the countless ways they each contribute to making lives better for Yukoners. Each of these businesses hire Yukoners. They provide training and support so their employees are successful. Each of these businesses contribute to countless community organizations and events. They donate their time, energy, money, and products to so many causes that in turn support Yukoners. Each of these businesses are invested in the success and the health and well-being of our Yukon communities. For that, not only are we lucky, but we're also incredibly grateful.

So, whether you're flying, building, relaxing, or bathing, Yukoners, we are in good hands.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a document that shows the Yukon Party's support for new placer mining laws.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling today a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works entitled "Ongoing extra security costs in the Main Administration Building".

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling a letter to the ministers of Health and Social Services and of Justice regarding the recent deaths at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

I also have for tabling a letter to the Yukon's Member of Parliament regarding the need for regulation for psychologists from the Psychological Society of Yukon.

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. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Dylan Loblaw, the new Chief of the Ross River Dena Council, as well as all those elected as councillors.

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

THAT this House urges the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Education to live up to their promise to provide Hidden Valley School parents with a copy of the video from the November 9, 2021 online meeting between those two ministers, department officials, RCMP, and parents.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House commends the private sector for major increases in the amount of money being spent on residential building construction, including a 79-percent increase when comparing January 2021 to January 2022 and an increase on an annual basis of \$66 million in 2021 compared to 2020.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT this House congratulates the United States Senate on voting unanimously to make daylight saving time permanent in November 2023.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Unless the minister was actually moving that, I believe he meant to say that he rose “to give notice” of that motion. I would just ask for clarification on that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I totally flubbed that, so, yes, “I give notice of the following motion”.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon aviation industry

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Our government is continuing to provide vital support for the Yukon’s aviation industry. Our aviation system is essential for connecting our communities, building our economy, and linking the Yukon with the rest of the world. Recognizing this, our government has made significant investments in aviation over the past few years, including upgrades to equipment and facilities.

We have prioritized building stronger relationships with our aviation stakeholders to help better support this critical

sector. We created the Yukon Aviation Advisory Committee, which has been instrumental in giving us feedback on how we can better work with stakeholders and support these businesses.

We have developed a 10-year strategy called “Flight Path”. This helps to guide our investments in the Yukon’s aviation infrastructure for the benefit of all Yukoners and the territory’s air carriers.

However, we know that there is more work to be done to help grow and develop Yukon’s aviation system and the sectors that rely upon it. As the major airport in Yukon, the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport is a conduit for many important operations within the territory. It provides critical support for crucial medical and community services, serves as a vital connection for the tourism and resource sector, helps keep northern mining operational, and much more. With these considerations in mind, I am excited to announce that the Yukon government will be making a number of improvements at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. This year, we are upgrading the parallel runway, reconstructing the apron 1 panels, realigning taxiway golf, as well as adding in water and sewer at Chipmunk Place and finishing the resurfacing work on taxiway echo and the apron taxi lane.

This may not sound glamorous, Mr. Speaker, but it is, of course, important work that is needed for an effective and modern airport that will last for years to come.

We are also planning for the reconstruction of the main runway and the replacement of the airport maintenance facility, as well as other upgrades that will support the recovery of the aviation industry in the Yukon as well, as we continue to learn with COVID-19.

All of these critical upgrades will not only keep the Whitehorse airport safe and operational, but they will also help to build capacity to support future jet service. The aviation community has demonstrated tremendous tenacity and unparalleled dedication to continue their operations throughout the last two years. As we begin to emerge out of this pandemic, the government is committed to help this sector thrive in the growing demands of travel and tourism.

I would like to take a moment to recognize all of the air carriers, airport operations, pilots, medevac companies, and everyone involved in our highly capable aviation community. They have all gone above and beyond to keep our territory connected and safe. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed. Thank you for all that you do.

I look forward to sharing the progress of all of these exciting projects at the Whitehorse airport and continuing to make improvements to our airports and aerodromes across the territory.

Mr. Hassard: It is an honour to rise to today in response to this ministerial statement. For those of us who live north of 60, we know that the airport is the lifeline for all Yukon communities. It doesn’t matter where you live.

For communities such as Old Crow, it is the only way to receive supplies year-round. For communities such as Mayo, Faro, and Dawson, it drives the mining industry in their area. For communities such as Watson Lake and Haines Junction, it

provides a point for tourism. For Carmacks, Carcross, and pretty much every other Yukon community with an airport, it hosts many small aircraft and provides a pickup point for rural Yukoners needing critical air ambulance service.

For Whitehorse, it's the central hub for the entire territory. The Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport provides an outlet for some important services that Yukoners cannot do without. From cargo shipping and air ambulance service, to welcoming employees and goods for the mining sector, to training new pilots, and to, of course, passenger traffic — and a way for all Yukoners to access the south in just over two hours.

As the name implies, it also welcomes international traffic with the Condor flight from Europe that brings tourists to the territory. It also serves as an important backup landing spot for any major passenger or cargo aircraft that needs to be rerouted on one of North America's most important access routes to and from Asia and the Far East. That is why it is so important that the Whitehorse airport be maintained to the point where it not only meets but exceeds the standards of the day.

To quote the minister, the work may not sound glamorous, but this is important work that is needed for an effective and modern airport that will last for many years to come. We certainly agree.

But, as I just pointed out, the airport is so critical that it needs to be in tip-top shape, or better, at all times, so can the minister confirm the budget and timelines for this project? With uncertainty surrounding supply chains, can the minister also tell us if there's a backup plan in place to make sure the work is done in a timely manner to minimize disruption to air traffic and keep the project under budget?

I would also like to ask the minister for an update on the Yukon's Flight Path multi-year investment strategy. The final report from Stantec was issued in January 15, 2021, but since that time, we have not heard from the government as to what they are doing with this report.

The strategy makes several recommendations for investing in Yukon aviation, with an estimated expenditure of between \$217 million and \$356 million for capital investments. It also recommends \$15 million per year for increased O&M costs over 10 years.

Now, the report was issued over a year ago, so has the government provided a final response to the report yet? If so, where can we see it? Has it informed this work at the airport this summer?

I hope the minister can address these questions in his response.

Ms. Tredger: I'll start by echoing the importance of a welcoming, safe, and well-designed airport for our aviation and tourism industries. Where would our beloved local airline be without a modern airport to support its operations? I want to give a big thanks to all those airport and airline workers who have worked so hard on the front lines these past two years and beyond to keep us connected to the — capital O — Outside.

Regarding the projects described today, I understand that the need to do some of this work is due to the effects of melting permafrost.

My first question to the minister is: Have climate risk assessments been done for the new projects? What steps are being taken to mitigate the effects of climate change on these projects so that they can last for years to come?

I also understand that the new maintenance facility is being designed right now. I hope that climate change adaptation and mitigation will be considered in the planning process.

While we're talking about the airport, I would like to highlight the maintenance of the airport trail that passes around the perimeter of the airport. It's an important piece of infrastructure for active commuters from Hillcrest, Granger, Copper Ridge, McIntyre, and other neighbourhoods west of the highway. The minister and I have corresponded quite a bit about this. This trail is important, both as an active transportation route that helps to reduce our emissions, but also from an accessibility lens.

I am aware that the path itself is a city responsibility, but there are a number of decisions made by Highways and Public Works that impact the maintenance of the bike path. I have written the minister about the problem of snowplows on the highway dumping snow back onto the freshly cleared path. He has promised that he is working with the city on this. Could he give an update on that work?

There is so much opportunity for creative thinking here. Another problem on the airport trail is that, despite the city's best efforts to keep it clear, the steady winds blowing across the field of the airport cause large snowdrifts to be deposited onto the cleared path. It has been pointed out that the airport plow crews are already piling snow on the northwest corner of the airport and that this section doesn't get drifted in. Why not distribute these piles along the entire north end to act as a snow fence, saving the city time and money on clearing and keeping the trail open to commuters more often?

I guess what I'm really asking is that the maintenance of an active transportation route be prioritized and that we collectively take responsibility to make sure they are usable by everyone who needs them. Our expectation is that the Yukon government will continue to work with its partner governments to follow through on its commitment to our climate and ensure that active transportation is a priority.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Perhaps, just as a preliminary comment in responding to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, I can assure the member that I am certainly a strong proponent of active transportation — not really the topic of today. However, I do have regular meetings with the mayor of the City of Whitehorse and we are in conversation to coordinate plowing schedules and trying to ensure that the path that has been identified is open as much as absolutely possible, but thank you for your comments.

Mr. Speaker, all Yukon communities deserve access to infrastructure that works and meets their needs. This is why our government has made the biggest capital project investment in an airport in the history of our territory. We care about resilient

infrastructure and the generations to come and that we need to continue to support. Maintenance in our aviation industry is an everyday necessity. These types of upgrades may not always be easy to see. They are, as I said before, not often glittering makeovers to behold, but they go a long way to ensuring that safety and operational efficiency is top notch at our airports. Without these forward-looking investments today, tomorrow's ability to advance aviation services will be lost. These include accommodating direct flights to and from Frankfurt via Comdor, which are slated to return this summer.

It is easy to fall behind if one ignores maintenance. Our government has long believed in being proactive in this regard. Mr. Speaker, the investments we continue to make to improve the Whitehorse International Airport will significantly extend the life of the parallel runway, the apron 1 panels, taxiway golf, and much more. As we noted in our five-year capital plan, the major reconstruction and upgrading work will take place from 2022-23 through fiscal year 2025-26.

Through the implementation of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy on these projects, Yukon First Nations will see tangible benefits to their citizens and businesses. As well, importantly, the secondary runway will be upgraded to handle 737 traffic to ensure continuous operations at the airport.

With more than \$51 million in the budget to support airline access to the territory for Yukoners, visitors, and businesses, our government continues to make historic investments in the Yukon's airports and aerodromes to support our aviation industry and tourism and increase economic opportunities throughout the territory. A further \$69 million will support a wide variety of community infrastructure projects in and around Yukon communities.

This will include an expansion to the Mayo aerodrome. As members will well know, the Mayo airport has truly been transforming over the past few years. In 2019, we worked with community partners in Mayo to rehabilitate the runway and purchase new maintenance equipment to help ensure that it received certification as an airport by Transport Canada. Since receiving that certification, modern, energy-efficient airfield lighting has been installed, leading to an expansion of services and capacity. Yukoners in Mayo are more connected than ever, as such, including through Air North flights until the pandemic reduced the demand for that service.

Meanwhile, in Dawson City, the runway has been paved. A new second apron and a new maintenance facility were built, as well as several other upgrades, such as the helicopter parking area, visual aids for pilots, and additional operational areas to support air carrier operations.

Burwash Landing is another community slated to see aerodrome site improvement, as you will have noticed highlighted in our budget. This is all part of building resilient communities that will improve the quality of life for all. I look forward to continuing this important work.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Moose management

Mr. Istchenko: In February, the Minister of Environment announced that the Liberal government would be imposing permit hunt authorizations in the Sifton-Miners Range and the South Canol moose management units. This is a proposal that was pushed by the Yukon government in the 2019 wildlife regulation proposal process. In response to the idea of the PHA for the South Canol moose management unit, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board recommended setting aside this proposal, allowing for more survey work and further public consultation.

Why did the minister not accept this recommendation from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Moose, as we know, is the most harvested species by Yukon hunters and is an important species culturally. In some areas, the combined licensed and subsistence harvesting of moose is at or above sustainable levels, particularly in areas that are easy to access.

As the member opposite indicated, starting in the 2022 hunting season, moose hunting will change in three moose management units. This will include establishing a threshold hunt for the Mayo moose management unit. This hunt will open on September 1, and the threshold will be set at 11 moose. In addition, the South Canol and Sifton-Miners moose management units will be put on permit. Yukoners can apply for a hunting opportunity for these areas through the permit hunt authorization lottery, starting April 22, 2022. Limiting harvest in those moose management units is essential to ensure that moose populations stay healthy and that licensed harvest opportunities remain available over the long term.

We have combined information gathered from harvesters, First Nations, and community partners with results from our targeted scientific surveys so that management decisions are informed with the best and most currently available data.

Mr. Istchenko: The question I asked was why the minister didn't follow the recommendation of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, set aside the proposal, and allow for the survey work and further public consultation to work with those affected.

In their letter to the minister about this proposal, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board made it clear that there was strong opposition to this measure from the public. They also noted that imposing a PHA in the South Canol area would create issues in other parts of the Yukon. To quote from the advice to the minister, they said: "Many First Nations and Renewable Resources Councils have expressed serious concerns over the continued 'whack-a-mole' approach and urge the Government to look at moose management from a broader perspective."

Why did the minister not follow the advice of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Specifically with respect to the South Canol moose management unit, the Ross River Dena Council has asked for licensed harvest restrictions in this area for many years, and we received a letter from the Chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council indicating that establishing permit areas for

licensed hunters would help address their concerns in this area. We, of course, acknowledge that this was not the recommendation of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

However, the decision to vary the board's recommendation and go forward with a regulation change was approved, as our evidence shows that immediate regulation of harvest is necessary to ensure sustainable moose populations in this area. A survey conducted in 2013 indicated that, to have a sustainable harvest, a total of 15 bulls for both licensed and First Nation hunters could be harvested in any one season. From 2017 to 2021, licensed harvests alone averaged 15 bulls, not including First Nation harvest.

So, while licensed harvest has been relatively consistent for many years, the estimated total harvest numbers indicate that it is at a level that is far above what is sustainable for this moose population, and licensed hunters are taking a disproportionate amount of the sustainable harvest. To put it another way, we need to see the moose population — my scientists say — roughly double in size from the 2013 survey for the current harvest numbers to be considered sustainable.

Mr. Istchenko: The advice of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board was for the government to look at moose management from a broader perspective. Like the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, we are concerned that the Liberal government is not fully considering the broader impacts of their decisions on wildlife management. Limiting access in one area creates pressure in another. In their letter to the minister about the particular proposal, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board said: "The lack of timely and concrete data in the proposal has eroded public confidence in the merit of the proposal and the need for a regulatory change."

So, if the board thought that pushing through this proposal in 2020 was eroding public confidence, what impact does the minister expect that pushing through this proposal two and a half years after the public consultation will have?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I suppose I will start at the outset by saying that, as you will know, in the budget — from last year's budget — approximately \$700,000 to \$750,000 was set aside for aerial moose surveys, including in the Sifton-Miners Range, so that we will be guided by the best data possible. I am also advised by my department that funds have been set aside to do an aerial survey of the South Canol in the upcoming season. We will be guided by that information as well.

These are adaptive measures that can be adapted as necessary, but we have received information and the best data available from my scientists and the discussions we had with the Ross River Dena Council that this area is under stress and restrictions are required.

I will be guided by science on this, and I said that we are committed to doing the surveys, which are expensive, but they will provide the data to all stakeholders, as it becomes available.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: The Whistle Bend school is significantly overbudget. The spring budget of 2019 allocated approximately

\$25 million for the project. By November 2019, it had already gone overbudget to \$32 million. Then, by July 2021, the budget had ballooned to \$42.8 million. That is almost \$18 million overbudget from the original estimate in the 2019 budget documents.

Can the minister tell us if he expects the cost overruns related to this project to go even higher?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Building a new school in 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 the school design incorporates important community elements.

As the member opposite will know, Ketz Construction Corporation was awarded the design/build contract last summer, and the detail design work is near completion. Some sitework started last fall, and we are expecting to be in construction of the foundation when the ground thaws this spring.

Construction completion of the school is planned for the winter of 2023-24.

I take issue with the member opposite's characterization of the cost inflation, but I will address that in a subsequent question with respect to how that has come to be. The design/build contract was awarded to Ketz Construction for ultimately \$42.8 million.

Ms. Clarke: When the school was first announced in 2019, the Liberals committed that the project would be completed by 2023. An August 2019 briefing note confirms that completion was targeted for June 2023.

Will the school be completed by 2023? Or will this be a broken promise by the Liberals?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: There is every intention of completing this project in 2023. I don't really believe that the member opposite is pointing to much of a delay, but when you have these very big projects — this one is approximately \$43 million — there are a lot of moving parts and contingencies. We also know that we are in the middle of a very tightened supply chain issue, so there could be issues.

Of course, we have been assured by the contractor that they will make best efforts to complete this project on budget and on time. I would also say that, given these supply chain issues and the global conflict that has arisen by virtue of this completely unjustified and illegal land war in the Ukraine, construction and material costs are unlikely to be getting any cheaper in the near future.

So, ultimately, we stand by the value-driven procurement that was made. Value procurement looks beyond the price to make sure that projects bring as much value as possible to the community and the territory. In this case, the winning bidder earned points for their schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation.

Ms. Clarke: So, the project is overbudget and late, and the minister can't confirm if it will go even further overbudget or how late it will be.

Last spring, I asked the Highways and Public Works minister about traffic concerns in Whistle Bend and the new school. At first, he pointed the finger at the city. Eventually, he admitted that this is a Yukon government project and he bears some responsibility.

The February 2021 *Whistle Bend Elementary School Traffic Impact Assessment* in YESAB makes it clear that the school will increase traffic in and out of Whistle Bend.

What has the minister done to address the traffic concerns created by this project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Overbudget, overtime — let's take one trip down memory lane. F.H. Collins — on one site, for some period of time, some design where the former —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor and is speaking. I cannot hear him do his speech.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Where the former Yukon Party government wanted to build essentially on top of students while they were studying — there was obviously a large hue and cry, a big push still to have that school done, ultimately having to get a cookie-cutter middle school design from Alberta at the last moment — and the school started at full capacity, instantly, where that school probably will require expansion in the near future.

So, sure, I can take lessons from the Yukon Party on how you've managed school construction. We also note that there had not been an elementary school constructed in the Yukon in 25 years. This is going to be a leading-edge, energy-efficient, sustainable, very valuable education hub in the fastest growing community in the Yukon.

Question re: Mental health counselling services for children

Ms. White: Being young is tough. There's so much going on, and it can be hard to make sense of it all. So, now imagine that you lose your best friend to suicide or your mentor to an overdose. You need help; you need someone to talk to, but where do you turn?

Children and youth spend a lot of time in school. They form trusting relationships with their teachers, EAs, principals, and guidance counsellors, but people in these positions may not be trained clinical counsellors and have the tools to deal with these traumas. Early intervention is critical when it comes to mental health, but we know that accessing help right when you need it is easier said than done.

Will the minister tell us how many full-time clinical counsellors are currently working in Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Staffing levels in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services in the community hubs here in the Yukon Territory are based on several factors. Recruitment efforts are as follows — I will only be able to get to some of the communities, as time permits. Recruitment has recently been finalized in Watson Lake for one mental wellness and substance use counsellor to join the Watson Lake hub team.

Recruitment for one youth-focused support worker to work closely with the child and youth clinical counsellor who is already in that region is currently underway. One mental health nurse has also recently started to work in the Watson Lake hub area.

With respect to the Haines Junction and Carcross hub — and the Haines Junction hub that serves Haines Junction, Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, and Carcross — recruitment is underway for one child and youth counsellor in Haines Junction and one to support the work in Carcross and Tagish. Recruitment is also underway for one child and youth counsellor in the Dawson City hub in addition to the community counsellor. One community counsellor will soon be starting there.

I have much more information. I will get on my feet again.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate hearing from the Minister of Health and Social Services, my question was clearly for the Minister of Education when I asked how many full-time clinical counsellors were working in Yukon schools.

In the City of Whitehorse alone, there are 19 public schools. There are another 14 schools for the rest of the Yukon, and on any given day, we have just under 6,000 students in Yukon schools. That is 6,000 young people who could benefit from support. Child and youth counsellors being shared by communities may be a start, but it just doesn't cut it. Having a clinical counsellor in every Yukon school will drastically improve the chances of getting kids help sooner rather than later.

We have lost too many lives in recent years — siblings, relatives, and friends. How can we expect our youth to recover from these traumas when they can barely, if at all, access the support they need?

My question is for the Minister of Education: Will the minister commit to opening up full-time clinical counsellor positions in all Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Part of the services that are provided through the mental wellness hubs include child, youth, and family treatment team child and youth counsellors who operate in schools here in the territory. Out of the Watson Lake hub, there is one resident child and youth and family treatment counsellor in that community. There are also bi-weekly visits to the school in Teslin. Out of Haines Junction and the Carcross hub, there is one resident child, youth, and family treatment counsellor in Carcross. The position is currently out for recruitment. In the meantime, there are bi-weekly visits from other counsellors.

Out of the Dawson City hub, there are two counsellors connected to child, youth, and family clients, plus one additional child, youth, and family treatment counsellor position. That one is out for recruitment, but in Mayo, there is one child, youth, and family treatment counsellor making bi-weekly visits, along with a resident clinical counsellor who is able to support complex child and youth needs.

Out of Carmacks — I have more information — there is one counsellor who provides monthly visits in both Pelly Crossing and Faro-Ross River to connect with child, youth, and

family clients; two counsellors are connected with the Carmacks school with weekly visits.

Ms. White: Again, having the Minister of Health and Social Services rise only goes to highlight the real struggles that people are experiencing in Yukon schools. Each person in a school or community with knowledge and training in clinical counselling is an asset. It puts every student in that school — every person in that community — one degree closer to the support that they often desperately need.

Well, we're in luck. A teacher can obtain a degree in clinical counselling through a two-year master's program. There are teachers here in the Yukon who have already pursued, and teachers who are currently pursuing, these qualifications. Unfortunately, with no financial supports in place and special leave not being given, we're missing a fantastic opportunity to invest in our territory's mental health.

Will the Minister of Education commit to supporting Yukon teachers in pursuing degrees in clinical counselling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: First of all, I would like to acknowledge the health, safety, and well-being of staff and students as one of our first priorities, absolutely. Supporting employees' well-being, as well as students' well-being, is a crucial part of our work at the Department of Education along with our other departments that we work with, such as Health and Social Services.

This is the third year impacted by COVID-19. I fully acknowledge that our schools and staff are experiencing pandemic fatigue, including increased anxiety and stress in schools. The recent wave that we have just gone through with Omicron has also increased fatigue and anxiety due to staff shortages and having to pivot to remote learning at a moment's notice.

We have worked with our school communities. We have requested an increase in this budget of \$400,000 for mental health supports in schools for the 2022-23 budget for both staff and students in recognition of mental health and wellness needs. We'll continue to work with our school councils. I have met with almost every single school council in the territory. I am meeting right now on a tour of working with First Nation governments to determine how we best coordinate all of our services. I would be happy to continue to have this conversation with members opposite.

Question re: Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement

Mr. Hassard: The RFP for the replacement of the Nisutlin Bay bridge closed in early February. At that time, there were two prospective companies shortlisted to submit prices. Since that time, there has been no public communication about the project. There has been considerable speculation that this project is substantially overbudget.

Can the minister confirm that the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement is overbudget?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As we know, the Nisutlin Bay bridge is a critical link along the Alaska Highway and an important landmark for Teslin.

In the spring of 2019, the Yukon government and the Teslin Tlingit Council signed a historic project charter to

replace the Nisutlin Bay bridge. Through that agreement, we have been working together to plan for a reliable structure — one that supports active transportation by including shoulders and a walkway so that pedestrians and cyclists can safely use the bridge, LED lighting along the walkway, and a trail that will provide safe, all-season access underneath the bridge.

Through the procurement process for the Nisutlin Bay bridge, we have been working closely with the Teslin Tlingit Council. Community engagement has been a key component to the success of this project so far. Mr. Speaker, I can advise that there have been many meetings in the community, both with the community and with the Teslin Tlingit Council.

In an effort to ensure all potential contractors truly understood what it was like to live and work in Teslin, we first conducted an RFQ — a request for qualifications — process.

We were fortunate to have selected two qualified contractors who, over the past several months, have come out and met the community, learned from both the mayor and chief, and discussed potential local opportunities. As indicated on February 3, 2022, the tender for the Nisutlin Bay bridge project closed.

I will continue in a subsequent answer.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the history lesson, but the question was actually about whether the project was overbudget.

Since the RFP closed in February, several local companies in the area have been trying to prepare for a busy construction season. In order to prepare, they need to know if and when the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement is going ahead.

Can the minister tell us when the government will make a decision about this project, when the contract will be awarded, and when construction is anticipated to actually begin, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are currently in the process of evaluating both of the submitted proposals. I can advise that prices have come in higher than anticipated due to current global circumstances and the high premium on steel and other materials.

The higher prices are linked to a lot of factors related to the flooding events in BC's Fraser Valley region, which, of course, have led to many opportunities and demands for the repair of railway trestles, the Coquihalla, and others.

President Biden's administration's massive infrastructure project bill has certainly had inflationary pressures as well.

Of course, awarding this contract is a high priority for us. However, we must also do our due diligence to evaluate whether we are making the right decision on behalf of Yukon taxpayers before we proceed with this award.

Question re: Macaulay Lodge site development

Ms. Van Bibber: In November 2021, the government announced that they are planning to demolish Macaulay Lodge. Can the minister confirm what the plans and timelines are for the land that Macaulay Lodge currently occupies?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: It is great to get up again to respond to these important questions.

Highways and Public Works completed a building condition assessment and feasibility study report on Macaulay Lodge in 2020. The report compared repurposing Macaulay as housing, mixed-use space, or demolishing and building a new facility. As the Member for Porter Creek North has indicated in her question, based on the report, repurposing Macaulay Lodge was not economical. The building is over 50 years old and will require extensive renovations and energy and building code upgrades.

We are moving forward with the demolition of Macaulay Lodge due to concerns around public health and safety, the ongoing costs of maintaining the building, and the value of the land for potential housing development. A contract for the demolition of the building has been awarded to the Yukon First Nation business United North Construction Group. Work is expected to be completed by the end of this summer. This is a great example of a Yukon First Nation business using the tools in the First Nation procurement policy. The successful candidate included bid value reductions for being a Yukon First Nation business and hiring Yukon First Nations.

Importantly, Mr. Speaker, we have begun work with the Yukon Housing Corporation to plan for future housing development on this site.

Question re: *Motor Vehicles Act* amendments

Mr. Hassard: So, in 2018, the former Minister of Highways and Public Works announced that the government was rewriting the *Motor Vehicles Act*. On October 3, 2019 during the Speech from the Throne, the Liberal government announced that, before the end of their mandate, they would introduce legislation to overhaul the *Motor Vehicles Act*. That mandate ended with a snap election call in the spring of 2021 and, with it, a broken promise as this legislation was never tabled. Here we are in 2022 and the *Motor Vehicles Act* rewrites are now at least one year late.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us when Yukoners will finally see this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The short answer to the member opposite's question is that we are aiming to bring both the full bill and regulations to the House in the spring of 2024. I have certainly instructed my department to expedite it as much as possible. In speaking to my officials and to the former Minister of Highways and Public Works, I have been advised that some of these rewrites — I believe, in the Maritimes, in any event — have taken a long, or longish, time. By a “long time”, I mean approaching 10 years, so we are certainly still very focused.

What I can advise is that we are rewriting the *Motor Vehicles Act* because the existing act was written in the late 1970s. A new act is necessary to improve safety for all road users on Yukon highways. The new modernized act will address long-standing safety and administrative issues and fill gaps that have arisen in the time since the existing act was proclaimed.

There are many outstanding issues with the existing act and regulations. Updates are required to improve road-user safety and vehicle safety, accommodate advances in technology, adopt best practices, and ensure consistency with other

jurisdictions across Canada. We will get this right and we will have the most up-to-date legislation in the country.

Mr. Hassard: It has become clear that the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works was really good at saying that he was going to do things, just not actually so good at delivering on them. It seems that he just couldn't get 'er done.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us why this legislation, which was promised to be tabled in 2021, is so late?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. As I indicated in my first response, working on both the new legislation and its accompanying regulations is ongoing. We are aiming to table the full new bill and regulations in the spring of 2024. There may have been a time in the prior Assembly when there may have been consideration for introducing the legislation without the regulations. That was ultimately deemed to be not advisable.

As indicated, I have directed the department to do everything that they can to expedite the timeline, and we want to ensure that we get it right and that the new legislation meets the current and future needs of Yukon.

But, as all members opposite and the driving public will appreciate, there are a lot of different areas in the *Motor Vehicles Act* that require attention. Given the fact that this has not been dealt with since the 1970s, things like cell phones, perhaps even fully automated cars, and other incredible safety enhancements were but a glint in the automakers' eyes at the time.

So, adaptations have to be made in order to rewrite this act.

Mr. Hassard: It's hard to believe that the previous minister may have tried to bring forward legislation that wasn't right. So, we'll walk through the timeline one more time for the new minister.

The government announced this new legislation in 2018. In 2019, they promised that the legislation would be introduced by 2021. 2021 comes and goes with no new legislation. Now the government is saying that the legislation won't be here until 2024 — four years late.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that by this time, the consultation conducted in 2019 will be five years old and out of date. What is the government going to do about that, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question once again.

The Yukon *Motor Vehicles Act* has not been significantly updated since it was first written in the late 1970s. Rewriting the act is necessary to improve safety for all road users on Yukon highways.

This large, complex piece of legislation touches on a wide range of issues important to Yukoners. We are working with stakeholders, municipalities, and First Nations to ensure that their interests are taken into consideration. As the member opposite did indicate, public engagement took place in 2019. At that point, we received more than 2,800 responses.

To answer his question, Highways and Public Works continues to engage with targeted stakeholders on specific

issues to ensure that the new act will meet the needs of Yukoners.

So, yes, there is a high degree of complexity. I have received many different packages — discrete packages — on different issues — all manner of things and all manner of different issues and technological advancements. Making sure that the act is consistent with *Criminal Code* provisions, vehicle-dimension issues, lift kits — you name it. There are a lot of issues.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Government House Leader's report on length of Sitting

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 75(4), to inform the House that the House Leaders have met for the purpose of achieving agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current Sitting. I am informing the House that the results are that there shall be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the 32nd sitting day being Thursday, April 28, 2022.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current Sitting shall be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the 32nd sitting day being Thursday, April 28, 2022.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Bill No. 14: *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 14, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the members of the Assembly who have contributed to Bill No. 14 coming to this stage in the process. In order to support the Law Society of Yukon's policy and, most importantly, to protect the public interest, the amendment before us today is necessary.

The proposed amendment will ensure that the Law Society of Yukon is able to fulfill the responsibilities laid out in the act in a responsible and efficient manner and will reduce the red tape affecting out-of-territory corporations that wish to be licensed to provide legal services here in the territory to Yukoners.

The Department of Justice has worked to ensure that the amendment is compatible with concerns that have been raised by the Law Society of Yukon.

Passing this amendment supports the healthy operation of necessary law society processes and promotes Yukoners' access to legal services, justice, and legal remedies.

With respect to implementation, we are proposing to bring the amendment into force upon assent. This will allow the Law Society of Yukon to implement its processes, as intended, as soon as possible, should this Legislative Assembly pass Bill No. 14.

In conclusion, I would like to recommend to the members of this Legislative Assembly to support the passing of Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*.

I appreciate the input they have had.

Mr. Cathers: As we have noted before, this is an area where the Minister of Justice and this Liberal government didn't get it right the first time they amended the act and recognized that this was identified as an error by the law society, and the government is now taking steps to correct the error they made in this legislation. We don't have any concerns with the correction suggested.

Ms. White: I agree with my colleagues. It is about making things work better, and we look forward to passing this legislation.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the comments, and I understand that to be the support from the members opposite. I will just clarify that I am assuming that the Member for Lake Laberge is not criticizing the staff and the people who work at the Department of Justice or the law society. In fact, I don't have any trouble bringing forward a matter to correct something to make it work better on behalf of Yukoners and to make sure that there is clarity in our legislation.

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.

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 yea, nil nay.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare that Bill No. 14 has passed this House.

Bill No. 15: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated previously, ensuring that our legislation is accurate and without mistake makes up part of the mandate for the Minister of Justice. From time to time, as minister, I have undertaken to bring miscellaneous statute law amendment acts to this Legislative Assembly to correct minor errors and provide clarity and accuracy for Yukoners.

This latest version of this kind of legislation amends 25 acts in total, making it rather small, compared to some previous versions.

Such amendments include: fixing numbering errors, language errors or inconsistencies, such as where one word is used interchangeably with another in an act and needs correction for consistency; it includes amending incorrect references to other acts; to fixing consequential legislative change omissions; or other such technical changes, such as name changes of organizations.

I have heard from members that they support this kind of bill to be brought before the House from time to time. I will assure this House that the government will certainly look at bringing more of these bills, should they be required.

I would like to thank all the departments across Government of Yukon for working together to identify items for this bill to be brought forward. I would also like to thank the staff at the Department of Justice for supporting this work, for their attention to detail, and for their patience and perseverance.

Mr. Cathers: That was a long introductory speech by the minister for something that — these bills are quite common. They are housekeeping in nature. They are correcting minor issues in legislation that have been identified by staff. That was a much longer speech than this warranted.

Ms. White: I actually think that this is an example of why we did a tribute to legislative drafters in the fall of 2021. Correcting mistakes in 25 pieces of legislation, including

spelling errors that many of us would have just glanced over, when we started — I thank the folks for the work in identifying those problems, and I'm looking forward to having these 25 pieces of legislation corrected.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm sorry that eight sentences was too long for the member opposite, but I think this deserves to be spoken about here in this Legislative Assembly, regardless of how mundane some members might think it is. I'm pretty sure that the RCMP are happy to not be called the Royal Canadian Mountain Police any longer. That is what one of these errors corrects, to properly name them as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I thank all the members for their consideration of this bill. I look forward to it passing.

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.

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 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 15 has passed this House.

Bill No. 205: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 205, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I indicated during second reading, if passed, this bill will provide spending authority for April and May of this fiscal year. The interim supply bill, which has a total value of approximately \$410.7 million, will ensure that government services continue and that employees, Yukon businesses, and government contractors continue to get paid until the main estimates become law.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this Chamber support Bill No. 205 so that the government can continue to provide the services that Yukoners expect and rely upon.

Mr. Cathers: I would note that we do recognize the need to have interim spending authority in place before the beginning of the new fiscal year, but since this is a budget bill and a confidence matter, we will, of course, be voting against the budget bill and voting against the Liberal government.

Ms. White: Unsurprising to many in this House, in different cases, the NDP have supported interim supply bills for both Liberal governments in the past and Yukon Party governments in the past, because we believe that the work we do here should not hold up the business that public servants do in supporting Yukoners.

Unlike my colleague, the NDP will be voting in support of the interim supply bill.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: With that, I will take my seat, and we will move on.

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.

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 yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 205 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 205 has passed this House.

Bill No. 12: *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I indicated in second reading, and also in Committee of the Whole, Bill No. 12 is primarily a housekeeping item — a riveting one but housekeeping no less. For this reason, my remarks will be brief, as I am prepared to close debate on this bill.

This bill was prompted by federal changes and the need to maintain harmony between our territorial tax act and its namesake at the federal level. The changes are mainly about administrative provisions and have no fiscal impacts and no new taxes or changed tax rates for Yukoners therein or businesses or First Nation governments, for that matter. That does not diminish the importance of this bill. The bill is fundamentally about fulfilling obligations. We have the obligation to Canada, by virtue of our tax collection agreement. We have obligations to Yukon self-governing First Nations through various tax-sharing agreements, as well, and finally, we have an obligation to ensure that every Yukon tax filer has a fair and efficient tax system. With the passing of this bill, we will fulfill these obligations.

The bill also supports businesses by deferring the coming-into-force dates under the business investment tax credit, and we remain committed with this bill to expand participation in this program for the benefit of Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

I would once again like to thank all members for the previous discussion and debate on this bill and I look forward to its assent.

Mr. Cathers: This bill is largely housekeeping in nature, and I don't have additional comments to add beyond what was said earlier.

Ms. White: Just in ending the debate today, I again want to thank the Department of Finance and the folks who focused on the tax amendments here that we are seeing for the really thorough briefing and especially for the side-by-side of the legislative changes. This is just a pitch to other departments: When we're making changes to legislation, being able to see it in front of you — the old legislation to what the new will say — is really helpful. Thank you to Minister Clarke and his team for making that available.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I look forward to the vote on this particular legislation.

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.

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 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 12 has passed this House.

Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 203, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to begin debate on the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*. Bill No. 203 is the second supplementary estimate and the third appropriation for the fiscal year.

The supplementary estimates are an opportunity to take stock of the fiscal year and to see how our commitments are benefitting Yukoners. They allow us to check in to see if the funding allocated for the year is meeting the needs of Yukoners in our various industries or to make adjustments if there are areas that require further attention.

More importantly, however, the supplementary estimates allow the opportunity to account for unexpected circumstances. While traditionally this has taken the form of flooding events, wildfires, or other natural weather events, more recently, these adjustments have been needed to make sure that Yukoners and our economy remain healthy through the pandemic.

I think that we can all agree that the last two years have been nothing but uncertain, to say the least. While this continues to be the case with the emergence of new variants and improving vaccination rates, this government has done significant forecasting work to ensure that we plan for these unexpected scenarios as early in the fiscal year as possible.

In the 2021-22 budget, this government introduced a COVID-19 contingency fund for the first time. This fiscal shock absorber created a flexible fund that has allowed us to respond to unexpected circumstances caused by the pandemic with no impact to our fiscal framework and without affecting the surplus/deficit position. While this tool gives us significant flexibility to respond to emerging challenges related to the pandemic, it also ensures that budgeting remains entirely accountable and transparent, as these funds still need to be introduced, debated, and voted on in the Legislature before the spending is authorized.

In the fall, we made use of this fund in order to absorb \$4.5 million in costs to support the Yukon's tourism sector to ensure that Yukoners could continue to access the COVID-19 call centre and, lastly, to make sure that Yukon government buildings are effectively cleaned and sanitized for the safety of those who visit them and also work inside them.

Today, we are once again drawing on this fund to respond to new challenges and to reduce the fiscal impact of COVID-19 on the territory. This new budgeting initiative has allowed us greater flexibility in managing the pandemic while also keeping our finances healthy. It is thanks to the innovative ideas like this that, two years into the pandemic, we are in a position where we can better plan for these expenses at the start of the

year, even though they may not occur later or may occur. This is why this supplementary estimate reflects fewer new costs than previous years.

In addition to further supporting the territory as it navigates the latest wave of the pandemic, this year, the second supplementary estimates also help to deliver on commitments relating to early learning and childcare, ensuring continued community safety and wellness, and also reflecting adjustments to the Yukon's tax revenue.

Mr. Speaker, this year, the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* forecasts an increase of \$30.3 million in new operation and maintenance and capital spending. This is made up of \$24.7 million in new O&M and just \$5.6 million in new capital. This increase in new expenditures is offset by a decrease of \$16.5 million in capital and an additional \$58.1 million in additional revenues.

The bulk of those revenues are the result of additional taxes and general revenues, as well as recent grants from Canada. These changes are forecasted to result in a revised surplus of \$25.5 million, which reflects a significant improvement in the government's fiscal picture from the first supplementary estimates, as folks will recall.

The year-end debt is forecast to be \$96.6 million, which reflects a reduction of \$86.6 million from the first supplementary estimates. This is primarily the result of adjustments following the tabling of the Public Accounts in October as well as the change in the surplus/deficit position.

Overall, these changes show a territory that is on the path — well on the path — to recovering from the effects of COVID-19 while supporting a number of commitments that will improve the lives of Yukoners.

With respect to O&M, in addition to the \$24.7 million in new expenditures, the government will also see an increase of \$3.1 million in new recoveries. While this spending does reflect the \$11.4 million in COVID-related funding, the majority of these appropriations, or \$13.3 million, help move the needle on other Government of Yukon priorities and services in Yukon for Yukoners.

Initiatives like expanding universal childcare will ensure that more families have access to high-quality, affordable health care. As I mentioned in the fall, we believe that all families should have access to high-quality, affordable childcare.

Expanding this program in the Yukon provides children an opportunity for learning and development in those early years of life. It also provides a continuum of a child's education while putting more disposable income into the hands of families, allowing parents and guardians to have more choices if they want to work outside of the home.

The universal childcare model is possible due to a collaboration between Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, childcare operators, the Government of Canada, and partners across the Yukon.

We are also further supporting the film location incentive fund with this bill. The film location incentive encourages production companies from outside of the territory to film in the Yukon and to hire and train Yukoners. Using this fund,

companies can receive: a rebate of up to 25 percent of their expenses on Yukon goods, services, and labour; 25 percent of wages paid to mentors who train Yukoners; and 50 percent of travel costs to Yukon. To receive support, companies must meet strict requirements for hiring or training Yukoners, which helps to support film development opportunities here in the territory.

This supplementary estimate also supports continued community safety and investigation work in the territory by meeting Yukon First Nation community policing, the collective agreement requirements for RCMP, and other RCMP funding requests.

It is also important that we continue to keep our roads safe and accessible. Money in this appropriation bill will ensure that emergency washouts and flood damage can be repaired on all roads in the Yukon in a timely fashion.

In addition to our roads, the Yukon must also ensure that the territory's aviation sector remains healthy. Phase 3 of the federal government's support in the aviation industry will maintain continued services to and from the territory and its remote communities. Aviation is critical to the north, and our government continues to work with our federal partners to support Yukon's aviation industry to keep the communities connected.

Throughout the pandemic, Yukon's air carriers have transported essential goods, medical supplies, and health care workers to and from the territory. Phase 3 funding is fully recoverable from Canada and ensures that the aviation sector continues to provide these services that Yukoners can rely upon.

This government also remains committed to reconciliation on all fronts. This is why this supplementary estimate includes funding for the demolition of the Lower Post residential school and ongoing work to identify and locate unmarked graves. While the facility, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is located in BC, a significant number of students were taken from Yukon First Nation communities.

Many survivors and their family members live in the Yukon, and the devastating impacts of residential schools continue to be felt throughout the territory.

Our transfer to the Daylu Dena Council was a Yukon Forum commitment and supports the efforts, as an important step forward on the path of reconciliation. We must continue to move forward, learning from the past and acknowledging present realities, as well, but building a strong, healthier future together.

As I mentioned before, there is also some additional funding to continue seeing the territory through the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes targeted relief for businesses impacted by the state of emergency and rebates to supplement the cost of purchasing the technology required to scan the QR codes for proof of vaccination for Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations.

The Yukon emergency relief program supports Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations that are financially impacted by public health measures that were introduced under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. The

program focuses on funding eligible fixed costs for businesses and non-recoverable financial commitments, or expenses, incurred by non-governmental organizations for events cancelled or significantly altered due to the new public health measures. The vaccine verification rebate provides a 50-percent rebate toward the purchase of equipment required for the efficient and accurate tracking of vaccine status, up to a maximum rebate of \$500.

This government recognizes our local businesses and organizations for their commitment to adhering to new public health measures introduced to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners. We are very grateful to these folks in the local businesses and organizations. These programs help to ease the burden faced by businesses and provides a sense of stability during these uncertain times.

The Government of Yukon will continue to monitor the economic impact of COVID-19 and provide support where it's needed. This is why we are also including new financial and employment supports for Yukon businesses in these supplementary estimates. Under the new stream, the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement — TNASS for short — all bars and restaurants throughout the territory are eligible to receive up to \$20,000 per month, up to \$60,000, to break even. This funding is available to cover both fixed and variable costs, including payroll. All bars and restaurants are also eligible to receive a one-time sector supplement of \$10,000.

Now, eligibility under this new stream will be retroactive to November 8, 2021, when the Government of Yukon declared the state of emergency in response to COVID-19. To help protect business costs, the Yukon Liquor Corporation will provide bars and restaurants with a rebate on their liquor licence fee for the 2022-23 licence year.

Finally, we continue to fund the COVID-19 response through efforts in the Department of Health and Social Services. Funds included as part of this appropriation bill will support ongoing costs related to testing, vaccine rollout, rapid test implementation, and self-isolation costs. It will also go toward supporting additional needs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

All of these requirements under the Department of Health and Social Services are being funded using the COVID-19 contingency fund. This means that the \$5 million in funding required for these initiatives can be financed, while having no impact on the government's fiscal framework. \$4 million in funding from the Department of Economic Development's COVID-19 supports is also being funded using this contingency fund. This drawdown of \$9 million total also means that the fund still has \$1.5 million in remaining capacity.

Mr. Speaker, while this supplementary estimate includes new funding for several initiatives, the changes in O&M also include several new recoveries. The Government of Yukon will see \$3.1 million in new O&M recoveries reflected in this appropriation bill.

As I mentioned earlier, there are also some changes to capital spending included in the supplementary estimates. Overall, new capital spending consists of \$5.6 million, none of

which is COVID-related. While there is some new capital spending, decreases in other areas result in a net decrease of \$10.8 million in capital.

Now, the single largest capital expenditure included in the supplementary estimate is for the Safe at Home Society. This funding will go toward renovating and refreshing the former High Country Inn, adding a total of 55 supportive housing units to the community. These housing units will support Yukoners who are in uncertain housing situations, experiencing — or at risk of — homelessness, or living in temporary shelters because of the pandemic.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the significant opportunity this funding represents to support women, youth, and indigenous members of our community in need of supportive housing. The partnership displayed across all levels of government helps to address the unique housing pressures that we see in the territory and advance Yukon's fight to reduce homelessness during the pandemic.

This supplementary estimate also supports access and justice for Yukon victims of crime by improving interview spaces and providing testimonial aids to be more consistent with national best practices for child and youth victims and witnesses.

As far as decreases, the largest reductions are seen in the Yukon Development Corporation. This is largely the result of projects being deferred to the 2022-23 fiscal year. As a result, members will see a decrease of \$12.2 million for the corporation, as work on the Atlin hydro project, Beaver Creek solar project, Haeckel Hill wind project, and Kluane wind project shift to next fiscal year. These decreases are partially offset by increased work, seen as part of the Mayo-to-McQuesten transmission line and the grid-scale battery project.

Other notable decreases to capital spending can be seen in the Selkirk parking lot reduction, the Burwash school, and the Dempster fibre project. The latter is the result of an earlier than expected seasonal change and issues with supply availability as a result of supply chain issues, which have affected several construction projects. As a result of these decreases, the supplementary estimates also show a reduction in associated recoveries totalling \$13.1 million.

We remain committed to all of these projects, and we will continue to deliver on our capital plan in the coming fiscal year.

I also look forward to providing further details and breakdowns on the funding and recovery adjustments during Committee of the Whole. Before I conclude my remarks here today in second reading, I would like to speak to the changes in revenue as part of the bill.

As I mentioned earlier, the supplementary estimates include a significant increase in revenues. This \$58.1-million increase is the result of a large increase in tax revenue to the tune of \$33 million, slight increases to the cannabis transfer and investment revenue, and \$25 million in federal funding from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

With respect to tax revenue, this is primarily the result of an improved outlook for a total and average personal income in the territory and reflects the strength of growing salaries for those working in the Yukon. Previous forecasts were

conservative and assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic would negatively impact personal income both in terms of total income from all taxpayers as well as the average income of taxpayers. This increase is partly due to temporary emergency federal income supports, but a large proportion of the increase is expected to continue into future years as well, which is good.

The \$25 million in revenue that reflects a grant from CIRNAC late in the fiscal year will correspond with an equivalent amount of spending on future initiatives as part of our commitments under *Our Clean Future*.

Overall, these supplementary estimates show a Yukon government that continues to support Yukoners while improving upon its forecasting and budgeting earlier in the year by building tools like the COVID-19 contingency fund into this year's budget. This government has reduced the in-year fiscal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our finances. This type of innovative approach to budgeting continues to demonstrate this government's sophisticated approach to its finances and ensures that we are well positioned to navigate unexpected situations as they emerge. With this flexibility in hand, we will continue to support Yukoners not just through COVID, but through any challenges that we face as a territory.

I would like to once again thank every Yukoner and every public servant contributing to the efforts over the last few years on COVID — that is for sure.

I invite members to treat Committee of the Whole as an opportunity to increase further detail on any of the areas that are included in the supplementary estimates. With that, I will thank you, Mr. Speaker, for my time here in the Legislature today.

Mr. Cathers: I'm going to be quite brief today at the second reading and look forward to asking questions later on in Committee of the Whole.

We have learned from past experience that if we ask the Premier questions at second reading, he is either unwilling or unable to provide those answers until officials are present. So, I look forward to moving on to the Committee of the Whole stage later on.

Ms. White: Today, in speaking to the supplementary budget, the one thing that I want to highlight is that this is drastically different from when I was first elected in 2011. Today we see that there are nine departments up, and one is because of a reduction. Again, earlier I acknowledged the work of the Department of Finance, but I think that is another note to make because there were changes between the government of 2011 and 2016 that happened and that started to change the way that budgeting was done in the Yukon. I think, now that we have been in it for a while, there is a testament. Instead of debating every single department within the budget, we're down to nine.

So, like my colleague from Lake Laberge, we look forward to questions in the departmental debates.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take an opportunity to talk about the two departments that I have that are coming in the supplementary budget.

I will start with the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission is a central agency department and it is responsible for our public service. It delivers a range of government-wide human resource programs and services, and it has consistently risen to the challenges brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to just start off by thanking all public servants for their hard work over the past couple of years. Our public servants have ensured that Yukoners are continually able to access the services that they need, all while managing our own response to the pandemic as an organization.

Over the past year, the commission has worked effectively to respond to the organization's evolving human resource management needs. These needs were exacerbated this past summer when the territory experienced its first substantial wave of COVID-19, as well as significant floods across the territory.

The Public Service Commission leads the human resource management team, which has played a key role in mobilizing the talent, skills, and abilities from within the public service to support the COVID-19 surge response, the vaccine rollout, and the flood response.

Effectively, what they did was that they set it up so that if there was a department trying to put in extra work, they put a call across the whole of our public service. They very quickly moved people around to try to make sure that the work we were doing for Yukoners was there at all times.

The commission also supported efforts to increase the vaccination rates in the territory and to keep Yukoners safe as we implemented our temporary mandatory vaccine requirement for public servants based on the recommendations from our acting chief medical officer of health. In addition to supporting the pandemic response efforts, the commission also has a duty to support the organization's employee experience. In 2021-22, we were in the second year of the *People Plan*. This is a government-wide approach to the way we work together. It is intended to guide the way we recruit, retain, and sustain the public service. A crucial part of our work toward creating and engaging an inclusive workplace experience is supporting employee well-being, health, and safety.

The commission has provided and will continue to provide support and information to departments and employees regarding stress and mental health. While some of the initiatives under the *People Plan* were paused due to the pandemic, the Public Service Commission and the human resources community have continued to be guided by the vision and goals of the *People Plan* as we have responded to the pandemic.

In addition, a new metrics and analytics branch in the Public Service Commission began work to develop a human resource metrics framework for use within government. By developing this framework, the commission is able to provide managers and decision-makers with consistent, timely, and

meaningful data to inform our path to recovery and the direction of the service.

I am happy to share that, in this upcoming year, several *People Plan* initiatives will be underway, including an external review of psychological health and safety within the organization, streamlining our human resource practices, digitizing where possible, and building the capacity of managers and supervisors to lead effectively in these difficult times. The commission will focus efforts on modernizing recruitment practices, including researching and identifying any potential barriers to recruitment for indigenous candidates and other under-represented groups and exploring creative ways to recruit and retain employees to fill critical positions in rural communities. Overall, we are positioned to adapt as needs arise, and the Public Service Commission remains fiscally responsible.

There are two changes in the Public Service Commission's supplementary budget resulting in a total increase of just under \$2 million. Most of this is an increase of \$1.3 million to the employee future benefits fund. This amount is an estimate based on regular actuarial review and varies each year, depending on factors such as accumulated service, wage rates, and demographic factors such as the rate of retirement.

The second change to the supplementary budget is an increase of just over \$600,000 for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board's payments fund. The primary driver of the increased premium rates for the government rate group is rising claim costs relating to identification of psychological injuries.

Again, my sincere thanks to all of our public servants for all of the work they have been doing — I guess I'm saying since the fall budget, but in particular over the past two years.

Turning briefly to the supplementary budget for the Yukon Development Corporation, I thank the Premier for his comments. The corporation has reduced its capital budget by \$12,243,000 for the 2021-22 fiscal year. These funds are part of two multi-year federal funding programs under the Arctic energy fund and the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan. This is the green infrastructure stream that ends on March 31, 2028.

The funds from these programs can and will be accessed in coming years. Delays due to COVID-19 and supply chain issues have had an impact on project timelines for everyone, and the reduction in spending for this year for the Arctic energy fund is also a reflection of that reality. We have two approved multi-year projects that are underway. These are the Haeckel Hill wind project in Whitehorse and the Kluane N'tsi wind project.

I am also pleased to say that the Dome Road solar project in Dawson has recently been completed, making this project the third one to sell energy to the Yukon's electrical grid under the independent power producer policy.

In addition, Yukon government's funding for the Atlin hydro expansion project is being brought forward and will be included in the 2022-23 main estimates. These decreases are offset slightly by changes in the funding timing for two Yukon Energy projects funded under the Investing in Canada

infrastructure plan — again, under the green infrastructure stream. There is no change to the total amounts being provided to Yukon Energy for the two projects.

The Mayo-McQuesten transmission line project is complete and in service, while construction of the grid-scale battery storage system is moving ahead with an estimated in-service date of March 2023.

All of these projects are a clear demonstration of how our government is supporting sustainable development in the territory and continuing to enhance our electrical network to facilitate the integration of renewable electricity generation with the existing facilities. The refurbishment of the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line not only improves grid stability and provides more reliable service to Keno, but also significantly reduces the carbon footprint of Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold operation, and it is an excellent example of how we are promoting more sustainable development across the territory.

Meanwhile, the grid-scale battery storage project will help reduce the amount of fossil fuel consumed to generate electricity in our grid-connected Yukon communities. Basically, the batteries will provide energy during the daytime, when we have our peaks, and then we don't have to turn on the diesels or the LNG plant. And then in the evenings, when the demand is low on the system, we will recharge those batteries, and that is the way in which they reduce our greenhouse gas emissions — our fossil fuel use and our greenhouse gas emissions. It can also enhance the value of renewable electricity generation facilities by storing electricity until it is most needed, which is what we were talking about with some of those other projects.

Finally, I would just like to reiterate that we are pleased to report that all of these projects are advancing, in spite of the challenging circumstances brought on by COVID-19. I applaud all of the community-based projects which are working to bring us renewables and also applaud the work of the Energy Corporation and all of the proponents for their dedication in this regard.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to take the opportunity at the beginning of my remarks today to thank the department staff, who have all been instrumental in ensuring that we have a budget that supports all Yukoners, particularly, in my case, thanking the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice. But as we know, the Department of Finance works extremely hard to make sure that we bring forward accurate and timely reports on budgets and explanations in those budgets as to what is happening here in the territory and the priorities that we are responding to, on behalf of Yukoners.

As we can all appreciate, living in the pandemic for the past two years has been a very challenging time for all Yukoners and all Canadians. Yukoners have made sacrifices and have done our part to keep our most vulnerable population safe and our health care system from being overwhelmed. The arrival of the Delta variant in the past fall and, most recently, the Omicron wave of COVID have hit the Yukon hard. We've

had more cases during these last two waves than in the 18 months prior and unfortunately more deaths as well.

Mr. Speaker, again, I offer my sincere condolences to the families and to the loved ones of those lost to COVID. One death is too many, and 22 deaths here in the Yukon Territory is heartbreaking. It has been a long and challenging fight against this pandemic and COVID-19, and it is not going away yet, but thanks to the effort of all Yukoners, we have avoided the most severe health and economic impacts of the pandemic. It has been another challenging year for everyone who works in Health and Social Services.

As elected officials, we need to thank everyone in the department and others in the front lines for their dedication and their hard work to keep us safe.

Increases in this supplemental budget to support Yukon's response to COVID-19 specifically are there to manage the additional pressures related to the surge in COVID-19 due to the Delta and Omicron variants and to support the COVID-19 vaccine process. We fully expect that COVID-19-related costs will decrease in 2022-23; let's hope, Mr. Speaker, that we are correct.

The *Forging Ahead* document aligns with the expenditures in this supplementary budget. The *Forging Ahead* goals are designed to protect vulnerable populations and to enhance the well-being of Yukoners. Our response, as outlined in *Forging Ahead*, is supported by six pillars. These pillars are: supporting First Nation and community partnerships; vaccinations; testing and surveillance; surge capacity; social supports and vulnerable people; and public health measures.

In total, there have been 159.2 temporary FTEs included in the 2021-22 COVID budget to address the Yukon's ongoing pandemic management. These temporary FTEs have been needed because ultimately COVID is responded to by people — front-line people. They are screeners, nurses, greeters, social workers, testers, immunizers, rapid response teams, and public health experts across the territory who have, and are, keeping us safe. Without the necessary Health and Social Services professionals, we could not have met the needs of Yukoners; however, in this second supplementary budget, it is noted — please — that there are no additional FTEs for 2021-22.

Vaccinations continue to be our best defense during this pandemic. Vaccinations are safe and effective. While the demand for vaccines is now slowing, our territory-wide vaccination efforts do continue. We continue providing booster vaccinations to those Yukoners who received their second doses six months ago or longer, and we continue providing first and second dose vaccines to all Yukoners aged five and up. I continue to urge all eligible Yukoners to get vaccinated. We do not know what the next variant of concern will be — whether it will be milder or more severe — but we do know that getting vaccinated is our best defense.

Our comprehensive testing strategy continues to be another foundation of the COVID-19 response and a pillar of the *Forging Ahead* document. The Yukon's testing approach includes the use of a number of different types of tests, which group into three categories. They are: lab-based testing; point-of-care testing; and at-home self-tests. All types of testing that

have been used will continue to be used, as we manage this pandemic. Our testing strategy will continue to evolve, based on evidence and the guidance of the office of the chief medical officer of health. For example, with the arrival of new rapid-testing resources and an increase in cases related to Omicron since January, our lab-based PCR testing resources have been focused on populations with the highest risk of negative impacts from COVID-19.

At-home self-tests are recommended to be used for lower-risk individuals and when a person is showing symptoms. These self-tests have now been distributed widely throughout Yukon. They are available at schools, childcare centres, and to the general public throughout the Yukon. Pickup locations are listed on yukon.ca. Here in Whitehorse, they are available right next door to this building at the tourism building, as of early March this year.

We have distributed more than 100,000 rapid antigen self-tests. Members and Yukoners who are listening might remember that those tests come in large batches. We have to have Yukoners work very hard to repackage them so that they can be distributed in smaller packages. It is an enormous amount of work and dedication.

Of course, funds have been, and continue to 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 vital to combat this virus.

Supports for vulnerable populations are another key pillar of our response. Vulnerable populations include Yukoners living in our continuing care homes, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance, and those who are precariously housed or even homeless. Due to the size of this population and the number of 24/7 facilities that the Department of Health and Social Services 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 of the office of the chief medical officer of health. Continuing Care alone, Mr. Speaker, has approximately 300 long-term care beds and more than 700 home care clients.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its guests also continue to be greatly affected by the pandemic. We are mitigating the risk of transmission among this vulnerable population through enhanced services and supports, including cleaning and infection control measures and the implementation of social distancing measures. As I noted — I think that it was only yesterday, but maybe it was last week — I am pleased to say that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter is returning very soon to its regular services and will be able to serve more individuals.

One example of continued measures is that the department continues contracting with local hotels to house clients who are unable to be accommodated at the shelter due to the physical distancing requirements, which I have noted will soon be returning to normal operations. Further to these efforts, we continue to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation with COVID-19-related financial needs. Within the total COVID-19

allocation of \$29,973,000, the hospital is allocated \$5,862,750 for logistics, policy work, infection control, screeners, emergency department services, lab supports, and other efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that, while this global pandemic is not going away yet, our vision of healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities is strong and continues. While COVID-19 is testing our resiliency, we have accomplished a great deal and will continue to make progress.

Everything that we do in the Department of Health and Social Services is done to maintain and improve the well-being of Yukoners. I don't think we can emphasize that too much, Mr. Speaker.

Despite the fact that the opposition will likely vote against this supplementary budget, I would like to thank members here for your support of Yukoners during what has been a very difficult time. Supporting this supplementary budget is evidence of that support.

I thank you for this opportunity.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the second reading of Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — speaking directly to the items that I have within this budget, under Vote 3.

Mr. Speaker, I'll start by saying that we continued to face, in 2021, unexpected challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are fortunate to live in such a resilient and diverse community. I'm proud, always, of the work that Yukoners do to support one another and to keep each other safe and to work in this way.

Despite these ongoing challenges, much important work has been completed over this last year. This supplementary budget reflects how the department is working to achieve many of its priorities, including continuing to support learners through the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding universal childcare, and responding to the review of inclusive and special education. These three areas remain at the forefront of the Department of Education, and it is work that we are working on with all of our partners to enhance the learning environments for all of our children, from early learning right through to university.

The budget also notes our continued work to support reconciliation and signifies our commitment to investment and capital infrastructure. These investments are needed to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing student enrolment needs, and create modern learning environments and community spaces.

In this supplementary budget request, the Department of Education is requesting an increase of \$3.063 million in operation and maintenance expenditures and a decrease of \$301,000 in capital expenditures. I would like to take this opportunity to go over a few of the changes to the capital and operation and maintenance funding. I know that we will get into more detail on this in Committee of the Whole, but I thought that I would take the opportunity to speak at the second reading.

In terms of capital, a total budget decrease of \$301,000 is noted under the capital expenditures, reflecting revised capital project timelines resulting from COVID-19 and additional time

required for key project planning activities. With respect to these capital projects, I will go over them in a bit more detail — again, I know that we will get into more detail when we get into Committee of the Whole and I'm looking forward to that.

The Government of Yukon and Kluane First Nation are taking another step toward reconciliation by working together to build a new school in Burwash Landing. Moving the current Kluane Lake School from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing has been a long-standing request of the Kluane First Nation. Due to some delays related to COVID-19, there is a budget surplus this period of \$85,000. As part of our commitment to reconciliation and long-term capital planning for Yukon schools, we are so pleased to be working in partnership with the Kluane First Nation to relocate this school from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing. Moving the current Kluane Lake School from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing has been, as I said, a long-standing request of the Kluane First Nation. This project has been a true partnership, as we have been negotiating a Yukon asset construction agreement right now related to the *Kluane First Nation Self-Government Agreement* along with a community development agreement as part of the First Nation procurement policy.

A community consultation was scheduled for January 26 and 27. It was intended to solicit feedback and preferences from the community on the four concept designs. We currently have the owner-advisor Taylor Architecture Group in place for this project.

Again, a new school in Burwash Landing has been a long dream. I have enjoyed my recent meetings with the chief to advance this project. In June of 2020, our government signed a memorandum of understanding outlining a commitment to plan and construct this new school in Burwash Landing. A total of \$500,000 was originally allocated in 2021-22 to support planning and design for the project. Due to, as I've said, a few delays in relation to COVID-19, it has now been reduced to \$416,000. Looking forward, of course, to 2022-23, we have requested \$1.275 million. We are looking forward to continuing this work with all of our partners, including Highways and Public Works. I am looking forward to getting out to that community to have more direct discussions in person.

On other capital projects, there is a budget decrease of \$920,000. That was originally allocated for the Selkirk parking lot project. This decrease is due to delays in the project. The surplus has been transferred internally to support other capital projects, including \$504,000 for a modular classroom project at Hidden Valley and Selkirk Elementary schools and \$200,000 for work on the Lewes Boulevard bus stop at the CSSC Mercier School. This essentially brings the net impact of these internal transfers in the overall budget to zero.

There is a total increase of \$3.063 million in operation and maintenance. The primary driver of the increase in O&M is collective agreement increases. On January 26, members of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals voted to ratify a new three-year collective agreement with the Government of Yukon. Among other items, the agreement brings forward meaningful changes, which include yearly salary increases

totalling 5.35 percent over three years for teachers and a 7.5-percent increase in pay for teachers on call, effective now, and additional levels of pay based on qualifications for Yukon First Nation language teachers and educational assistants.

Teachers and all school staff play an absolutely key role in supporting students to be successful at school. They have done an incredible job adapting and being flexible during the pandemic. We thank each and every one of them for all of their hard work. The collective agreement increases in the budget cover July 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

The Yukon Association of Education Professionals is an important partner in education. This has been a positive and respectful round of bargaining. I thank them. Together we've had the view to supporting Yukon educators and students.

These increases amount to \$1.506 million for Schools and Student Services and \$44,000 for First Nation Initiatives. We are glad that we have finalized this agreement to continue to support school staff in the essential work that they are doing to continue learning and to keep school environments open and available for students and families through the pandemic.

Other increases in Schools and Student Services include an increase of \$213,000 in funding for CSFY due to increased enrolment and school operational costs.

Another major driver of the O&M budget increase that we are asking for is under the universal childcare program. This, as everyone is aware, has been a major priority for our government. We continue 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 new universal program focuses on key areas of affordability, accessibility, and quality. The new universal childcare program reduced parents' fees to less than \$10 per day on average. We heard in engagements that, in addition to affordability and accessibility for families, we needed to address quality end wages to educators, which we are doing and have done. We're really proud of these investments.

The Yukon universal early learning childcare program is designed to provide rich early learning experiences and environments and to view children as capable, competent learners who are full of potential. This program ensures that licensed early learning and childcare programs can be accessible to all Yukoners as costs to families have been significantly reduced.

Due to higher than expected program uptake and program costs, we are seeking an increase of \$1.3 million. We believe that investing in early childcare relationships, environments, and experiences supports the development of Yukon children and the future of a happier and healthier society. This program has been a tremendous success over the last year. We are coming close to the one-year anniversary. In terms of further information about this, the Yukon early learning and childcare funding program focuses on quality, inclusivity, affordability, and accessibility. The program consists of two parts: funding for licensed childcare, which reduces parents' fees, reduces operational and administration expenses, and supports program

needs; and childcare operational funding — formerly the direct operating grant — which supports high quality learning environments, increases wages of early learning childhood educators, and supports operational costs.

Starting on April 1, 2021, Yukon families automatically began saving \$700 per month per child registered full time in participating licensed childcare programs. These savings are also provided for children attending programs part time, so on a pro-rated basis. The Yukon early learning and childcare funding program helps to support, as I have said, the reduction of parents' fees to remain, on average, less than \$10 a day.

As of January 1, 2022, 100 percent of licensed early learning and childcare programs in the Yukon had transferred to the universal childcare program, providing a total of 1,979 spaces for children in the Yukon.

This investment in high quality early learning and childcare is paying off. This increase in the budget is due to more parents choosing to access this program, so that is great news for families and for young Yukoners who have access to quality learning environments for their critical early learning years.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Department of Education and all of our partners, who have been working incredibly hard.

There are a number of key partnerships and strategies that we are working toward developing. Some are in the implementation stage. I am very grateful for all of their hard work and for working in a collaborative way. I would also like to acknowledge my appreciation for the work and dedication of other partners. I express a tremendous gratitude to the acting chief medical officer of health and her staff for their tireless efforts to help keep Yukon learning environments safe for staff and students. I think that they have done a tremendous job. There has been a lot of pressure and I feel like we are now in a place of really looking toward that light at the end of the tunnel and seeing us move into this next stage of the pandemic. I think our school settings have done a tremendous job. We have learned so much throughout this pandemic, and having children learn in person has been one of our key priorities.

I thank every single educator, parent, child — all who have been involved in this tremendous effort. I thank you for all of the work that you've done. As the world continues to be in flux, each and every one of you is helping to provide stability, security, and optimism for Yukon learners of all ages.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the supplementary budget that pertains to my department, which will be Vote 3. I look forward to seeing this pass through the House at this stage and moving into Committee of the Whole and look forward to that general debate when we have our officials here.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have some brief comments on behalf of the Department of Highways and Public Works. I am pleased to speak to you about the Highways and Public Works supplementary budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

This is a large and diverse department. We have a variety of divisions, branches, and agencies that provide central

functions to government, as well as direct services to the public. With all of these things that we manage, we must make difficult choices with our spending so that we can provide the best possible service to Yukoners. Despite a high level of care that goes into planning our budget, it is impossible to predict every cost. The supplementary budget allows us to address those unexpected costs and continue to provide top-quality services.

Highways and Public Works is expecting an increase of \$3.556 million to our 2021-22 operation and maintenance costs. I would like to provide some details on this ask. As you all know, this year, we experienced unusual weather events. Some of them were even record-breaking. Not only did it impact us in the winter with an increased snowfall, but also in the spring, when the melt caused major road washouts. We needed to increase the department's budget by an additional \$407,000 to maintain our roads and repair the damage from the washouts. This is just one example of how unanticipated weather events can significantly impact the department's budget.

Another impact to our budget this year was the rise in fuel costs and electrical costs, which increased the cost of heating our buildings. Unforeseen costs can come from a number of things, but perhaps the most significant was the pandemic.

Our aviation industry was hit hard when the pandemic began, and they continue to need our support. Through the essential air service program, we have provided an additional \$2.4 million to continue supporting the Yukon aviation industry, which is 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

While we saw an increase in the operation and maintenance budget, we correspondingly saw a decrease in the capital budget. This was due, among other things, to a decrease in the spending on the Dempster fibre project. Due to weather and material availability, certain aspects of the project could not be completed last year; however, the project is still on track.

As I wrap up today, I would like to reiterate that our department performs a significant range of services, and the work that we do impacts all Yukoners. The work that we do is important, and we take pride in doing this work well.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to questions in Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to my colleagues for their comments here today. We got a lot done today. It's really good to see, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Leader of the NDP for her comments. I'll spend a little bit of time on the Member for Lake Laberge, as he laughs off-mic. I will just say that I disagree with the Member for Lake Laberge's comments as to being let off the hook, I guess, because my officials aren't here. I do agree that my officials are brilliant, and I want to thank Scott Thompson and his team for preparation of the variance reports that we go through, through the years, the attention to detail when it comes to the Public Accounts, the information-sharing, the

advancement of — I mean, I'm sure the members opposite wouldn't even recognize the organizational stratus of the Yukon government anymore, now, as we have gone from being a budgetary office in the financial world to having this large complement of professionals, including those in Highways and Public Works, including those in Community Services, including those throughout the government, and how we develop budgets now. It's truly impressive.

So, I can understand why the member opposite would be beside himself with glowing praise for the intelligence of these public servants, and I would agree with him on that.

But it really doesn't fit the MO of the Yukon Party to let somebody off the hook over in government. We saw, just from the Question Period, their tactic, or approach, where they will focus in on one minister, trying their best to get them maybe off topic, not asking three questions and only asking two — those types of things —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Not only is the Premier probably in contravention of Standing Order 19(i) regarding insulting language that is likely to cause discord, he is, pursuant to Standing Order 19(b) — he's speaking to matters other than the question under discussion. He seems to be trying to have a re-hash of Question Period and is forgetting that we are actually here to talk about the third appropriation act of this fiscal year.

Speaker: The Hon. Premier, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised by this point of order. The member opposite said one thing in his response to my second reading speech, and I'm responding to that one thing, and he just can't handle it.

I don't think this is a point of order. I think this is a dispute among members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The discussion is a dispute among members, but I just want to remind the member who has the floor: Please stick to the topic. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree and thank you. I will continue, and I will be brief.

Again, it is just not in the MO of the Yukon Party to give us a break over here. That is why they have no questions today in second reading. Maybe —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The member has the floor, and I am having a hard time hearing him speak.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think they are having a hard time swallowing what I'm about to say.

Maybe, again, they are not prepared for today. It is often the time when the member opposite maybe hasn't received his marching orders from the new leader yet. Oftentimes, as we're

in debate and having conversations here, he is on that phone so many times that he will pause halfway through a sentence just to consult the oracle to see if he's on track or not.

Maybe they are just not prepared for today.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Ms. McLeod: I don't have the Standing Orders memorized like my colleague here, but clearly the Premier is just going out of his way to be rude today. If he could just stick to his comments on the budget, we would appreciate that.

Speaker: The Hon. Premier, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I am not really sure which point of order we are on here, because no point of order has been stated.

Also, I am merely responding to the one question — the one statement that was given by the Yukon Party. I think I deserve my time to give an alternative to what the Yukon Party is saying as a narrative as to why I am not being asked questions in second reading.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: It is a dispute between members, but I just want to remind the member who has the floor: Please stick to the bill. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Absolutely. Again, when I'm being portrayed in a certain way by members opposite, I have been taught very well by my parents that you need to stick up for yourself, and that's what I'm doing here today. I am providing an alternative to the member opposite's narrative.

I think that it is pretty telling. I don't think that it is necessarily the MO of the Yukon Party to give us a break here when it comes to asking questions. I think that it is more likely that the member opposite just hasn't been given his marching orders yet as far as what questions he is to ask, but I am here. We met at House Leaders this morning. The members opposite knew exactly what was ahead of them as far as scheduling. I am here to answer questions from the members opposite, but let it be known that the members opposite have no questions. We haven't seen a lot of questions so far. We haven't seen a lot of questions in the briefings from the members opposite either when it comes to finance or the briefings that the Finance department has given.

I will leave it at that for now, but I am looking forward to not only debating the substantive pieces of this bill, but also the expertise of my colleagues as they get into Committee of the Whole for their specific departments.

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.

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, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of the Bill No. 203 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. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

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

Bill No. 3: *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to return to this. I do have a number of other questions, both about the program itself, but also the interaction between the Yukon government, the AYC, and the municipalities in this respect.

When we left off yesterday, the minister had agreed to go to AYC and ask if the recommendations provided by the working group could be shared. I would note that the minister did share a motion from AYC that indicated that AYC endorsed the recommendations, and then I should note that the minister committed to accept all of the recommendations and implement them, but we haven't yet seen those recommendations, and so it is difficult for us to judge whether or not, and how, that will be achieved, without actually seeing the recommendations themselves.

So, I will start off by asking the minister if he was able to reach out to AYC and if he is in a position to table those recommendations.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are working with AYC still. I have reached out to them; I haven't heard back yet. As soon as I do, for the documents we were talking about yesterday, I will certainly table them in the House.

Mr. Dixon: Obviously, as I noted, it is difficult for us to review this program and understand what recommendations were made when the recommendations aren't shared publicly. Can I just ask again if the minister can clarify: Has a response been sent from him to the AYC that clearly articulates the Yukon government's support and plan to implement all of the recommendations provided by the working group?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said yesterday, we received the notification from the AYC — the letter from AYC — late last week, I believe on March 8. It is now just about a week later. I am drafting a letter of response to the Association of Yukon Communities — a formal letter. Again, I expect to get that to them very soon, but I have reached out and spoken to the president and expressed our support of the recommendations. He has it verbally, and we are preparing our letter to AYC, and I expect to get that to him as soon as it is properly vetted and sent off.

Mr. Dixon: Will the minister commit to tabling that letter, as well?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am nothing if not open with providing all of the correspondence and documents that I can to the public and to the opposition.

Mr. Dixon: Okay, I'll proceed with some questions, then.

I'll start with some questions about the commercial stream, as it is planned to look — sorry, as the program is planned to look, at least. I have some questions about how it is planned to look.

The commercial stream, as indicated by the minister, would have a cap of \$100,000. Can he provide any other differences between the residential and the commercial stream, as they are in the process of developing the program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, the member opposite is talking about the commercial stream. Yes, he is correct, it is up to a \$100,000 loan for the commercial stream, as I said yesterday; not much has changed in the last 24 hours. It includes retrofits

for existing buildings that improve overall efficient energy and performance in the following categories: thermal enclosure, insulation, windows, fuel switching to biomass, and/or HVAC, and/or recommissioning.

So, that is basically where it will go. There will be an intake of client agreement construction and project closeout.

I want to just light for a moment on the program itself. It's not built yet. This program, based around local improvement charges, has not yet been built. We have a sketch-out.

We don't have any experts here in the room today, but the Energy Solutions Centre is the one that runs the retrofit programs. They have great experience doing retrofits. They know what they are doing, but in terms of the actual details of the program we are talking about today, it's just very, very high level. It's a program that is delivered across North America. It has been very successful, but it hasn't been delivered here and certainly not in this way, with LICs and municipalities, with the government providing so much support.

There is some work left to be done on the program itself. As I said, I don't have the advantage of having the experts from Energy, Mines and Resources in the room. What we are really discussing today is Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*. That's really what is on the floor for debate today. The program itself will be enabled by this legislation. As I have said several times in the House, until the actual legislation that is before us gets through the House, there is really no point in discussing what the program is going to look like.

I know the Leader of the Official Opposition was actually opposed to the program last fall. I am delighted to see his apparent interest and possible support of the bill now. Until this bill passes this Legislative Assembly, the actual program itself is in very broad terms.

We are going to see how it actually materializes once we get into negotiations with municipalities that want to adopt the program and what their needs are and what their tax base is and what the assessed value of their homes are. There are a lot of things to work out yet with municipalities.

I am happy to continue talking about this, for sure. I appreciate the questions and the interest I'm getting from the member opposite. I hope that answers, in broad terms, how it will work. It includes retrofits for existing buildings that improve overall energy performance in the following categories, which include: thermal enclosure, fuel switching to biomass, and/or HVAC, and/or recommissioning. In broad terms, that is what will be available for people to apply on. That should include insulation and windows, entryways, that type of thing.

There will be an intake, a client agreement, and a construction closeout, including an assessment of the actual property.

Mr. Dixon: I need to remind the minister that this is a program that he announced, even before the bill had passed the fall.

There were Facebook posts, and there was media done. The government did quite the job selling this program that had not yet been created prior to this legislation passing the House.

Obviously, that was the subject of a point of personal privilege that was discussed last fall, but since then, we have realized that the work that the government had done on this bill was incomplete and that it wasn't good enough. That is why this bill had to be set aside for the winter while the minister went back to the drawing board and actually did some of the consultation that was required to do this work.

He has said that it is not worth it for his department to start working on developing the program until the legislation passes the House, which I find odd because he has in his hands a signed letter from the Third Party saying that, if they satisfy their requirements of the AYC and municipalities, they will happily support the bill, so it's certain to pass. Why the government has refused to begin working on the development of the program is beyond me. It's simply, I think, a decision by this minister to hold off on developing the program until after this legislation clears, even though he knows full well that he has a signed letter with assurances from the Leader of the Third Party that this bill will indeed pass this spring.

The minister also indicated that he thought that I did not support the program. I would remind him that the program does not exist yet — that's his whole point. All he said today is that the program doesn't exist yet, so how can they answer questions about it? I would remind him that this is why we are asking the questions that we have been asking. We want to understand this program. We want to understand its implications for municipalities, and we want to understand its implications for residents and businesses that could be prospective applicants to it. I don't think that it is an unreasonable thing for opposition parties to ask questions about what this program will look like. I think that the questions that I have asked are fairly reasonable. I appreciate that the minister can't answer in full every detail, but I would appreciate it if he could at least provide the facts without the sort of narrative that he wants to add in around our support or opposition to this.

We have said all along that we support the idea of this program. We have said all along that we want it to work. We would like to see this type of program come forward, but we know that there have been significant concerns raised by municipalities and the AYC over the course of the last several months. We have seen multiple letters tabled from municipalities expressing that concern as well.

So, while we do intend to support the creation of this program, I think that it's only fair for the opposition to ask questions about the program that this legislation is intended to create. I'll start there and note that in response to some of the minister's comments.

I will then turn to some of the more substantive issues that I would like to ask about, as it is important for us to understand if these issues have been dealt with in order to judge whether or not the concerns raised by municipalities and the AYC have indeed been addressed.

One of the concerns that we heard is related to the possibility of default. If a client defaults on these loans, who will be responsible for collecting that money? How will that liability be handled? What provisions have been made for the

sharing of that burden or the distribution of that burden if that does indeed occur?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Before I begin, I want to let my good colleague across the way know that we have been having a very cordial exchange, and I appreciate that. The questions coming from the other side are thoughtful and well-intentioned, and I have no problem answering the questions coming from the member opposite.

I am gladdened to hear his statement of endorsement, I guess, of the project on the floor of the House today, so that is good to hear.

I just want to make it clear, though, to the member opposite that there are still things to work out, and I have been quite clear about that going forward. Frankly, we had formal recognition from the Association of Yukon Communities, I believe, on March 8 — it wasn't that long ago.

When I got that letter from the president, it was a great day because it actually said that the work that we did with municipalities to give them the comfort that they were asking for at the end of the last Sitting was granted. Until that happened, I didn't have formal notification. I heard that this or that had happened, but I actually got that formal notification just last week — late last week. It really just verified that all the work that the working group did on behalf of the Government of Yukon the AYC and municipalities paid off and was successful. That was a good moment for me — to have that acknowledgement. You know, I had said all along that I was willing to work with municipalities and put their fears to rest, much like my colleague, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, had before me.

We want to make sure that municipalities are whole. We understood their trepidation with this new program. They hadn't seen it work. The rural well and electrification program had some gaps. That was a Yukon Party initiative. They had some lingering worries based on that program. We have worked through those problems with the municipalities and, I think, developed a closer working relationship, and I'm really happy to have done that and gone through that. We learned a lot working so closely together. That was a useful enterprise.

The purpose of the working group, just to go back — and I will provide these documents once I have formal notification for the actual recommendation document and the letter from the AYC president.

The purpose of the working group is to develop recommendations and an opt-in agreement between the Yukon government and each participating municipal government that adequately addresses the administrative workload and removes barriers to municipal participation in better buildings using the local improvement tax mechanism. That's the key part. That's what the legislation today enables: the ability to use that local improvement tax model mechanism to actually collect and manage the loans that we're handing out. That allows us to actually get some of the best interest rates available to Yukoners. That's really the difference here; having that loan tied to a local improvement charge to a property actually allows us to deliver really good interest rates to Yukoners.

The working group examined what is proposed and what could be adjusted while adhering to the general objectives of the better building program and the themes and scope prescribed by the oversight committee, namely, to determine resource requirements from municipal participation and determine program administrative details related to municipal delivery elements.

That is what they were tasked to do. In the end, one of the things I think that the member opposite was asking about was: What about the default that was an issue? Municipalities — in my community tours and in conversations with municipal mayors — had identified it with the rural well and electrification program. They felt that when there was a default — and there aren't many of them. But when there was a default, they felt that they were left holding the bag. So, we have worked with them to come up with a new approach. In case of default where an administrative fee is not fully recovered by the administrative charge allowable under the *Act to Amend the Taxation and Assessment Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* — this legislation before us today — or, in cases of lien where the administrative cost is not recouped by the sale of the property, municipalities can request that the Yukon government pay 50 percent of the costs incurred on a case-by-case basis where a better buildings local improvement charge is owed with municipal taxes owing, and the Yukon government pays all the costs where only the better buildings local improvement is owing.

So, costs for default include administrative workload, advertising, notarizing, serving notice via registered mail and sheriff, land titles, forms, fees, legal advice and services. It is difficult to estimate the cost as each case is different, but we did hear that. I heard this, certainly, from the CAO of the Town of Watson Lake, who has had to go through this lien process several times. He outlined to me some of the costs that would be incurred by municipalities that would be difficult to recoup, but they were felt to be left high and dry. So, we are now saying that, yes, we understand that you have incurred these fees in the past and we will look at this into the future.

Default and lien are anticipated to be similar to the default rates in the current Yukon government local improvement programs of approximately three percent. So, that is really what we are looking at, and it could vary from municipality to municipality, and that is where some of the negotiations come in.

We also want to minimize the likelihood of default. This is actually a very good point. It is different from the previous local improvement charges that were paid by municipalities. We saw them in Whitehorse where there would be a referendum or a vote taken, and then the entire community involved would be assessed a local improvement charge against their property. This is a little bit different. It is certainly a different approach in that applicants are informed of the cost and new tax payments before entering into any agreements. So, they are going in with eyes wide open and they are going in willingly. This is a process that they will enter into of their own volition.

It's not going to be forced on them in any way, shape, or form. Before they sign any documents, they will know what

they are getting into. The application process will ensure that there are no unpaid taxes on the property and that funded projects have energy savings that offset the new expenses.

They will actually see the costs of the program. They will be able to assess what the benefits should be through the program. That will help, I think, alleviate some of the pressure that municipalities saw on some of these other programs that they have administered in the past. So, it is a different approach.

I think that is a key point in recommending this program, which, as I said, has been offered across the country. We have Nova Scotia — in Bridgewater — Lunenburg, Digby, Barrington, Yarmouth, Amherst, Cumberland, New Glasgow, and Victoria — all have a program similar to this one — and the Town of Berwick in Nova Scotia, Wolfville, Charlottetown, Stratford, and Halifax. PEI has a program like this. Toronto is running a program very similar to this one as well — Guelph and Newmarket, Ontario. Saanich, BC is looking at it, as is Canmore, Rocky Mountain House, the Town of Devon, and the City of Edmonton, Alberta. Ottawa, Ontario has one. Burlington, Ontario has one — Vancouver, BC, Halifax again, and Ontario.

I guess the point is that this is a Yukon iteration of these programs that are running in many cities across the land. They are run by municipalities. Municipalities in most of these jurisdictions run them all themselves. The difference here in the territory is that here the Yukon government will be doing a lot of the heavy lifting and assessing the homes and taking people through the application process and the rest of it through the Energy Solutions Centre. In most other jurisdictions, it is done solely by the municipality. We understand that the burden here would be too great on municipalities. We are going to take on some of that load and do it through the good folk at Energy, Mines and Resources and at Community Services to help offset. The administrative burden is really what we have been dealing with through discussions with the municipalities over the last little while to give them a level of comfort that they didn't have previously. The time that we took to do this, as the Leader of the Third Party mentioned, was time well spent, and I do appreciate the agreement that we have managed to reach with the Association of Yukon Communities.

Mr. Dixon: I had a specific question about default, and I do believe that there was an answer in there, so I appreciate that.

I noted that the minister offered some congratulations to himself for the moment that he received that motion from the AYC endorsing the recommendations of the working group. They were talking about how the groups were able to come together and do the hard work necessary to come up with a solution. I couldn't help but think that this would have been better done before this bill was tabled in the fall. I think this is something that we can reflect on: If that work had been done before the bill was tabled, the government wouldn't have faced the delay of a number of months while this work occurred in between the Fall and Spring Sittings.

I just wanted to confirm one thing very quickly. It is a very specific question: Can the minister confirm then that no one

from AYC has communicated to Yukon government that they support or will allow the tabling of those recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can confirm that I have just been shown that — at the officials level — we got an e-mail while I was in the House this afternoon that my deputy has just shown me. So, the AYC did get back to officials within CS and said that they were fine with it at the officials level. I have not yet heard from the president personally. I have reached out, but I haven't heard back yet, so I'm waiting for that, but I do have confirmation at the officials level that the documents are fine to be released. That happened while I have been in the House. I haven't been out to talk to the deputy since then.

Mr. Dixon: I am very pleased to hear that the AYC has agreed to release the recommendations. I am sure that the minister has them with him. Will he please table them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I don't have a clean copy on my desk, but if we take a brief recess of five minutes, I can go up and have one printed for the member opposite.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much. Just to allow our pages a moment to distribute those, I'll just fill in with a question that could be answered by the document, but I'll give it to the minister anyway.

I had a question about the commercial stream and whether or not, if a business owned condos or rental units, if those would be considered under the residential stream or the commercial stream.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I'm going to say that this really is one of the details that will have to be fleshed out as we build the program going forward. It really will depend on the class of property tax paid by the entity. We will have to look at what the tax rules say to determine whether or not it's captured by the program. These are some of the details that we will have to work out, as we go forward.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the answer from the minister. I will turn to the interaction between the Yukon government and a municipality. I will start with the opt-in agreement. Can the minister explain what the opt-in agreement would look like, what provisions would actually be in that agreement, in terms of detail, and whether or not there is already a template in place for such an opt-in agreement — or does that have yet to be developed?

Deputy Chair: I will just add a request that all members speak up. I think that the acoustics are particularly difficult in that corner of the room. Thank you to everyone for helping with that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I will try to angle my mic. I do find it hard back here myself, actually. With a hearing impairment, it can be difficult. I hope that helps a little bit.

So, there is a draft template. It is modelled on the one that we use for the domestic well and rural electrification program, and I have been informed that a draft had been shared with municipalities through the working group.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer there.

With regard to the fee — or the administrative fee — I suppose there are two fees. There is one that is paid by the client — the homeowner, the customer — and one that is paid by the Yukon government to the municipality. Both are set at \$500, but I believe that the customer fee is an upfront cost of \$500, and the fee that is paid by the government to the municipality as an administrative fee is \$500 per year of the agreement, which is up to 15 years.

Maybe I will just ask the minister to confirm that I have that correct. And is that indeed the process?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite has it mostly right. The initial fee is paid by the participant in the program. It is an initial sign-up fee of \$500 that is paid by the person receiving the loan — the individual receiving the loan — and it's tacked onto the LIC itself.

The subsequent years, it is an amount negotiated with municipalities of up to \$500. It's not a flat \$500 fee. It's up to \$500, based on discussions with the various municipalities. That's based on \$100 an hour of work, for up to five hours of work, to maintain the file over the course of the year. That fee is scheduled to be reviewed within the first two years of the program. The reason being is that this is the best guess from municipalities on the cost of administering the program, as it was done under the rural well and electrification program and as it was done under other local improvement charge programs that they've had in municipalities.

As I said this afternoon, we have asserted that this is a different beast. This is something that people will take on themselves and go in willingly and with eyes wide open. I don't think that the administrative burden is there. Nevertheless, municipalities wanted us to capture it. They did an awful lot of work to lay out all the different interactions that they would be having with individuals coming in for this loan program. This is the amount that they assessed: It would be up to between five and 10 hours' worth of work — up to 10 hours of work — and they agreed to take on half the charge themselves. That's up to five hours on behalf of the Yukon government.

As I said, we're going to do an audit of the program within the first two years, or in the second year, to make sure that we know how much it is actually costing municipalities, because another component of the arrangement we've made with municipalities is that this is not a profit-generating enterprise; it's basically just to recover costs for municipalities to administer the program.

Mr. Dixon: I just wanted to note for the minister that I have in front of me now the document that we've been discussing previously.

I have with me the letter from the AYC to the minister, dated March 7, as he has indicated — the terms of reference for the working group and an eight-page note, which is titled “Better Buildings Working Group and Oversight Committee: Administrative approach for municipal and territorial governments”.

For those perhaps reading this at a later date, I am sure one of us will table these documents, probably tomorrow. Listeners and readers will have the opportunity to refer to those documents.

With that in mind, I note that there are actually two categories of administrative fees identified in this document; one is for a larger municipality and one is for a smaller municipality. The minister has referenced that the fee is up to \$500 per project, which appears to be the larger municipality level. Can he just tell us quickly what the distinction between larger and smaller is? Is it just Whitehorse and everything else, or what is the criteria for smaller municipalities, and what was the logic behind the lower rate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a good question. The answer is that there are some communities in which the Department of Community Services actually administers the tax rules on behalf of the municipalities, so they are not doing as much work. In municipalities like Whitehorse, Dawson, and Watson Lake, the tax function is actually handled by the municipality itself, so that is why they may be entitled to a higher fee.

In some of the smaller jurisdictions, CS actually does the tax administration for the municipalities, so it is actually another stage of work that they just do not have to engage in. That is why the fee is lower for those very smallest of municipalities.

Mr. Dixon: Just to circle back to the fee, is the amount paid to the municipality by Yukon government \$500 per project per month? Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No. It is \$500 a year.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the clarification there.

The minister discussed the relative amount of that and its intent to not be a revenue generator. I would note that if the minister has the kind of uptake that is planned, that could grow considerably. If it is \$500 a month and all the projects are in Whitehorse and the minister is hoping to have 1,000 of these go out, the territorial budget will be looking at a line item of about \$500,000 once that occurs. That is not insubstantial, and I think it is something that will be monitored, I am sure, by governments at both the municipal and the territorial level.

There is a question about the timing of the remittance of the money collected by the municipality to the Yukon government. I know that the *Municipal Act* does state that municipalities must remit LIC principal and interest payments back to the Yukon government by July 15. I know that there is a recommendation about that here, so I would like to ask if the minister can clarify what the working group recommendation was around the length of time after the property tax payment deadline date and whether or not the recommendation from the working group to extend that was accepted and if it is reflected in the legislation.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I just want to make sure that the record is correct because I believe the member opposite — and he may have misspoken. He did say \$500 a month. That is not the case. It is \$500 a year.

The member opposite is correct, but we are not expecting to hit the full 1,000 properties, certainly, for many years. As I said before, we are actually going to review the program administrative burden in real time, checking it against the work of the committee, to make sure that we know what the actual workload is. So, that will be done, and it is with municipalities after two years in the program.

The other issue that the member opposite was talking about was to examine timelines, deadlines, and program agreements for any flexibility. They had asked that we amend the amendments to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* to allow 90 days for the remittance deadline for better buildings. As I said yesterday, I had spoken to mayors and to the committee. I said that I would endeavour to see what magic Justice and Community Services folks could do to get this forward. That is the amendment that we have proposed for this bill — to actually put that amendment in. It was something that they did flag.

The good folks in Justice and Community Services were actually able to get this together despite all of the work that they have been doing on the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and everything else that they have been doing in the last several months. It has just been an absolutely frenetic pace for those departments, but they did actually manage to get this amendment forward. I have it, so I will be able to make good on that commitment to the municipalities way faster than they ever expected, so that is good news.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that. Now, having had the opportunity to review the document, I note some issues that have been raised in the report. I was very interested to see one particular issue highlighted that I had actually mentioned the last time we debated this, which they note as being a potential barrier for low assessed property values. The report notes that for property owners with lower assessed value or high existing LIT debt, there is less room to borrow within the 25 assessed property value cap, which may deter someone from retrofits if the financing will not cover the bulk of the deep retrofits that retrofit projects cost.

The report notes that, furthermore, the proposed program would apply the rebate to the loan, reducing debt, but not providing as much capital as applying rebates to expand the project’s budget. The requirement to work within a retrofit package for a 20 improvement in energy use will deter participants eligible for smaller improvements, such as \$17,500 for windows on a property assessed at \$75,000.

People who most need assistance may be excluded, and this may be seen as inequitable to communities with lower assessed value housing stock.

Changing or removing the energy target would not ensure that the buildings are improved to the level needed to reduce energy, meet climate change targets, and offer improved resiliency and comfort to homeowners.

The promotion of other territorial and federal programs and rebates for projects outside the scope of better buildings

will be addressed in a communications plan, which I understand is yet to be developed.

This is an issue that we raised yesterday just around the disparity of this program as it applies to, in particular, rural Yukon, although there are lower assessed property value homes in the Whitehorse area too. But I think that, in particular, homes in rural Yukon that are very much comparable to homes here in Whitehorse — or at least are ostensibly comparable — often have a lower assessed property value.

I'm wondering about the concerns raised here, and one that I raised previously, about access to the program for Yukoners in the rural parts of our territory and whether or not the government is willing to make changes or is interested in expanding the program to make it more equitable and more accessible to Yukoners with lower assessed property values.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is one of the reasons why we have negotiations with municipalities on the terms of the deal. This issue has been raised by both Dawson and Watson Lake — their leadership and their mayors — as a concern. It is one of the things that we will deal with through the negotiations with each municipality to make sure — I mean, across the country, these programs are delivered by the municipalities themselves, so it is not really a problem. They will tailor the program to their own municipality. Here, because they don't have the capacity, we are working with them to do this. That is why it is an opt-in program. That is why we will have negotiations with each municipality on the terms of adoption.

That said, the Energy branch will work with owners to find additions to an LIC, such as grants or other potential revenue that they might be able to access to help bring the bar up so that they can actually make their properties much more energy efficient.

The goal is 1,000 properties across the territory in as many communities as we possibly can. That is the goal. It is a hard and fast goal. For some people applying, it just won't make sense. The aspirational goal is 20 percent in energy savings and 20 percent in greenhouse gas reduction and energy savings. We talked about that yesterday.

So, that is what we are working toward. We are trying to hit 1,000 properties, and some of them won't make sense, in which case we will have to find other options for those individuals.

Seeing the time, Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report progress. Are you agreed?

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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, 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 5:27 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 15, 2022:

35-1-46

Ongoing extra security costs in the Main Administration Building, letter re (dated March 14, 2022) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge to Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Cathers)

35-1-47

Regulatory body for psychologists, letter re (dated March 14, 2022) from Reagan Gale, President, Psychological Society of Yukon to Brendan Hanley, Member of Parliament (Blake)

35-1-48

Better Buildings Program Oversight Committee and Working Group Terms of Reference (Mostyn)

35-1-49

Better Buildings Working Group and Oversight Committee: Administrative approach for municipal and territorial governments (Mostyn)

35-1-50

Better Build Program Committees, letter re (dated March 7, 2022) from Gord Curran, President, Association of Yukon Communities to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 50

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, March 16, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

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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
Wednesday, March 16, 2022 — 1:00 pm.

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 a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as it is now outdated: Motion No. 284, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

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 my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to welcome several guests whom we have here today for the tribute. We have with us Joe Mewett, the president of the Whitehorse legion; we have Inspector Lindsay Ellis, officer in charge of the Whitehorse detachment of M Division; we have Superintendent Dak Dara with M Division; we have Terry Grabowski, a recipient of a community safety award; we have Chase Blodgett, a recipient of a community safety award; and we have Melvin Lagersson, who is also a recipient of the awards. With him is his son and his mother who is visiting here from Sweden. Welcome, everyone.

Applause

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask for your indulgence and the indulgence of my colleagues, but it is not often that we get to invite someone and welcome them in a different capacity. Chase Blodgett has given so much of himself to make sure that we change the very rules that we govern ourselves with — especially when we come to human rights recognition and how that is there. It is so lovely to see him here in a capacity of not having to defend those human rights, but he is being celebrated for the human that he is. It's so delightful to have him here in such a happy capacity.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Community Safety Awards recipients

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today to recognize the 2020-2021 recipients of the Minister of Justice Community Safety Awards.

The Community Safety Awards were created to recognize Yukoners for their dedication to improving community safety through various initiatives, including activism, community outreach and support, excellence in emergency and first response, and volunteerism.

These awards were established in 2012 in response to the *Sharing Common Ground* report, which highlighted a need to recognize the contributions of Yukoners who promote community safety.

They are awarded every two years, upon the recommendation of the Community Safety Awards Nomination Selection Committee. Here in the Yukon, we are so fortunate to have many individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to build safer communities and are nominated by their fellow Yukoners.

Usually, we are able to host a lovely dinner and a community ceremony, but COVID-19 has forced us to be a bit creative. We delivered framed certificates and a personalized plaque to each recipient, and I had the pleasure of personally calling and congratulating each one of the spectacular individuals. It was so great to talk to each person about their award.

It is my true pleasure to speak here about each of these recipients.

Gerry Crayford, a volunteer with the Dawson City fire department for 46 years and three months, received the award for a lifetime contribution to community safety. Gerry has shown exceptional commitment to his community and as a role model and mentor.

Corporal Cameron Long received the outstanding community policing award for his incredible bravery in being dropped by a helicopter into Marsh Lake — not once, but twice — in the middle of a storm to rescue two people whose boat had capsized. The helicopter was piloted with exceptional skill by Melvin Lagersson, who was awarded the first responders award. Melvin's actions in operating the helicopter through a storm and locating the people resulted in this heroic rescue.

The mentor for youth award went to Willow Brewster, a long-time lifeguard and paramedic. Willow identified a need and developed a summer water safety skills program that was delivered in Old Crow and Teslin with the hope that these critical education day camps will be expanded to every Yukon community.

Our bridge builder award for human rights activism was given to Chase Blodgett for his continued efforts to promote safety and justice throughout our community and his efforts with recreational hockey and transgender inclusion. There are truly too many other achievements of Chase to mention here.

Angela Miller and Sue Rudd were awarded our exceptional project award for the Watson Lake system navigation project, which provides much-needed outreach and navigation services for individuals living with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

A volunteer award was given to John Moses, who works with Emergency Medical Services in Watson Lake. John is someone who takes action in his community in so many ways to help everyone, with a focus on the most vulnerable people and children.

Sergeant John Mitchell of the Dawson Rangers has been awarded the volunteer award for his 30 years of service. Sergeant Mitchell was integral in bringing new life to the unit in the early years and helped grow the Rangers into a community force.

Terry Grabowski, a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces and community policing, works with the legion and the community to identify veterans and families who are in need. His work is truly outstanding. He provides information and help on local and national resources that enable veterans in need to access specific help.

First responder awards were presented to Corporal Tim Anderson, Constable Greg Tillack, Constable Eric Parent, Captain Scott MacFarlane, and Ryan Miller for their quick and heroic efforts to save people who were engulfed in a burning building in downtown Whitehorse in January 2021. Despite the considerable risk to themselves, their teamwork, as RCMP officers and firefighters, avoided serious tragedy.

Another first responder award went to Jesse Craig for his location and rescue of two men from Schwatka Lake. Jesse called 911, followed his training, and took quick action. He saved their lives.

A first responder award was given to Claude Vallier. While working as a CEMA officer, Claude came upon a person who appeared to be overdosing. Claude had 911 called, administered the Naloxone, and ultimately administered CPR, going above and beyond, and saved this person's life.

Scott McDougall, co-owner of Kanoe People, received a first responder award as well for his quick actions to save a man from the mighty Yukon River. Without hesitation, Scott used his considerable skills to launch a canoe and pull the man to safety. His courage and calm approach inspire us all.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so grateful to each and every Yukoner who contributes to our territory's safety. These Yukoners were nominated by their peers and have shown leadership and dedication to improving safety in their communities. We are all in their debt. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize and to thank the recipients of the 2020-2021 Community Safety Awards.

The Community Safety Awards recognize Yukoners who, through their work, volunteerism, leadership, or acts of courage, contribute to community safety, and 18 people and one project have received awards.

I will not repeat what the minister said in listing some of the details of those awards, but I do want to recognize, beginning with Scott McDougall, co-owner of Kanoe People, for acting quickly to save a person from drowning in the Yukon River. He launched a canoe and reached the man, pulling him back above water and transferring him to an RCMP boat when it arrived. It's clear that his skill and quick response saved the man.

As a mentor for youth, Willow Brewster deserves recognition for her work to bring water safety and rescue skills programming to Old Crow and Teslin.

Helicopter pilot Melvin Lagersson, who is here in the gallery today, received an award for his contribution as a helicopter pilot to the rescue of two people from a capsized sailboat.

For the same rescue, Corporal Cam Long received the Yukon policing award. Corporal Long entered the water to assist both people.

Having personally seen Cam's professionalism in the field during a search a couple years ago, I would also like to thank him for his ongoing work on behalf of all Yukoners.

John Moses and Sergeant John Mitchell have both received volunteer awards. Mr. Moses goes above and beyond in his volunteering for Watson Lake EMS, and Sergeant John Mitchell led the Dawson Rangers for 30 years, until 2021. In addition to playing a key leadership role in developing capacity and skill of the Rangers and the Junior Rangers, Mitch has contributed to the Yukon in many ways, including breaking thousands of miles of trail for the Yukon Quest and Percy DeWolfe over many years.

Terry Grabowski received a well-deserved award for his work with the legion to identify and help veterans and families in need of assistance, and Terry himself, of course, is a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Angela Miller and Sue Rudd received an award for the Watson Lake system navigation project, which provides outreach and navigation support for people with disabilities.

Chase Blodgett received the bridge builder recognition award for his efforts to improve safety for Yukoners who may be marginalized due to gender identity or sexuality.

Gerry Crayford was recognized for a lifetime contribution to community safety, as a firefighter and assistant fire chief in Dawson with service of over 45 years.

A number of awards were given to first responders in recognition of courageous actions, including Corporal Tim Anderson, Constable Greg Tillak, Constable Eric Parent, Captain Scott MacFarlane, and Ryan Miller. They all received awards for their role in assisting people during the Ryder apartment building fire in January last year, including two unconscious people who required first aid.

Claude Vallier assisted in saving the life of a person who was determined to be overdosing through CPR and the use of Naloxone.

Jesse Craig assisted two people who had flipped a canoe on Schwatka Lake in frigid temperatures, helping one to shore and helping both stay warm until help arrived.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to thank all of these people for their contributions to their communities and to their fellow Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the recipients of the 2020-21 Community Safety Awards. From paramedics to activists, to community police and firefighters, the list of recipients shows the many ways we can increase safety in our communities and how many Yukoners are there and ready to do the work.

When I think about safety, I am reminded of the small communities across the territory that rely on the heroic acts of volunteers. Every day, these volunteers go above and beyond their roles to support neighbours and friends.

I want to congratulate the recipients on their hard work and on protecting Yukoners across the territory from harm. Each of you have exemplified what it means to be a community builder. In the last year, you provided your services, you have dealt with a pandemic, historic flooding, and more, depending on where you are in the Yukon.

Thank you for the dedication that you have shown Yukoners and for continuing to protect us in all our communities across the territory.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling the Highways and Public Works *Fleet Vehicle Agency Business Plan 2022 to 2025*.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a CBC article showing the Yukon Party and its leader's support for rent controls.

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?

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

THAT this House supports the continued transition away from fossil fuels by investing \$1.7 million to electrify the Government of Yukon's fleet vehicles in this year's budget.

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

THAT this House urges the Alaska Senate committee on education to vote down Bill No. 140 as it would negatively impact transgender athletes and the transgender community.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to ensure that his ministers follow the law, including the requirements of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, by taking actions including directing them to immediately provide a copy of the video from the meeting on November 9, 2021 between the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Education, and Hidden Valley school parents in response to an outstanding ATIPP request.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase housing options for Yukoners by reviewing the size and purpose of the Government of Yukon's involvement in the housing sector.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Macaulay Lodge site redevelopment

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise to speak about the future of the Macaulay Lodge site. Macaulay Lodge opened in Riverdale in 1969 and was the only continuing care facility in Whitehorse for many years. It provided a place for senior residents to call home. It was a vibrant and well-loved key area of our community for many decades.

In 2019, 50 years after it opened, Macaulay Lodge closed its doors for the last time. All of the residents have moved to other long-term care homes, including Copper Ridge Place and Whistle Bend Place.

The building itself has come to the end of its life and is slated for demolition this year. The demolition contract has been awarded to a Yukon First Nation business, United North Construction Group, and the demolition is expected to begin next month with completion slated for this upcoming fall.

The Macaulay Lodge site holds exciting opportunities for redevelopment and, in particular, new housing for Yukoners. Despite historic levels of new housing construction over the past year, as the Yukon's population continues to grow, there is still a need in our territory to build more homes for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to announce that the Macaulay Lodge site will indeed be redeveloped to build homes. Located at the intersection of Lewes Boulevard and Klondike Road, it spans a total of five lots within the established residential neighbourhood of Riverdale. The Macaulay Lodge site is within walking distance of services, is on major bus routes, is close to a neighbourhood park, and is near the bustling heart of Riverdale.

An expression of interest for the development of housing on the Macaulay Lodge property will be released in the coming days, and this announcement builds on our recent work to increase the availability of homes in the territory.

In 2022 alone, several new affordable homes will come online, including: the 4th and Jeckell Street community housing project; the Challenge Cornerstone supportive, an affordable housing project; the Normandy Living seniors residence; and the Boreal Commons rental project in Whistle Bend.

The development for the Macaulay Lodge site aligns with the goals laid out in the housing action plan for Yukon — in the Yukon Housing Corporation's strategic plan — by providing a rare opportunity to develop higher density housing in central Whitehorse.

We need to keep the housing development momentum going in the territory, and we must now plan for the needs of tomorrow. Redeveloping the Macaulay Lodge site for housing is part of that vision.

Thank you to the Yukon Housing Corporation, the Department of Highways and Public Works, the City of Whitehorse, and the United North Construction Group for their hard work to advance this project and create new homes for Yukoners.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this today, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for re-announcing that the site of Macaulay Lodge will be used for housing. Of course, this was announced yesterday by the Minister of Highways and Public Works in response to a question from the Official Opposition. Of course, we support the development of new housing, as prices continue to increase.

This is why we thought it was important to announce this yesterday. I do have a question for the minister with respect to his plans for the site. In his remarks, he referenced that the site spans a total of five lots. I assume these details will be captured in the expression of interest. So, will the EOI be asking for the five lots to be developed individually, or will it be looking to have the lots developed as a single project? Also, the lots are currently zoned for residential, multiple housing. Will the minister be specifying that they remain as that type of zoning, or is the government open to different types of housing development to be explored on these lots?

I am also wondering about the value of the land. The most recent publicly available assessment of the value for each of these lots is just over \$2 million each. Does the minister know if that is still current? Also, is the plan to sell the land at market value to the potential developer?

Finally, I have a question for the sixth lot that is adjacent to Macaulay Lodge. Currently, this lot is made up of greenspace and runs adjacent to the backyards of several Teslin Road homes.

Does the government have any plans for that lot? Or is it planned to remain as greenspace?

Once again, thank you to the minister.

Ms. Tredger: Since 2019, people have been asking about what comes next for Macaulay Lodge — and with good reason. When the last resident was moved out, Yukon was already in a housing crisis. There were calls from my colleagues to use it as temporary housing, but they were told that the building was too old, too run down, and too toxic. When my colleagues asked when it would be demolished, there was never a clear timeline given.

I've heard from Riverdale residents questions as to why the lights have been kept on for the last three years, which begs the question: If the lights were on, has the water and heat also been kept on? If so, how much has it cost Yukoners to keep a building that will soon be demolished heated for three years?

We're glad that today's announcement is confirming what we had all hoped — that housing will be built in its place. Despite the new lots and projects that we have seen opening, and that are opening soon, the Yukon is still a long way from having enough housing for everyone who needs it — but we look forward to seeing folks being able to call this convenient location home once again.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, in response to the Official Opposition, I appreciate that it was felt that it was important to announce our project yesterday. Thank you.

Concerning the five lots, the reason that we're going through an expression of interest versus an RFP is because it actually gives us that ability to have very innovative submissions. At this point, we're not putting hard lines on what can possibly be there; we're looking for a plethora of different opportunities for housing in that spot.

Again, we'll continue to work with the City of Whitehorse, which of course controls zoning in that particular area, and based on what the submissions are, and working very collaboratively with them on all of our future projects in these areas and downtown Whitehorse, we have committed directly to the mayor and the city manager that we would make sure that we're sharing the ideas that come in and the work that can be done together.

Before we can talk about valuation on the five lots, one of the major concerns — and partially why we didn't look at demolition and then potentially have the same company or joint venture look to build to make it more efficient — is that there is a potential of contamination from some hydrocarbons. I think, at this point, we'll wait and see what the potential contamination is and if there has to be remediation before we look at a current valuation.

Again, there are no plans for that greenspace area, and that might let us move past having any public use dedication with the developer, but again, we will work with the city on those particular items. Concerning the O&M, we're saving about \$100,000 per year by not having that in place.

I can look for the conversation about the lights over the last three years. I am not sure about that one in particular, but I will endeavour to come back with a written response to you.

We continue to leverage multiple tools to address housing availability in the Yukon. We are ensuring strong, collaborative relationships with municipalities, private land owners, developers, and First Nation partners to speed up the development, approval, and construction processes. We are excited to see First Nation land being developed into residential lots. We applaud the Kwanlin Dün First Nation for leading the Yukon in residential lot development and creating new opportunities for homeowners.

We are moving forward in partnership with the City of Whitehorse to get both the Macaulay Lodge lot, the 5th and Rogers land parcel, and the tank farm property out to residential housing development while looking at both densification and mixed-market options, inclusive of home-ownership opportunities.

In addition, we are excited by the creative work underway by the Northern Community Land Trust — I look forward to speaking more about that in budget debate — which has received concept funding through the Yukon Housing Corporation's housing initiatives fund project concept stream. This project represents a new and innovative approach that will bring online affordable home ownership and housing for many Yukoners.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Dixon: This year's capital budget for the Department of Education includes \$200,000 for what it calls "School replacement 1". Yesterday, in our briefings with officials, the deputy minister told us that this will begin the process of design and naming for a Whitehorse-area school that will be demolished and replaced. We were told that it is likely between three schools — Takhini Elementary, Selkirk Elementary, and École Whitehorse Elementary. Can the minister tell us which of those three schools is slated to be demolished and replaced beginning next year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start by saying that we continue, of course, to work with school communities on planning for their short-term, medium-term, and long-term facility needs. We are pleased that work is underway on a new school in Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. I talked about that yesterday in the reply to the supplementary budget. I am really happy that those two projects are going ahead.

We have a number of projects that are slated in the Government of Yukon's five-year capital plan. That includes school replacement and 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 if, for example, safety issues are identified.

The priority for renovating or replacing schools is based on criteria such as building age, seismic mitigation considerations, operational needs, and enrolment growth. Some Whitehorse schools are nearing capacity, for sure. I have certainly had a chance to speak with almost every school council in the Yukon, and we have talked extensively in each of those discussions about infrastructure needs. I will continue to build on my answer.

Mr. Dixon: I think that the school councils and the school community at large would like to hear a clearer answer from the minister. Officials made it clear yesterday that an announcement was forthcoming, and if they have already begun the process of naming and initial design, they must know which school it is that they are demolishing. If this work is going to begin this year, as the budget indicates, they will need to engage with the school communities immediately, so I don't see why the government won't just tell Yukoners which school it is.

So, let's start with the most rumoured of those, Mr. Speaker. Is the school that the Liberals are demolishing or replacing Whitehorse Elementary — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I stated in my previous answer, I am working with all of the school communities and having discussions with them. I talked to nearly every school council throughout the Yukon. I have also been meeting with First Nation partners and discussing with them educational needs overall, and infrastructure certainly comes up on a regular basis.

We have allocated \$200,000 in the capital plan for preliminary consultation and initial design of an existing, aging Whitehorse replacement school. Conversations with Yukon school communities and the future First Nation School Board about longer term planning for their facility needs will be ongoing as decisions are made about future school projects, planning, and development.

I think that what is really important to note, Mr. Speaker, is that we are really doing the research, gathering the data, and making decisions based on that information. This is a new practice. The previous government did not take those steps. Their decisions were purely political in nature.

Mr. Dixon: It is a bit surprising that the government is being so secretive about this. Construction is set to begin next year, according to the budget, and so it seems unlikely that they haven't decided which school will be chosen.

For a government that ran on a promise of openness and transparency, they sure seem to be pretty secretive about something that will deeply affect so many families. But if they want to start construction next year, as the budget suggests, then they will at least have to have picked a location and secured the land and zoning. So, where will this mystery "School replacement 1" be located?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think I have been clear that I'm having discussions throughout the Yukon with our school communities and, for sure, our schools within the Whitehorse area. Our government is working on evidence-based decision-making. The Government of Yukon has a five-year capital plan that includes a school replacement and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the preamble to this question really has the Yukon Party spreading rumours and speaking in ways that suggest things that are other than what we're doing. Our government is working with school communities. We're doing consultation. We're working with our partners, and when it is time to make an announcement, we will do that in the right way.

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Kent: I have some more questions about this mysterious "School replacement 1" that is in this year's budget. We know that there's \$200,000 in the budget this year for designing the school, but let's take a step back to the 2018 budget that the previous Liberal government tabled. In that budget, the Liberals told us that they would be spending \$2 million for a scalable, generic school design.

At the time, we asked the Liberals about this, and they claimed that this was going to create a generic school design for the government to use in future school replacements. They claimed that this project would ultimately save Yukon taxpayers up to \$7 million as a result of not having to come up with new designs for each new school.

So, can the minister confirm that the generic school design that the Liberals spent millions on back in 2018-19 will be the design used for the mysterious "School replacement 1"?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will again talk about our commitment to the work that we are doing around infrastructure and actually building new schools. That's something that our government is doing. We're really proud of the new Whistle Bend school, which is the first new elementary school in the City of Whitehorse in a few decades.

I'm really proud, of course — I talked yesterday at a bit of length about the Burwash Landing school, which is an exciting project that we are committed to working on with the Kluane First Nation and the community at large within the Kluane area. This is a long-standing request of the community that we're happy to be fulfilling. This government has a five-year capital plan that includes school replacement and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come.

Our commitment is also to building schools that create modern learning spaces. This is something that our government is committed to, and I'll continue to build on this answer as we go forward.

Mr. Kent: I'm not sure if the minister heard the question, but it was about a generic, scalable school design that was announced in 2018. Again, when we asked about that generic design in 2018, the former Minister of Education said that the Liberals were planning on spending up to \$3 million on this generic design, but they thought it was a good investment because it would save taxpayers as much as \$7 million in the long run. But now we know that they are spending \$200,000 on a design for this mysterious "School replacement 1" that they will not provide any details on.

So, can the minister tell us what the point of the generic design was and how much was actually spent on it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, as the Minister of Education, I am very committed to working with our school communities and planning these facilities based on what the needs are in our educational community. Our designs going forward are designs that are creating educational spaces in a new and modern way. I think that the school that was built for the francophone school board is a really beautiful example of a modern learning space that takes into consideration ways of learning in the 21st century model.

I'm very excited about the Whistle Bend school and the advancement of this project. Again, I am excited about what this will bring to our community and Whistle Bend, the fastest growing neighbourhood in the Yukon, and I am happy that we are investing in new schools.

Again, we are basing our decisions on research and evidence, and working with our partners, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Kent: Again, this was a very specific question about a generic, scalable design for schools that the minister's colleague, the former minister, championed back in 2018.

So, on March 27, 2018, the former minister said — and I quote: "With respect to the scalable school design — potentially, it will cost up to \$2 million or \$3 million and will save approximately \$7 million, by our calculations, in the total school design costs over the next 10 years." She went on to say that this school design is — and I will quote again: "... to be

used for upcoming school replacement planning as we go forward."

So, can the current minister confirm that this so-called "generic, scalable school design" will be the one used for school replacement one in Whitehorse next year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will reiterate, as I have a couple of times already today, that we are working with our school communities. We are making decisions based on evidence and research and making sure that our schools meet the needs of Yukoners. We know that our population is growing, and this government has made a commitment for replacement of a Whitehorse-based school. We committed in our five-year plan to build the Whistle Bend school, which is underway. We are building a school in Burwash Landing. We have a number of other projects within the five-year capital plan that are based on facility assessments. Should needs change, of course, this plan is flexible and may be adjusted — for example, if there are safety issues and whatnot that may arise. The criteria for new buildings are building age, seismic mitigation considerations, operational needs, enrolment, and growth.

We are, again, continuing to work with our partners and to build modern, 21st century schools.

Question re: Affordable housing and land development

Ms. Tredger: Despite the housing crisis, this government has made it harder to build a house. Banks don't offer traditional mortgages to individuals for the construction of a home. When someone buys an empty lot, they can't just get a five-percent down, 25-year mortgage to build the house. Down payments are extremely high, and terms are short.

Up until 2020, all Yukoners wanting to build a house could apply for financing through the Yukon Housing Corporation's owners' building program. The government would finance the construction, and when the house was completed, the owner would get a traditional mortgage and pay back Yukon Housing Corporation. But in the midst of a housing crisis, the Yukon government has made that program unavailable to people in Whitehorse.

Will the minister commit to reversing his decision to exclude people living in Whitehorse from applying for the Yukon Housing Corporation's owners' building program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I would like to touch on the work that we have done with the Association of Yukon Communities for Yukoners. What we saw in our rural communities, first of all, was that when you took into consideration the mortgages that we made available, and you took into consideration the cost of land and the cost to build homes, it was capped at \$500,000.

I do appreciate the direction from the mayor of Teslin, Mayor Curran, as well as the members for the Association of Yukon Communities who spoke with me in September. We then made those adjustments so that you actually could go out and leverage more dollars through our program.

I think that's one of the key items. It was very difficult for people in rural Yukon to be able to access funds. In answer two, I'll speak to the situation with mortgages in the Whitehorse area.

Ms. Tredger: If the minister wanted more funds available for people living in rural Yukon communities — a laudable goal — there are a lot of options to do that, instead of restricting access of more than 75 percent of the Yukon's population to this fund.

Two weeks ago, this government announced that 42 single-family lots were being released to the public for a lottery this spring. The minister has gone on record saying that he will, for the first time, enforce the rule preventing developers from bidding on these lots. He hasn't told us how he plans on doing that. We have all since heard challenges and concerns from both individuals and developers about what this means.

Will the minister consider making some of these lots available exclusively to individuals and others to developers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I said last week in the Legislature, and what I also said in the media, was that we have released 78 lots. Most of them are in Whitehorse. There are several lots that are in Mayo. We had released, just recently, 26 commercial lots.

Of those lots here in Whitehorse, there are 42 lots that are designated as single-family residential lots. Those are meant for homeowners to bid on. Then they can turn around and hire contractors to do the development work on those lots.

There are also 32 townhouse lots, and those lots are meant for private sector developers. They develop them in blocks of five or six. That is the arrangement we have in the land lottery right now, and we are excited to be getting those lots out for Yukoners. It is very important. This is the work that the departments of Community Services and of Energy, Mines and Resources are doing to accelerate the number of lots we are creating for Yukoners across the territory.

We have quadrupled the budget in land development compared to the Yukon Party government, and we will continue to develop lots for Yukoners.

Ms. Tredger: On one hand, this government has restricted access to the government bridge financing for individuals to build a house in Whitehorse. This means that only people with hundreds of thousands of dollars up front will be able to build a house in Whitehorse. On the other hand, the government is also saying it will restrict developers — the very people with access to cash and financing — from building on available lots.

Can the minister tell Yukoners how he expects people to purchase these Whitehorse lots and build homes after he has cut the program that would help them access the affordable financing that they need?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just for the record, we are not saying that; the member opposite is saying that.

Yukon Housing Corporation's loan and grant programs are designed to target the highest need in the territory, providing support to Yukoners with core housing without competing with traditional lenders. Our loan and grant programs are designed to complement federal initiatives and support fiscal responsibility.

However, it can often be difficult to secure adequate financing from traditional lending sources, and our loan and grant programs include, first, our developer-build loan, which

supports developers of new rental housing with bridge financing for construction. We also have our home-repair loans and grants, which include our home-repair loan and accessibility emergency repair grants for eligible Yukoners and our rural home ownership loan, which we talked about earlier, which aims to help Yukoners in rural Yukon to buy a house through a first mortgage or to build a home.

Speaking to the existing programs in Whitehorse, we want our loan and grant programs to be complementary to existing new federal opportunities. For example, we have taken into consideration that there is now the first-time homebuyer incentive program, which launched in 2019. It fills the housing gap previously covered by our down payment assistance program.

Again, the Government of Canada of launched this first-time homebuyer incentive program in September 2019, and the program provides an incentive for down payment to first-time homebuyers.

Question re: Ventilation systems in schools

Ms. Van Bibber: The Public Health Agency of Canada states that proper and upgraded ventilation in schools can help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Since the onset of the pandemic, has the Government of Yukon upgraded any ventilation systems in our schools?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question. The Yukon government continues to ensure that all Yukon government buildings, including schools, are safe during this time. Highways and Public Works maintains all government buildings' ventilation systems to the industry standard and performs regular inspections and maintenance. Prior to the start of the school year, all school ventilation systems were inspected and had maintenance completed, including having the filters replaced.

The government stays up to date on health recommendations and guidelines in order to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19. I can advise, Mr. Speaker, that every ventilation system in a Yukon government building, including schools, was designed to the ASHRAE standard of the day. All systems have been maintained to the standard that they were designed for.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Government of Ontario spent \$550 million upgrading ventilation systems in their schools last year to help stop the spread of COVID-19. How much money did the Government of Yukon spend last year upgrading ventilation systems in our schools?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will return to the member opposite with a specific answer to the amount of money that has been spent on ventilation assessment and ventilation upgrades in all Yukon schools, but I can assure the member opposite that, once again, the government stays up to date on all health recommendations and guidelines to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

I can also advise the member opposite — who will also know — that generally speaking, Yukon has been able to maintain full-time attendance of its students in all schools, with some exceptions, but certainly, an above-average number of

schools stayed open during the entirety of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Of course, we know that this impacts the mental health of students in an incredibly positive manner and that the results of having extended absences from school and extended Zoom sessions have led to fatigue and mental stress, so our schools are healthy.

Question re: Kluane school relocation

Mr. Istchenko: In the spring of 2018, the Liberals said that they were going to build a new school in Burwash Landing. At the time, they had \$50,000 in the budget for planning and design of the school. The minister at the time told the House that, in the following year, the government was planning on spending \$500,000 on the new school. At the time, the government said that the work on the school was to be completed by 2020. Of course, here we are, four years after it was first announced, two years after it was supposed to be completed, and there is no Burwash school.

Can the minister explain why this project has been significantly delayed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I am happy to rise and talk about the exciting project that we're working on for a new build in Kluane. As I said yesterday and a little bit earlier today, this has been a long time in the making. It is a request of over 100 years for Kluane First Nation to have such a school built. We are certainly committed to working with the Kluane First Nation and the entire Kluane school community to ensure that the school is built in the way that they would like it. I am excited to get out to the community soon to see the site that has been selected. I will be excited as well when we get going on the building of it to do a proper blessing ceremony, as we did with the Whistle Bend school. We are really working in a different way with our school communities to ensure that our learning centres and communities are healthy and done in such a different and good way.

Question re: Capital plan for schools

Mr. Kent: I have some questions, again, regarding Education capital projects. Early in the last mandate, the former minister told this House that she would produce a 10-year capital plan for schools. Of course, that document has never been made public or, perhaps more likely, it was never completed.

Can the current minister update us on the status of the Education department's 10-year capital plan for schools and when we can expect to see that document?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise again today to talk about capital projects — again, a huge commitment from our government to build new, modern learning spaces and to look at the short-term, medium-term, and long-term facility needs. Before us we have a five-year capital plan that includes school replacement and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come.

What is included in this five-year capital plan is a new elementary school at Whistle Bend, the replacement of an existing, aging school here in Whitehorse, modular classrooms

in different places within the territory, including Selkirk school, Hidden Valley school, and Robert Service School. We are building the new Kluane school. There is ongoing stabilization work with the Ross River School. We also have done smaller upgrades to ensure safety in various parking lots at different schools throughout Whitehorse, and we continue to work closely with our school communities to ensure that our schools are safe and that we are making good decisions that are based on evidence.

I am happy to answer more questions about this.

Mr. Kent: I am not sure if the minister heard the question. Again, it was about the 10-year capital plan for school replacements that was promised by the former Education minister. So, it is clear that this minister is either unwilling or unable to answer that question.

But let's take a step back to 2018 again when the government tabled a five-year capital concept, and in it, they listed the Holy Family School and Christ the King Elementary School as being replaced. The former Minister of Highways and Public Works even confirmed that Holy Family was slated for replacement. In the following year's five-year capital concept, both of these projects mysteriously disappeared. One of the first five-year capital concepts tabled by this government in 2018 again listed Holy Family and Christ the King Elementary in the project list for Education.

So, can the minister tell us why the Liberals cancelled plans related to both of these schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The member opposite may not like the answers that I'm giving, but this is where we're at in terms of our planning and what we've been working on in our five-year capital plan, which includes a number of projects that I just listed. I'm happy to list them again.

We're excited about these projects. I've had discussions throughout the territory with school councils — and, of course, working government to government with Yukon First Nations. I know that these are new ways of working with our school communities. I'm excited to be doing that work on behalf of our government to ensure that our schools are safe and positive learning environments for all Yukon children.

We have had a lot of change in education recently. We do have a new First Nation School Board, which is exciting. We will be having a lot of really great discussions with Yukon First Nations about what that means in terms of capital and other work down the road. I'm happy that we're building the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in a number of decades, and we are going to replace another Whitehorse school soon.

Mr. Kent: So, unfortunately, the minister's responses are totally unrelated to the questions that we're asking here. That's where we have the problem.

The first Education annual report tabled by the previous minister in 2017 stated — and I'll quote: "... the goal will be to upgrade or replace one school building approximately every three years." Now, that was five years ago. According to that promise by the Liberals, we should be well on our way to having two existing schools either upgraded or replaced. Of course, the actual number is zero when we know that some

schools, like the Ross River School, desperately need replacement.

The planning documents tabled with this budget suggest that the first replacement will not be completed until 2026. Instead of a replacement every three years, it's actually every 10 years. Unfortunately, another missed timeline and broken promise by this Liberal government.

Can the minister please tell us why the Liberals have not prioritized replacing the Ross River School?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to shift the focus a little bit and speak specifically about one of our schools. The health and safety of students across the territory is, of course, our top priority for the Yukon government. The Ross River School continues to be inspected quarterly by a multi-disciplinary team that includes an architect, a structural engineer, a geotechnical engineer, and a surveyor, so I thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works for continuing this good work to ensure that our schools are safe.

The latest building condition inspection report completed on December 15, 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. I'm happy that we are working, of course, as I've said earlier today, with all of our school communities, having discussions and doing consultation and ensuring that we are keeping the pulse of our school communities. I will continue to do that work on behalf of Yukoners.

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): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 3: Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021) — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have talked an awful lot about this. We are already three and one-half hours into this discussion about a seven-page piece of legislation. I think I will just open the floor at the moment and then let the questions flow.

Ms. White: Just before we get started, because obviously I am not the leader of the Yukon Party, and for anyone who is listening, I obviously sound different.

I want to take us back, because the minister did just say it was three and a half hours of debate, which is true, but it means that I am coming in three-plus hours in.

The first thing I want to do, actually, is thank municipal leadership. I want to thank the mayors from Dawson, Mayo, Carmacks, Whitehorse, Teslin, Watson Lake, Haines Junction, and Faro. That is Mayor Kendrick, Mayor Ellis, Mayor Bodie, Mayor Cabott, Mayor Curran, Mayor Irvin, Mayor Tomlin and Mayor Bowers.

I say this because, last fall when this bill originally came forward, it wasn't going really well, to be honest. There was concern from the municipal level. I spoke to each of those mayors when I was negotiating with the minister in trying to put a stop on it and bring it forward.

I want to thank those mayors, because they trusted me enough to go through with the process. They trusted the minister enough to go through the process. Full credit to him and his department. We sat down — not me, I wasn't involved — but there were working groups created. They sat down and hashed out these details, and I think that is really important.

I want to say thank you to mayors Cabott, Irvin, and Kendrick, because they were at the leadership table of those discussions. They worked with their counterparts from the Liberal government — the ministers of Community Services and of Energy, Mines and Resources — to get toward where we are today. I think that is a really successful thing.

When we had this discussion in the fall, I said that I was committed to this, and I was, and I am. It's great that the minister got the letter from the Association of Yukon Communities in support. I appreciate that, yesterday, the minister tabled the letters and the plan and the recommendations, because I think that is really important to the clarity of the conversation.

I also hope that, when he does write that letter of confirmation that the Yukon government is accepting the recommendations from the working group, he tables that also so we can make sure that, in his words, the "full clarity" is available.

I just wanted to start our conversation with grounding it in the fact that there was a willingness from all sides to work together to get to this point. That is really important, because municipal leaders are committed to climate action, just as is the

Yukon government. Everybody worked hard to get us here, so I just want to thank those mayors.

I want to thank the Association of Yukon Communities because they also had to trust, when I reached out to them, that we could get to this point. I think it's really important that there is that acknowledgement that we can push pause on things and that we can all work together, because we're all trying to do it for the right reasons.

The minister is right that it's not a big piece of legislation, but the one thing I think that we have seen in the last number of hours is that what the possible program looks like is really what the conversation is right now. The reason why that conversation is happening around this possible program is that this is the opportunity where we have that ability.

But, maybe before I get into some of that, I want to know: Is the minister willing to have the opposition briefed just ahead of the release of the program or once that program has been created and is ready to be released?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to welcome my colleague across the floor to this debate — after three and a half hours of talking. The Leader of the Third Party was not part of those initial discussions, and it's great to have her voice on this issue because I know how important it was for her and we have worked together on this file.

I have also thanked the municipalities, the Association of Yukon Communities, the mayors, and the committee that did just an exemplary job working together to come to this agreement that we've come to — the recommendations. It really was fruitful work. It created a depth of understanding of municipal life and government life that I think was invaluable. It was a good process, and we are here.

It is a small bill, and I think the member opposite had asked whether I would provide a briefing to opposition before the program launches. Of course, I would be more than happy to do that. I think it certainly behooves us to let them know what the actual details of the program are once we have them better fleshed out because, at this point, there are some variables. We are working through some things. We have had that discussion over the last three and a half hours. Of course, I think that would be only right to have that type of briefing for the opposition.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that confirmation that the opposition will be briefed about this program.

I do want to talk about some of the goals that the minister highlighted initially when he announced that this program would be available. I just want to understand some more things.

Unlike my colleague from the Yukon Party, I recognize that there are many houses in Whitehorse that would qualify for this program — given the fact that I live in a house that was built in 1958.

When we talk about the property assessment over the market value, which I do think is really important — the property assessment for my house at this point in time has just crested \$100,000, which would mean that if I was to have access to the money at 25 percent of that amount, it wouldn't be very much money, is the honest truth.

So, when the minister talks about those metrics, has there also been a discussion of the cost of doing these retrofit

programs? Again, I will use myself as an example. In 2012, I insulated my house, and I accessed the Yukon Housing loan at that point in time — the home repair program. I accessed the full \$35,000 to insulate three sides of a house — I live in a duplex. So, I insulated three walls and added siding, so that was \$35,000, which would be more at this point in time than I could access through the better building program, based on the assessed value of my house.

When those numbers were calculated — has the minister thought about the cost of actually doing those upgrades?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for the question. It is a good one.

What the folks at Community Services and at Energy, Mines and Resources have done is that they have gone through and assessed all of the properties in the territory and taken out a number of things, such as properties with grants-in-lieu from YG or from the federal government, exemptions, and Yukon Housing Corporation, Yukon Energy, and Yukon Electrical properties — all of those things are taken out — those that are vacant as well. We have also taken out properties that are less than \$40,000 in assessed value, because that is sort of the tipping point where it just isn't useful to do this program on a property of that value.

When we did that calculation and looked at all the properties, we found that there are probably more than 2,200 properties in rural Yukon that would be eligible for this program or where it makes sense for it to be done. In Whitehorse, the estimate is more than 3,300 properties that are eligible for the program and where it would be worthwhile to get it done. In rural Yukon, in every community, there are literally dozens of homes in every rural community that would be eligible, given the property assessment, given the age of the home, given the condition of the home and everything else. We are looking at probably more than 6,000 homes across the territory — and commercial properties as well — that would be eligible for this program as it stands. We are looking to do 1,000 of them. There is an awful lot of work to be done here.

I guess the case could be made that if this program is successful, maybe we should keep going, but at this stage, we're going to stick with the 1,000 and see what we can do. And it looks like there's — in every single community, I think the smallest community — the community with the least amount of eligible properties under the assessed value is Carmacks with 28. So, you still have 28 properties in Carmacks that would be eligible for this, if they wanted to come forward. So, there's a lot here.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I apologize. I don't think I made myself clear, and so I will try again.

My house — I live in Takhini North. Its property assessment is just over \$100,000, which means at 25 percent, I could qualify for \$25,000 under the proposed building program. It cost me \$35,000 to insulate my house. I have not replaced my windows; I have not put insulation into my ceiling. That's just the wrap. I accessed initially the Yukon Housing Corporation housing and home improvement loan — or the repair loan or whatever it's called now — for \$35,000. I paid some of that down. By 2016, that program had been increased to \$50,000. I

went back, and I accessed the additional money, because I put in a heat pump. It's great, because now Yukon government has a heat pump program, which is 30 percent up to \$8,000 of a rebate. It cost me \$23,000 for the heat pump — to have it installed. It cost \$5,000 to have my house upgraded to 200-amp service, and I had to install a power pole for \$2,000.

So, I appreciate that there are many homes that qualify. I live in a neighbourhood full of homes that qualify. I live in a neighbourhood of homes that were built by the army in the 1950s, and I have mentioned it before that the army didn't care about energy efficiency or the cost of oil when they built these houses. They are drafty if they haven't been insulated. They are drafty, let's just say. My house was drafty before I insulated it.

One of the concerns that I have is that no one, even at my house, where my neighbours are selling their houses for substantially more than my assessed value — if I could only access \$25,000 through this program, it doesn't meet the \$35,000 it cost me to insulate it. So, my question is that — when we're talking about this program, I understand the goals. I think it's really, really important, and there's no dispute about it. The concern that I have is that it costs a lot more to energy retrofit a house than what that 25 percent of that assessed value is.

So, when we talk about those numbers — and if I lived in rural Yukon and my property was assessed for \$50,000 and I could only access 25 percent of that amount, that is not going to insulate the house. I just wanted to know if, within the department, there had been conversations about that.

I'm just putting this out there. Prior to its development — I'm trying not to be critical; I just have questions, because I'm trying to understand. So, this is just to put it out. I know that there are people behind the scenes who are doing all this work, and this is just to have that conversation with them through the minister and his official.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We spent a couple of minutes consulting, because your point is excellent, and we understand that. The construction costs are rising, and how much are you actually going to get done for this? I think that, in some cases, there may be ways to stack — we will have to — when we are building a program, is there a way to stack this on a federal program or on a territorial program and actually gain leverage — so, more monies that people have — bearing options?

How much capital are the homeowners willing to put in themselves? So, this is a start, but maybe it is \$80,000 to wrap your home or whatever it is. This will cover \$50,000, and you will have to come up with an extra \$30,000 in some way, shape, or form, or maybe you just do three of the sides and live with it — come up with the money later. These are all fairly technical questions that are going to have to be worked out as we build the program and work with the Energy Solutions Centre to actually do this, and then there will be more details when we work with municipalities and try to deal with how the program rolls out to their properties, which will be different, probably, in places like Carmacks, Watson Lake, and Dawson than it would be in Whitehorse.

So, I am certainly as interested as the member opposite in the details. They haven't quite — there are a lot of moving

parts, and what happens federally in the five years? There are all sorts of things to come.

So, I will take her question seriously. I will say that, as we do these projects, as we do these programs, we implement them, we see how they react in the environment in which we are living. How much are building costs going to be in the wake of whatever tumult we have on the planet? And then we adjust, and we will try to readjust as this goes along. I don't think, at this point, that you can say the program will land and be set in stone. It will be a continual improvement, both with municipalities — in terms of how much their costs are and how it is working with them — as well as from the government, whether options come out in terms of energy efficiency loans and improvements and also in terms of the person obtaining the loan. It will be adapted.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am glad to hear that the program will be flexible. Again, the minister referenced the \$50,000. I am saying that I wouldn't hit the threshold of the \$50,000 to this program. Then the question is: How many houses in the territory will actually hit the \$2,000 of the property assessment to qualify for that \$50,000? I will just put that out there, because again, I do not access it. I will just continue talking about myself, which is not comfortable, but I am an expert in what I have done to my house.

I actually did not get the energy assessment or the blower test done until 2020. In 2013, I insulated my house. At that point in time, the Energy Solutions Centre wasn't advertising the services of the energy audit folks who could come in and help you directly, so I didn't have a pre-energy assessment of my house. So, I did not have an energy assessment of my house before I did the insulation work in 2013, which means that I have an energy assessment that I did in 2020. I was given two things that I could do: I could replace all my doors and windows and I could insulate my basement floor. But if I did those things, I wouldn't meet the 20-percent energy savings that I probably would have had I had done it before these things, so I just wanted to know if the minister and the department are contemplating people being able to do these in steps.

This would be encouragement for anyone anywhere in the territory who may be thinking about home renovations. Get your energy audit done. There is a great rebate program right now, and it only costs you \$50 of the \$200, but it will help you in this case, because then you will know when you improve. Has there been contemplation within the department in the creation of this program for people like me, who have done a substantial amount of work and have been told that there are things we can improve on, but we will not have the energy audit that will say that it is a 20-percent improvement from those projects?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite's personal experiences are informative. It's always great because you get real-world scenarios — real-world information, I guess, that is coming to the floor of the House.

I don't want to sound like a broken record, but we are talking about a lot of questions that will be coming before the Energy Solutions Centre, which is housed within Energy, Mines and Resources, and my good colleague can give me

some anecdotal information, but we don't have the officials here who are actually building the program. I will certainly, as I said, give the member opposite a briefing on this program once it comes forward.

I believe that what we're looking at is — there will be a point in time at which we say that this is what the program is, and we're trying to do 1,000 homes and trying to get a 20-percent reduction in both greenhouse gas emissions and energy savings.

Those are the broad parameters of the program. I don't know, at this point — if you had an energy audit done in the past X years, what is the threshold? I don't know, and I don't know what and who did the audit — if they are authorized or whatever. It's done through an official channel — whether we can use it. Have you had the actual work done or is it sitting there? Can we use that? It might help streamline the process, but I don't know how this will work. If it's staged, do we stage it from this point going forward? Everybody else who has done it is great, but we can't — that has already been done and we're looking to hit 1,000 new homes and hit the threshold.

There are a lot of these types of questions that will be worked on in the next few months with the Energy Solution Centre to see what happens.

As I said earlier today, we are looking at an eligibility list of almost 6,000 properties, which, to our eyes, have not seen any retrofits yet and have not done anything and are ripe for the picking. They sit in a pocket in all communities. They have the proper assessed values. They haven't got any encumbrances. They look like they would be prime candidates — more than 6,000 homes already — to hit that potential 20 percent and fully pull on this deal.

There are a lot of things to work out yet, but I take the insights from the member opposite to heart, and we will certainly bring them to the Energy Solution Centre's attention when they are starting to work with this program. We can get more information to you once we have that briefing.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that response. Again, in full disclosure, I am taking this opportunity to lay out different experiences because the program won't be created with input from people like me in it. There won't be that opportunity. I am just sharing my own energy journey because it has been an extensive one. I think, at this point in time, I am close to \$75,000 into my house to make it the most energy-efficient 1958-constructed army duplex in the world. It has the energy wrap, and it also has a heat pump because that is something I did.

Does the minister contemplate that these programs could be stacked? Could someone access both the stream for the heat pump and the thermal wrap?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: A few things I just want to hit on here — and I did miss a point that I was going to bring up in the last question with respect to energy audits. I hope everybody can hear me.

So, with energy audits with this program, we expect that there will be an energy audit as part of the assessment at the front end to determine whether or not the house is eligible and what sort of benefits they can see through a retrofit. There's

also a possibility at the end to see exactly how the retrofit went and what sort of savings were actually entailed. So, there's some sort of quality assurance process that we're going to work through for this. There will be, I imagine, certainly an assessment at the beginning and perhaps an assessment at the end, but whether it is every — or we'll do a sampling of people. We have to figure it out, I'm sure. So, just to be clear, there will be an energy audit component to this.

By the way, everybody, this is Matt King, my deputy minister. I don't think I did a good job of introducing him at the beginning, so this is the marvellous Matt King. Thank you, Matt.

So, there's that.

As far as the stacking goes, I hinted at this the last time, but there is an opportunity — we think there will be an opportunity — and that's what we have to do, look at this when we're building it. I think that will be interesting to see.

The other point as well is that the Energy Solutions Centre has been doing a lot of retrofits for a long time. They have a lot of experience in this field. They may not have been brought up to speed on your particular experience with your army duplex, but they will have had lots of experience with other army duplexes, we have to assume, and will be pulling on that experience to implement this program. That is to say, though, that, right now, I'm sure we have folks listening in and who are taking notes as you gave your experiences, so that will actually become part of the DNA of this as well. It is useful, and I thank you for that. I think that, for now, this covers off most of the points that I was going to say. I think that's enough.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Just to be clear, it was through the Energy Solutions Centre that I've done all this work, including trying to make a decision — do you replace the heating source ahead of insulation? The answer is no. Insulate your house before you change your heating source, because otherwise it's all for naught.

I understand the process, and I am happy to have the conversation with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about this during budget debate, but this is just partially having these conversations in a public way only because we won't have the opportunity in a different way.

There are the two streams. There is the thermal wrap for a building, which is the insulation, the window replacement, and things like that. The second one, as I understand it, is the heat pump, which is the heating source. Can the minister let me know if there is any requirement — for example, if a community like Watson Lake, which is a diesel community, would be able to access things like heat pumps, or are they excluded from this stream?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I don't know. I will get back to the member opposite on that question. It's a good question. I am not sure. It may be that there are other alternative forms of heat that we might be able to do, perhaps biomass. This is where I think we have to get down to the discussions with each municipality to see what works for them, based on their community energy profile. Maybe that comes into that, as well. I hope that I'm not causing any consternation with the officials,

who are wondering what the heck this guy is saying. Anyway, we will work on this.

I will say that the member opposite did have a heat pump installed in her property — did she not? I think she mentioned some price. I will say that the estimate that we have for heat pump installation at the moment, which will provide a 200-percent improvement from oil, is approximately \$20,000. I believe that there is an \$8,000 rebate that you can actually access from the Energy Solutions Centre. Understand that I don't have those officials here with me today, but I am getting this information. If the price is \$20,000, there is a rebate that is available, so there would only be \$12,000 onto your local improvement charge. That would be a stacking, so there is some indication that might happen when we build this.

I just heard from Energy, Mines and Resources officials — thank you very much — from the ether — that Watson Lake is eligible for heat pumps, so there is your answer.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. He alluded to the ability of possibly looking at different solutions in different communities. Again, through the Energy Solutions Centre, there are incentives or programs available for getting a more efficient, for example, wood stove. So, for some communities, if there is any community that doesn't qualify for the heat pump program, maybe looking at doing that and supporting better wood-burning things for biomass would make a lot of sense. Again, in some cases, it might even make sense in a community like Whitehorse, if you are already on a really efficient system — in my case, a heat pump — and you want to put in a wood stove, then maybe that is the thing.

I appreciate that the quote for the heat pump installation is \$20,000, but that doesn't take away the part where you have to get your other furnace removed and your oil tank removed. If you are lucky and you are in a house that has 200-amp service, then you don't need to do that upgrade. If you are in a house that does not have 200-amp service, you have to get it upgraded. If you are in an older neighbourhood where it is above-ground lines, you might actually have to install a power pole. So, I appreciate that one portion of that is \$20,000, and I can say from my own personal experience that it was more.

So, I just want to thank the ministers, because it has been a group affair across the way for having this conversation with me today, and really, it was me and my efforts to have this conversation with the people designing the program so they could hear from someone who has kind of been down the road a bit about my own experiences.

With that, I think that is it for questions about a program, understanding that today's debate is actually on the mechanism for communities to collect that money, which I am in favour of.

So, I wanted to take the opportunity today to talk about this program that doesn't yet exist, hoping that I can provide some feedback, and I do know that today's legislation is actually about a municipality's ability to collect this money in the future.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I do appreciate the context, the experience, and the questions from the Leader of the Third Party. I have enjoyed the conversation this afternoon. I will say, as well, just as sort of a footnote, that the Yukon government is

working with First Nation governments to see diesel communities incorporate renewable energy systems over the next five to 10 years. The better building program is part of the picture as an action toward the big picture. We know that, when we make our houses more efficient in the face of rising inflation, it's one of the actions we can take that is tangible and puts more money in people's pockets, reduces our reliance on fossil fuels, reduces our greenhouse gas emissions, and takes a step toward perhaps mitigating floods, wildfires, and the rest of it. So, it is all part of the big picture. I know that the member opposite knows that, and I really do appreciate her questions this afternoon and the conversation we have had.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Clause 6 agreed to

On Clause 7

Clause 7 agreed to

On Clause 8

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Clause 10

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Madam Chair, I move:

THAT Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be amended in clause 10 at page 6

(a) by replacing in the text of the new subparagraph 271.12(1)(b)(i) of the *Municipal Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression "July 15" with the expression "October 1";

(b) by replacing in the text of the new subparagraph 271.12(1)(b)(ii) of the *Municipal Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression "30th day" with the expression "45th day".

Chair: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West:

THAT Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be amended in clause 10 at page 6

(a) by replacing in the text of the new subparagraph 271.12(1)(b)(i) of the *Municipal Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression "July 15" with the expression "October 1";

(b) by replacing in the text of the new subparagraph 271.12(1)(b)(ii) of the *Municipal Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression “30th day” with the expression “45th day”.

Ms. White: I maybe just stole the thunder from the minister. This is a really important amendment. This is the one thing that municipalities said that they had a lot of anxiety about — being able to make the remittance at the same time that they collected their municipal taxes on July 1. This is an example of that working group and governments both working together. So, to have it move from July 15 to October 1 checks all the boxes that the municipalities needed to make sure that they had the opportunity to meet the requirements of the law.

I thank the minister for this amendment. This goes to strengthen this piece of legislation.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister provide an explanation for why this wasn't included in the original bill?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The original legislation just mirrored, almost in its entirety, the wording from the initial program we had for rural wells.

In the conversations we've had with municipal leaders, we learned that they would really like to have this extended out. I believe those discussions happened through the fall last year. We heard from municipal leaders, and we weren't sure at the time whether or not it was a fairly substantial amendment or not. We had to do the research. We did that over that time. I had committed to municipal leaders that I would look into this, and I did.

Thanks to the great work of Community Services, Energy, Mines and Resources, and Justice, we were able to get this amendment done since the House last sat. We weren't sure if we would be able to do it. We did. We had a lot of consternation around some of the other programs, like the municipal well and electrification programs. We have worked on fixing those problems.

I really do want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for the comment. She is absolutely right. There has been a lot of collaborative work here, not only with municipalities, but also with these three government departments working on behalf of Yukon municipalities to improve something that has obviously been an issue for the municipalities. We are happy to have done that work in such short order.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to see this amendment come forward. It is clear that the consultation that occurred between the Fall Sitting and now was very important to address the concerns of municipalities. Quite frankly, this amendment wouldn't have come forward if that work had not been done.

Of course, as we know, this is a case where this work should have been done before the bill was first tabled back in the fall. If it were not for the overtures of the opposition — both the Third Party and Yukon Party raising these concerns — this amendment likely wouldn't have come forward. I would like to thank those folks in the working group for the work that they did between the Fall Sitting and now, which brought forward the recommendations that inspired this amendment.

We will certainly be supporting this amendment and note that it is the work of the thorough consultation that the

government conducted after tabling the bill that brought this forward. We are happy to support it.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, the wording of the bill has always been about enabling for municipalities. From before the bill was ever drafted, in our conversations with municipalities, we talked about working with them and working to develop the program that the Minister of Community Services has now done. We have always committed to them that we would see how the program worked and do continuous improvements, so that commitment had been there all along. I am happy that, working with the municipalities, they raised a specific question that they would like to see changed, based on the previous program they had with the rural well program, which was brought in by the previous government. That is great, and I'm happy that we're able to get there now.

I think that we should note, though, that the commitment that has been made to municipalities is that we will continue to work on the program. If other improvements need to be there, we are committed to working with municipal partners so that the program will be of benefit to their citizens and not a burden to their government, and that has been the commitment all along.

Mr. Dixon: I just have one final question for the minister: Can he confirm then that this amendment is the only one necessary to implement any of the recommendations of the working group and that, once this amendment goes through, all of the recommendations of the working group will be satisfied in terms of the requirements of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To this very, very specific and, it seems, somewhat leading question from the Leader of the Official Opposition, I will say that, yes, the amendment in this legislation allows local improvement charges to be levied. It is enabling legislation. It allows for energy-efficient retrofits to be charged as local improvement charges and for it to be administered and collected by the taxing authority. All other recommendations contained in the document are for framing by the program and program agreements with the municipalities. This is the only legislative change necessary to enable those recommendations — I am told by my legal experts at Community Services.

I would like to correct the record because I think that there is a little bit of revisionist history happening here, and I just want to make sure that the record is clear. I really do — I sense that the leader of the opposition is in favour of the program now, and I really do appreciate that support.

I will wait for the vote, but I appreciate the overtures of support for the program.

I will say that the Leader of the Third Party certainly has been a champion and has worked very closely with me on this file from the beginning. The opposition voted against this at second reading. So, they voted against this. If the opposition had its way — that's the action we see in this House. They can say that they support it all they want, but the action that is recorded in the House was a vote against this legislation, which, had it gone down, would never have seen the light of day.

I just want to make that point — that hard point in the ground — because I do appreciate the support. I think it's a great program for Yukoners; I always have. I think it's great for the environment; I always have. I think it's supported by the labour, business, and the environmental groups and now municipalities. I think that's all great.

I think it's a great win for the territory. I believe in it, and I fought very, very hard to get it to this stage. I know we have worked with our colleagues in the NDP, but it was the Yukon Party that voted against this at second reading and this wouldn't be here today had that gone down to defeat.

I will say that, to the opposition leader's question, yes, this amendment to the legislation today does make good on all of the recommendations that the report had.

Chair: Is there any further debate on the amendment to clause 10?

Shall the amendment to clause 10 carry?

Some Hon. Members: Count.

Count

Chair: A count has been called.

Bells

Chair: All those in favour, please rise.

Members rise

Chair: All those opposed, please rise.

The results are 15 yea, nil nay.

Amendment to Clause 10 agreed to

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to

On Clause 11

Clause 11 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move that you report Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, with amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, with amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am very pleased to rise this afternoon to begin Committee of the Whole debate on the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*. Bill No. 203 is a second supplementary estimate for the fiscal year — third appropriation, second supplement. This is for the current 2021-22 fiscal year.

As members know, the supplementary budgets exist to provide spending authority for unforeseen events that could not have been anticipated at the beginning of the year. Traditionally, this has included funding to respond to natural weather events, like flooding, forest fires, or even record snow levels. In the last two years, however, these adjustments have also been needed to make sure that Yukoners and our economy remain healthy and strong during the global pandemic.

This year, our government took early steps to forecast this evolving situation. We did our best to deliver a budget that continues to support Yukoners and Yukon businesses over the year, while also trying to minimize the fiscal impacts of these very unpredictable events.

In the 2021-22 budget, this government introduced a COVID-19 contingency fund for the first time. This tool allowed us to remain flexible in the face of unexpected variants, necessary public health responses, and funding to support Yukoners as well. By building this into the spring budget for the year, debating the use of funds, and voting on the appropriation, we demonstrated our commitment to remain transparent and accountable for where these dollars are spent. In the fall, we made use of this fund in order to absorb \$4.5 million in costs. This allowed us to support the Yukon tourism sector to ensure that Yukoners could continue to access the COVID-19 call centre and, lastly, to make sure that Yukon government buildings were effectively cleaned and sanitized for the safety of those who not only work in them, but also visit them.

Today, we are once again drawing on this fund to respond to new challenges and to reduce the fiscal impact of the pandemic on the territory. I will get to these items in a moment.

First, I want to state for the record that it is partly thanks to the COVID-19 contingency fund that we are able to present the improved fiscal picture for the 2021-22 fiscal year that members see today. With that, I will get into the numbers included as part of the supplementary estimates.

So, this year, the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* forecasts an increase of \$30.3 million in new operation and maintenance and capital spending. This is made up of \$24.7 million in gross new operation and maintenance spending and just \$5.6 million in gross new capital. On the capital side, this increase in new expenditures is offset by a decrease of \$16.5 million, resulting in a net decrease of \$10.8 million in capital. On the O&M side, there are no decreases to note.

There is also an additional \$58.1 million in revenue included in this supplementary estimate. The bulk of those revenues, as I mentioned yesterday, is the result of additional taxes and general revenues, as well as a recent grant from Canada. These changes are forecast to result in a revised surplus of \$25.5 million, which reflects a significant improvement in the government's fiscal picture from the first supplementary estimates. Year-end net debt is forecast to be \$96.6 million, which reflects a reduction of \$86.6 million from the first supplementary estimates.

As I mentioned during second reading, this is the result of adjustments following the tabling of the Public Accounts back in October, as well as the improvement in the surplus deficit position.

With respect to O&M, in addition to the \$24.7 million in new expenditures, the government will also see an increase of \$3.1 million in new recoveries. Again, this is approximately the same amount of O&M expenditures that we saw for the same period last year. Of the total expenditures, \$11.4 million is COVID-19-related funding, while the remaining \$13.3 million is directed toward other areas of need.

I would like to provide a further breakdown of this funding beginning with the COVID-related spending. The largest funding initiative by cost is \$5 million from the Department of Health and Social Services. Funds included as part of this appropriation bill will support ongoing costs related to testing, vaccine rollout, rapid testing, implementation, and self-isolation costs. It will also go toward supporting additional needs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation. All of these requirements under the Department of Health and Social Services are being funded using the COVID-19 contingency fund. This means that the \$5 million in funding required for these initiatives can be allocated without impacting the government's overall fiscal position.

A total of \$4 million in operation and maintenance funding for the Department of Economic Development's COVID-19 supports is also being funded from the COVID contingency fund. This money will ensure that funds are available for both the Yukon emergency relief program and the vaccination rebate program.

This also includes \$3 million under the new stream of the tourism non-accommodation sector to ensure that local businesses have the support that they need to remain open and provide the products and services that Yukoners rely upon. This drawdown of \$9 million also means that the COVID-19 contingency fund leaves a balance of \$1.5 million in additional capacities.

Moving on to COVID-related spending outside of the emergency fund, this second supplementary estimate includes \$2.4 million for phase 3 aviation supports. This funding is a flow-through transfer and is therefore entirely recoverable.

Turning now to the non-COVID funding, again, the largest individual expense is for the RCMP member wage and contract increases as a result of the requirements in the new collective bargaining agreement, and \$3 million in O&M is budgeted for this item.

The Department of Justice will also see increases for initiatives that enhance access to Justice services. This includes \$1.1 million for judges' pensions and salaries, based on the 2019 Judicial Compensation Commission's recommendations. It also includes: \$625,000 for strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime; \$150,000 for the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court project; and \$590,000 for increases related to outside counsel expenses for COVID-related legal challenges. The first two initiatives are entirely recoverable.

The Department of Education will also see increases as part of this supplementary estimate. The two most notable items are \$1.6 million for the new Yukon Association of Education Professionals collective agreement and \$1.3 million for universal childcare, based on average monthly program costs.

The department also has \$213,000 in the supplementary budget related to the enrolment changes formula and for costs associated with organic waste collection.

Moving now to the Public Service Commission, we are requesting O&M increases of \$629,000 and \$711,000 for the post-employment benefits and post-retirement benefits respectively. The commission has also included \$630,000 in their supplementary budget to meet WCB premiums.

Finally, in the Department of Economic Development, there is a \$500,000 increase in funding for the film location incentive fund, due to an application from Raw TV.

This second supplementary estimate also brings along with it \$3.1 million in new O&M recoveries. As mentioned earlier, the largest O&M recoveries outside of the aviation supports come from the work we are doing to support Yukon victims of crime, as well as work on the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court project in the Department of Justice. The other O&M recoveries included in this supplementary budget are allocated to work being completed in the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. \$90,000 in recoveries will offset funding for the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, for the Sally & Sisters program, included in the first supplementary estimates and under the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund.

I would like to move to the capital side of the second supplementary estimates. On a net basis, this supplementary estimates includes \$4.5 million in new capital spending, when offset against corresponding decreases. In terms of increases, this bill includes relatively few, though those that are included are worth noting.

The single largest capital expenditure included in the supplementary estimates is for the Safe at Home Society under the Yukon Housing Corporation. This \$5 million in funding will go toward renovating and refreshing the former High Country Inn, adding a total of 55 supportive housing units to the community. Also, within the corporation is a \$300,000 increase to the rural home ownership program, due to higher demand and higher rates of home ownership programs in the communities. Both of these items are fully recoverable.

These increases within the Yukon Housing Corporation are offset by a \$1.1-million decrease to the northern carve-out funding agreement with CMHC. This decrease in costs is due

to delays in progress on this project, as only the scoping and design phase have been completed in 2021-22. The remaining funds will be deferred to the 2022-23 fiscal year to match the project completion timeline. This spending decrease also results in an \$825,000 decrease in associated capital recoveries.

The only other increase in capital is under the Department of Justice, where the work being done to support victims of crime also includes \$60,000 in capital, and \$70,000 is also included for work on the new morgue in Whitehorse.

Other capital decreases would include \$2.6 million for the Dempster fibre project, due to earlier than expected winter weather, and \$12.5 million in Yukon Development Corporation projects, including the Arctic energy fund and the investing in community infrastructure program, or ICIP for short. The latter carries a corresponding decrease in recoveries, as work in these areas will shift to the next fiscal year.

Finally, in capital, there are also some changes to projects within the Department of Education. There is an increase of \$204,000 for modular classrooms. It's offset by a \$420,000 decrease for the Selkirk parking lot project and \$85,000 for the Burwash school as a result of supply chain issues. The resulting change is a net decrease of \$375,000 in recoveries.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to speak to the changes in revenue as part of the bill. As I mentioned earlier, this supplementary estimates includes a significant increase in revenues. This \$58.1-million increase is primarily the result of a large increase in tax revenue. Tax revenue in the supplementary estimates is expected to increase by \$33 million. This is made up of \$19.7 million in personal income tax increases and \$12.8 million on the corporate income tax side. This is primarily a result of an improved outlook for total and average personal income in the territory and reflects the strength of growing salaries for those working in the Yukon.

Previous forecasts were conservative and assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic would negatively impact personal income, both in terms of total income from all taxpayers, as well as the average income of taxpayers. This increase is partly due to temporary emergency federal income supports, but a large portion of the increase is expected to continue in future years, as well, which is good news.

Insurance tax premium increases are expected to bring in \$875,000 in additional revenue, while tobacco tax and fuel tax revenues are expected to decrease slightly by \$25,000 and \$331,000 respectively.

Finally, the Government of Yukon will see \$25 million in federal funding from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada — CIRNAC. This funding was received late in the fiscal year and will go toward meeting our commitments as part of *Our Clean Future*. As noted during second reading, this grant has a corresponding impact of \$25 million on the Yukon government's surplus deficit position.

This concludes my overview of the changes included as part of the 2021-22 second supplementary estimates. I would like to once again thank the department officials who worked to support this budget process and also to my official here today, the Deputy Minister of Finance, Scott Thompson. He is

ready to go and inform me as we go through this debate. I invite members to request further details on any of the areas, including the supplementary estimates, and to direct department-specific questions to respective ministers during their departmental debate part in Committee.

With that, Madam Chair, thank you, and I will cede the floor to the opposition.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise in debate as the Official Opposition Finance critic on the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

As I mentioned in my speech on the 2022-23 budget, the pandemic has created a lot of strain on people and on our society. It is important to remember, especially as we talk about Yukoners who we are elected to serve, that we may not always agree with each other, but we don't have to agree with people to care about them. We can respect citizens who disagree with us and with whom we may disagree. As their elected representatives, that is what people expect us to do — to show them the respect that they deserve and to not lose sight of the issues that are important to them.

This winter has been tough on many Yukoners. I have heard from a lot of people who are really not doing okay right now. Government needs to rise above differences of opinion and the politics of division and recognize the importance of helping all Yukoners and listening to them. This is a time to recognize the importance of leaders across the country showing respect for citizens and focusing on unifying our country. Some have chosen to use very divisive rhetoric during the pandemic, both at a national level and in this Assembly, but that rhetoric is not helpful. Polarization in our society is causing real damage to families, friendships, and people. We need to unite our society, not divide it.

As we stated in the letter that the Leader of the Official Opposition sent to the Prime Minister last month — and I quote: “We also urge you to recognize that there are deep divisions in Canadian society right now, and it is time for all leaders to show respect for citizens, including people with whom they disagree, and to focus on unifying our country. We need to come together as Canadians again, and jointly find a path forward.”

Madam Chair, I would like to talk about some of the issues that we are hearing from Yukoners that are affecting their lives. In addition to the pandemic, and in some cases made worse by the pandemic, these issues continue to be raised by Yukoners. Over one-fifth of Yukoners don't have a family doctor. We have repeatedly urged the government to reinstate the physician recruitment position that they cancelled and to work with the Yukon Medical Association on improving recruitment and retention of doctors. Unfortunately, there has been a disturbing lack of action in this area. The family doctor shortage crisis is adding to the wait-time crisis. We have heard repeatedly from Yukoners that they are waiting too long for specialists, for surgeries, for MRI appointments, for other appointments, and for other important health services.

We've heard from our hospitals and health care professionals about the unacceptably long wait times. Tragically as well, families and communities are dealing with

the loss of loved ones due to drug overdoses right now. The government's actions in dealing with the opioid crisis to date have focused heavily on harm reduction and have not put enough emphasis on prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

Now, Madam Chair, we do want to again emphasize that we support effective harm-reduction programs, but it is also very important for government to focus on prevention, treatment, and enforcement and on the number one goal of any strategy of this type, which should be trying to help as many people who are addicted to break free of their addictions and to lead healthy lives free from that addiction and the health risks associated with it.

On an international stage, Yukoners, Canadians, and people around the world are seeing images and videos from Ukraine resulting from Russia's illegal invasion and watching that tragedy on television and online. Homes are being destroyed, innocent people are dying, others are being injured, and still more innocent people's lives are severely impacted as a result of Putin's illegal and immoral invasion. There's a growing refugee crisis with millions fleeing already. Ukrainian armed forces and volunteers are showing the world what courage looks like as they face the Russian invaders, fighting for freedom and democracy in their homeland. Yesterday, President Zelensky addressed the Canadian Parliament and today he addressed the US Congress to ask for more help. The crisis in Ukraine is world-changing. It will affect a number of things here. It has already affected prices of fuel and many other goods, and it affects the supply chains in ways that people did not anticipate before it occurred.

Germany has announced that it is doubling defence spending and there are growing calls for NATO countries, including Canada, to increase defence spending. This world situation is not of our choosing, but we must rise to meet it. As members will recall in the first day of this Sitting, the Leader of the Official Opposition and I both expressed support for sanctions on Russia, support for helping Ukraine with resources, including weapons and equipment, and urged support for refugees leaving the conflict. We again urge the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of making protection of our Arctic sovereignty a top priority by taking immediate action to modernize and strengthen our air force, navy, army reserves, and Coast Guard. I have also heard Yukoners raising the issue and suggesting that we should have a reserve unit stationed here in the territory.

Few people are driving a vehicle made in the early 1980s, and likely no one here in this Chamber or listening in the Yukon is using a computer that was made then, but Canada's newest fighter jets were made in the early 1980s. The navy, army, and Coast Guard have also been neglected. As Canadians, we need to recognize the importance of ensuring that we can protect our country and come to the assistance of our allies. I should also note, in expanding on the point that I made earlier, that an important part of protecting our Arctic sovereignty also includes our Canadian Rangers and also reconsidering whether, potentially, the size of that force should be increased to deal with a potential growing threat.

I would like to thank the Member for Kluane and others who serve in the Rangers for their service to the country.

As Canadians, we need to recognize the importance of ensuring that we can protect our country and come to the assistance of our allies, as well as asserting our sovereignty.

I urge the Premier and his government to make Arctic sovereignty a high priority and to work with the federal government, territories, and provinces on this important issue, as well as with the State of Alaska. To that end, I would ask the Premier whether he has contacted the Governor of Alaska to discuss Arctic sovereignty. I would also ask him what steps the government has taken to prepare to welcome and help refugees from the Ukraine.

Madam Chair, I have had people contact me wanting to help refugees, including offering housing supports for Ukrainian refugees if and when they arrive here in the Yukon. I would ask the Premier if he could indicate who they should contact, either in government or in another organization, to offer this help.

Madam Chair, as I draw my introductory remarks and questions to a close, I do want to note that yesterday when we began debate on this additional spending by government for the current fiscal year ending on March 31, I kept my speech at the second reading stage brief, noting that I would save my questions for Committee of the Whole today. In response, the Premier spent a surprising amount of time going through a long list of grievances — both real and imagined — with the Official Opposition and me personally.

I'm not going to waste much time responding to that, but I will say this: Ordinary Yukoners really don't care whether the Premier dislikes the Official Opposition Finance critic. Yukoners want us to focus on the issues that are important to them. If the Premier wants to spend his time in this Assembly taking shots at me, have at it. I have broad shoulders and thick skin.

I'm going to focus on issues that are important to Yukoners. I will continue to ask tough questions, even if the Premier and his colleagues don't like them.

I should also advise them that, if the Premier and his ministers refuse to answer questions or give unrelated non-answers from their talking points, they should absolutely expect us to continue to call them out on it. That is our job.

Demanding accountability from ministers is what people expect the opposition to do, including when the government would prefer not to answer a question or prefer to not answer it directly.

On that note, I have a number of questions for the Premier about spending in this supplementary budget. I am going to start with a short list of five questions.

First of all, can we get a breakdown of the \$9 million in additional COVID spending in Health and Social Services? The Premier made reference to that amount and what it covered, but we didn't actually get dollar amounts indicating what the breakdown was for each of those amounts. We would appreciate that in the interest of public transparency.

Second question: How many government employees will still be on leave without pay after April 4?

Third question: On April 4, will unvaccinated EMS and fire volunteers, who are covered by the vaccination mandate, be allowed to return to work and serve their communities?

The final question that I will ask, number five on the list, is: How much total revenue did the government receive in the fiscal year that we are finishing now from the insurance premium tax?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will start — probably not in a surprising fashion for the member opposite — by disagreeing with him. I don't dislike the member opposite at all, actually. I have been on record with friends and colleagues and others talking about the work ethic of the member opposite. Anytime that we are ever at public events, I make sure that I get out and say hello to him and see how he's doing. I always have, and the member opposite can correct the record, if he feels, but that has always been my approach to him. I have heard people from his riding talk about his diligence as an MLA in his riding, how quickly he gets back to folks. Even if he might not necessarily agree with them politically, he gives them the time of day. The member opposite is wrong; I don't dislike him at all. I actually have a lot of respect for anybody who puts their name forward for political service — absolutely. I don't take any of this personally.

However, if the member opposite is going to start something by saying something on the record, I really do have to defend myself, and that is what played out yesterday. But, if the member opposite keeps it to questions that are pertinent to the debate, I will too. I will make that commitment to anybody in the opposition. I always have. You can read through Hansard and see that.

If provoked, I will definitely react. But, at the same time, I would rather talk about these things in Committee of the Whole that are pertinent to the bills and the responsibilities that we all have as legislators, not only to present bills, but to do the research necessary to do the critique of these bills as well. I will give credit to those as well who are well-researched and have questions that are based on the reality of their constituencies.

I completely agree with the member opposite with his comments about politics of division. Maybe when the member opposite gets to his feet, he could give us examples of some of the conversations that he has had internally with his party as to his strategies for opposition members when it comes to being a little bit divisive and working across political lines. We've said it for — well, I have said for my whole political career that there are good ideas from the left and from the right, and our moderate party on this side is made up of people from — you can't even draw just one linear line as far as left or right politics. The folks on this side of the House bring forth a representation of their ridings, and we know very much on this side of the House that ridings are not made up of one side or the other, although I'm sure there are lots of ridings in the Yukon that have a political population that is overwhelmingly for one party or the other, for sure. We've seen that historical trend, but I don't think that anybody in this House should ever, as a political figure, only concentrate their efforts on the votes that they know they got.

So, again, politics of division, whether it's local or international — this is the time to have those conversations. As we see the world around us and the trauma and tragedies that are playing out on the national stage, it does beg the question internally here: How are we going to, in our small but very significant part of this world, contribute to a kinder, gentler political world? Amen to that. I will agree with the member opposite on that — absolutely.

The member opposite started by talking about family doctors. Again, I will leave a lot of the conversation to the Department of Health and Social Services when they are up on their feet. In terms of nurses and physicians, the *Putting People First* report found that approximately 21 percent of Yukoners don't have access to a family physician. As we implement the recommendations from the report, we remain committed to expanding Yukoners' access to primary health care services.

We live in very interesting times, Madam Chair. The specific nature of cancers that we're seeing in younger populations across the world, and specifically in Canada, is a real issue for the medical community right across Canada. Finding those specialists, as well, and being able to partner with other jurisdictions is very challenging.

We are so blessed in the Yukon with our partnerships that the Department of Health and Social Services and the minister have created through regular times, and in COVID times, with partnering with BC and getting us to the front of the line for COVID testing.

Also, in these conversations, it really does help to kind of paint the picture to what I see as a whole new mindset of young doctors. It's about balancing their lives. It's about having more ability to get out onto the land. If you're going to move to the land, you're going to want to get on the beautiful lands that we do have.

This is something that we're seeing right across the country. Doctors are balancing their lives out. Being in a family that has doctors in it, these folks have chosen a profession that monopolizes all of their lives. Whether it's through the studying phase or into the first few years, it takes a lot out of you, that's for sure, and there's a real strain on the family. So, to have a mindset that "I want to balance my life out" — that's kind of what we're seeing in the numbers right now.

Our government is aware that some local physicians have chosen primary care practices and transitioned to our acute care facilities, or moved out of territory, and recognize that this has an impact on both the walk-in clinic in Whitehorse and also Yukoners who receive that primary health care from these providers. We completely recognize that. Unfortunately, the pandemic has impacted recruitment efforts as well. It has resulted in some additional staffing pressures in Yukon, for sure, but it has right across the whole country, as well.

Here is a good example, Madam Chair. Between 2017 and early 2020, there was a five-percent vacancy rate among primary health care nurses within the Community Nursing branch. During that period, no agency nurses were required — none. Now, due to the pandemic, there is difficulty recruiting, and the vacancy rates are fluctuating higher than five percent now. The pandemic has specifically impacted our ability to

recruit nurses, physicians, and other care providers. There currently is a national and global shortage of health care workers.

We have continued to recruit through national and online forums, and we have supplemented staff with agency nurses and also out-of-territory resources, as well.

I'm not going to go too much farther down this road. There is a lot to be said about it; it is a complicated issue, not just here in the Yukon, but also right across the country and the world. But as we go out and recruit, to explain the progressive world that we live in here in the Yukon — the mosaic of communities that we have, the partnerships in our communities and our efforts on reconciliation, our beautiful vistas, our mountains, our trails, our opportunities to get out on the land and to enjoy the land — this is something that professionals really have in mind. It is also something that people have in mind these days with eco-tourism, as well, recruiting either doctors or getting people up here to visit on a tourism basis — we have so much to offer.

So, past the pandemic, we will get back to, hopefully, better numbers as far as recruiting, as far as the economy, as far as moving around our communities and enjoying our land and meeting with the people in communities again who we serve.

I do know that the department — the last I will say on this — has been exploring opportunities to contract additional nurse practitioners to service some existing clinics. Additionally, work is underway to expand access to virtual physician services. I will leave the rest of these details to the minister responsible, as she gets to her feet.

The member did start with COVID-19, as well, talking about the needs of Yukoners, and we recognize that. We recognize that COVID-19 has been extremely difficult on everybody — on absolutely everybody. I don't know of anybody — let me go back and say it this way. I can remember the first days of Bell Canada's "Bell Let's Talk", and you know, being a politician and the MLA for Klondike for going on 11-plus years now or more, almost 12 years, those original campaigns before the pandemic — it was interesting to see who was advocating, who was coming out for those volunteer days to help volunteer with Bell Canada, or anybody else who was doing any initiatives, when it came to mental health and wellness, and it wasn't the whole community. The last campaign — it was the whole community.

There is not one person who is not affected by mental health because of this pandemic, from very small to very large ways — very profound ways. That is absolutely true. We put things in perspective. We take a look at where we are in Yukon compared to the other jurisdictions in Canada. We have it so good here — we really do, comparatively, but that is not to say that we haven't struggled mentally, financially, emotionally, and physically.

It has been a strain on everybody — it really has — since the day that this pandemic started. Every single politician and every single MLA who is in this building here never signed up to be a representative of their community during a global pandemic. That was a very daunting task for every single one of us. I commend everyone in this room. I can't imagine the

number of phone calls, the support, concerns, and travel that you've done in your communities. I just know what I have done and what our team has done here. It is extensive, and it is a 24/7 job to represent communities during a global pandemic, and I commend you all for the work that you do.

In terms of the supports that we have offered — our economic support and our economic initiatives — we balanced a budget before we got into a pandemic. That helped out extremely. The former Minister of Tourism and Culture, the current Minister of Education, and the current Minister of Economic Development worked tirelessly in those first few minutes, to hours, to weeks, and to months to engage with the business community to make sure that we had supports in place. Since the start of the pandemic, watching the significant impact on the economy and watching the economies around the world in context, the economic supports in the territory have helped dampen the impact of this economic disruption locally, as we watched the perils of the economic markets and the world through this time.

Yukon support programs — like the Yukon business relief program, the regional loan relief program, paid sick leave rebates, and programs under the tourism relief and recovery plan — have significantly helped in reducing the economic harm to Yukoners and to businesses. Under these programs and other COVID-related spending for health care and public health responses, the Yukon government budgeted \$201 million in support of Yukoners since the start of the pandemic. Nearly half is related to mitigating the financial and economic impacts on Yukoners. Most of the remaining funds went toward costs associated with public health measures, including vaccinations, while a portion of it went toward COVID-19 initiatives, like education and sport supports.

Now, context is always important when we discuss and talk about how we budget the people's money. The Yukon's economy has performed much better than many have expected, given the significant challenges of the last two years.

I mentioned that in my opening speech today about revenues. We forecasted conservatively. At that time, that was the proper way to forecast. We saw, whether it's the placer mining community, the mining community, or quartz mining as well with Victoria Gold, or whether it's the construction industry, we saw Yukoners come out and do their utmost to be safe and to work. We're in a very good place because of that.

Not only right now with doing much better, given the significant challenges of the last two years — territory estimates of gross domestic product, a growth rate of 5.2 percent for 2020 — again, that's the highest in the country. Strong mineral production — obviously a primary driver. To that, we hear the opposition saying that, no, it's the growing of your government that's a strong — no, I'll disagree; it's mining.

It used to be in their minds that mining was the strongest growth. They seem to not recognize that now that we're in government, I guess, but that's extremely important to recognize.

Also, the real GDP is expected to show very robust growth of 9.6 percent for 2022. Now, I have been on both sides of the House here, and I have said that forecasts are just forecasts, so

take them all with a grain of salt. But with growth in mineral production — again, what's forecasted on the horizon, announcements from Newmont — there are some great things going on in the Yukon.

We're expected to return to near-normal levels in tourism-related activities in 2024. I have been talking to providers now and, as far as booking, they are really excited about how many bookings they are seeing right now right across the industry. That bodes very well for this season.

I'm hearing some great things from the federal government right now about testing at the borders — another great indicator that this is going to be a good summer for a tourism industry that has been through it for two years. Again — I said this quite a few times — as thankful as folks are in the business community for the reliefs that are the best in Canada, they want to make their own money. They want to get back to work. They want to do the jobs that they clearly are passionate about and have sunk investments in, and they want to start seeing that investment flourish over the long term, probably through the next generations as well.

Going forward, the pandemic and its economic repercussions will continue to bring some levels of uncertainty, for sure, that will affect the broader fiscal picture. However, we entered into this pandemic with a strong economic momentum and solid financial footing. Throughout the disruption, we have monitored and adapted our supports to meet Yukoners' challenging needs, from the immediate relief to adaptation and investment as well.

I will leave it at that. The member opposite asked an awful lot of questions, so I am trying my best to answer every one of his notes. I am looking at my notes from him talking.

The member opposite talked about the breakdown for the \$4 million and the details of the COVID contingency and the total. They are: Economic Development, \$4 million; Health and Social Services, \$5 million, containing the testing of vaccines and the other health measures — I spoke about that in my beginning notes, and I am not sure if you heard that or not. As far as the COVID response, the increase of \$4 million — that is the emergency relief program. If you break that down, it is \$820,000 to reimburse fixed costs of businesses directly impacted by the state of emergency declared on November 8, 2021. Then there was the vaccine verification rebate, which was \$157,000 to rebate a portion of the cost of technology required to verify vaccine status where required by CEMA orders. For the tourism non-accommodation sector — TNAS for short — \$3 million was out to support bars and restaurants. That is the breakdown from there.

I am not sure how much more time I have. I am trying my best to chronologically answer what he was asking. I might run out of time and he might have to re-ask some of those other questions.

I will go to Ukraine. The member opposite spoke about Ukraine.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: Okay, maybe I won't. I will leave that for another time because that is a bigger response, but he did

speak to the Yukon government employees on leave without pay.

So, some of the breakdown for the member opposite — 92 full-time employees, as of March 2, and 294 in total — of course, the 92 being the full-time employees.

Mr. Cathers: I would just also ask the Premier to remember, when he rises again, that I had also asked about whether EMS and fire volunteers who chose not to be vaccinated will be allowed to return to work. That is something that I have heard from volunteers who are off, including in communities — that my understanding is that they are actually without that service right now. I asked the Premier how much total revenue the government received from the insurance premium tax.

On the topic of Ukraine, I would just like to note that I actually received a message from a constituent, while the Premier was talking, in follow-up to a request that she had made earlier, wondering where they can reach out to if they want to provide help to families from Ukraine, indicating that she and her family would like to help a family from Ukraine make it to Canada and can provide housing, as well as assistance, to them. And that is just one, of course, of the many Yukoners who have indicated a desire to help people from the Ukraine.

I would just ask on that, if the Premier can provide information about who they contact to provide those resources, whether it is for once a family is here in the Yukon or actually getting from Ukraine, or wherever they have left, as a refugee — how and who people can reach out to, to effectively provide that help, either through government or through reputable organizations. There is, of course, a strong desire to help, but there are also people who are not necessarily familiar with all of the organizations involved and just aren't quite sure where to offer that assistance. I would just ask the Premier to provide that information.

I would also ask, regarding the supplementary budget, with the Arctic energy fund and the investing in renewable energy fund, we did have a briefing with officials on this, but it was clear that they didn't actually have the green light to share a breakdown with us in response to our questions.

So, the Premier can certainly make the decision to provide that information. I would just ask, with the Arctic energy fund and the investing — the IREI fund — I guess they use the acronym. We haven't received a breakdown yet of what projects are being funded in the current fiscal year and how much is going, particularly under that roughly \$8.5 million, under the Arctic energy fund. We understand that it's going into three projects, but we don't have a breakdown of the dollar amounts going to those projects.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will start with the *Insurance Premium Tax Act*. I do believe I mentioned this right up front in my opening comments, but the insurance premium tax revenues that were voted to date in 2021-22 were just over \$6.4 million, and the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* was \$875,000, and the revised vote is \$7.286 million. So, insurance premiums are market-driven and can fluctuate for a variety of reasons. There is no indication that the changes that we

announced in 2020 have any material impact on insurance costs in the Yukon.

This spring, the member opposite brought up an issue that he brought up in the past from the KPMG insurers. At the time, I thought that he was bringing something new to the forefront, and, no, this was the January 12, 2021 release that they put out. We talked about this in general debate in the past, so I'm not going to go too far down. I've explained in the past as well — the member opposite is still asking the same question. When we changed the tax rate, it was in recognition that our rates were out of line with other jurisdictions. Today, three jurisdictions still have higher insurance premium tax rates, five jurisdictions have the same rate as the Yukon, and there are only four jurisdictions in Canada with a lower rate. The four jurisdictions with lower rates all have rates above the Yukon rates in 2020.

Now, that KPMG report referenced an extremely rare situation where insurance coverage is obtained from an insurer who is not licensed to operate in the Yukon. This situation is so rare that it does not appear to have applied to any individuals in the Yukon for the 2020 tax year, which is the most recent year for which the data is available.

So, I said in answer to the question in Question Period that I think the member opposite is connecting two points that don't get connected by anybody else but him, so I won't go too much further into that. I think the Minister of Community Services did a great job, as well, of talking about the extreme conditions that we have been seeing right across the world and Canada when it comes to increases in insurance rates, but I won't go into that very far.

So, with EMS workers, this is an interesting one. We stated today — and I'll stand by this as well, obviously, but working with our most marginalized individuals, our policy will be, moving forward, that those health care providers will be required to be vaccinated. Entering into a hospital, there need to be requirements there. We need to make sure that the most marginalized — I mean, if you are a patient, you are coming in vaccinated or not vaccinated. That's one thing. But the people who work and support and supply these facilities — we have to make recognition of the importance of vaccination status when it comes to working with our most marginalized individuals.

That puts an EMS provider as a volunteer in a precarious situation. You could still volunteer as an EMS provider, but you are very limited in your scope of practice in that volunteer situation. As a requirement, if the ambulance is coming into the hospital, those employees or volunteers need to be vaccinated to enter into these facilities. That doesn't limit an EMS person who is not vaccinated from volunteering and working in the EMS department or getting training. A lot can be done, but I do admit that this would be problematic if that individual volunteer was hoping to do a ride-along and support as the EMS approaches our facilities. It is part of an ongoing evaluation of high-risk settings. We will definitely have more to say about this at a later time as well.

There is no budgetary line item that I can point to here when it comes to the EMS workers, but we did speak to this today at our press conference and outlined our considerations for vaccine requirements for our health care providers working

with our most marginalized Yukoners — also the non-governmental organizations that we fund and that have responsibilities for the most marginalized as well — but also welcoming back the public servants who don't work in these settings but didn't sign the attestation to begin with.

With Ukraine, I know that there has been unbelievable support locally. To have someone who is listening right now reaching out and asking how they can help out is extraordinary and such a very Yukon thing to do. Right after the Yukon Forum, ministers and chiefs gathered at the cultural centre in Whitehorse here, and gifts were exchanged with the Ukrainian community. Financial support and emotional support from First Nation leadership was profound. As profound as both of these statements about someone calling in and also the First Nation communities and other Yukoners wanting to do more, it's profound but not surprising. It's just our nature. It is great to see.

We started a Ukraine family support desk, and we launched that to help Ukrainians seek residency here in Yukon and Canada. For the person who is listening in online, if you go to yukon.ca and just type in "Ukraine family support desk", you will get some information there. I'm taking a look right now on the Internet at it. There's a publication there from March 3 basically talking about what this desk will do. The support desk will provide information on federal programs to assist with immigration and family reunification, connect employers who want to offer employment to Ukrainians arriving in Yukon, and also guide Ukrainians looking for employment opportunities in the territory. Please also inquire if you have space for folks in your home; that's fantastic. The good folks on the other side of that phone or that e-mail will definitely help you out.

I could also say that, if that person is still listening in, you can get more information online. It would be yukon.ca/en/immigrate/yukon, or you could also call 456-3920.

We obviously stand in solidarity for the people of Ukraine. Our government stands with all of the western allies in condemning these actions of this illegal war against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We are very supportive of the federal government's sanctions against Russia, and we will continue to work with partners to support people of the Ukraine, including here in Yukon. I know that all members of this Assembly stand united in support of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in the face of unbelievable Russian aggression in that area that hasn't been seen since World War II and, subsequent to that, in the 1930s with the starvation of millions and millions of Ukrainians.

The northern premiers — we had conversations at the beginning of this conflict. Last week, we met and spoke with Canada's defence minister. She will be coming to the north very soon to talk about improving the North American Aerospace Defense Command following a request from us, the northern premiers.

We will be discussing Arctic security, as well, at the Council of the Federation this summer and in the meetings we have subsequent to that. The Council of the Federation has been very supportive of northern concerns throughout the pandemic.

It's important that we have a united voice when it comes to the north. The premiers are very supportive of these discussions.

The last time that I was at these tables and brought up Arctic sovereignty was over climate change and the changing ice floes. We have a minister on this team who has done a thesis on this type of stuff — the Arctic ice floes and glacier movements. It is very concerning to him, and it is very concerning to us. As we started our climate action plan and then talked to the federal government and our provincial and territorial counterparts, we talked about Arctic sovereignty in the context of everyone seeing economic opportunity with the opening up of the northwest passages — plural — and we are concerned, because sovereignty starts with healthy rural northern communities, right across the north.

That was the last time that we brought up Arctic sovereignty. Now national and international security beget a further conversation with the premiers and with the Prime Minister. We want to work with the federal government to help strengthen the security of the Canadian Arctic for the benefit of all Canadians. There is a specific chapter in the Arctic and northern policy framework dedicated to safety and security. We have been pushing the federal government to put money to these chapters, so that is part of the conversation. The message that I sent in our conversation with the federal ministers last week about investment in critical infrastructure, highways, airports, energy, digital security, telecommunications — all of these things are how we support healthy, vibrant, and growing northern communities and contribute to a stronger and more resilient Canada as a whole. Hopefully, we will get more information from the federal government as we continue these conversations.

It was mentioned as well — I am going to go in order here, in case I miss something. I believe that the question was looking for information on the Arctic energy fund.

So, the member opposite asked about the Arctic energy fund. This provides funding until 2027-28 to projects that will result in more efficient and reliable sustainable energy over the long term. The funding is part of a larger federal Investing in Canada infrastructure plan, which aims to build modern, resilient, and green communities for all Canadians. So, to date, the projects that have been approved and announced funding — there are three. You have the Haeckel Hill wind project, which is \$13.07 million; the Dome Road solar project, which is just under one-half million — it is \$486,000, to be specific and concise; and the Kluane wind project is just under \$5 million, which is \$4.935 million.

As members will know, the objectives of the program align well with our focus on renewable energy through the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative, the microgeneration program, and also the independent power production policy. Other projects being considered for funding include two solar projects that are both located in off-grid communities.

Yukon's total budget under this fund is \$36.5 million.

I am going to cede the floor at this point just to see if the member opposite has any other questions or if I missed anything. I am trying my best to keep track of the questions that he is asking.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answers, and I would just note that I was pleased to hear that there have been some conversations with other premiers about Arctic sovereignty, and the Premier mentioned the Northwest Passage as well as made some reference to other areas there. It is important for us to keep in mind that what Canada claims as our Arctic territory does, in some cases, conflict with what Russia claims and what they have designs on. So, it is important that we recognize the importance, both militarily and economically and through research as well, to take a multi-faceted approach to assert our sovereignty in the Arctic. Military capacity is absolutely key to that. I don't want to dwell on that at length this afternoon, in light of the other items on my list, but I do encourage the Premier, when he is talking to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, and premiers about it, to be aware of this and to discuss the importance of having fighter jets, patrol aircraft, the modern distance early warning system, ships, icebreakers, submarines, reserves, Rangers, et cetera, that meet the needs of today, not the needs of 20 years ago or 40 years ago, in many cases.

I want to, on that topic, just move on to one very much related to the increasing Russian aggression — the issue of cyber protection. I raised that earlier in Question Period. I don't expect the Premier to get into a lot of details here today. I, of course, don't want him to get into sensitive details, but again, I would urge the government to take action to ensure we're working with all of the necessary experts to ensure that we're doing what we need to, to follow the warning of federal agencies and prepare for the very real risk of cyber attacks that could affect areas, including our health care sector — as happened in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Government systems themselves, online registries, banks, and also the electrical system have been ones that have been identified as being at risk in many parts of North America. I would urge them to take action on that, as well as, in addition to any information the Premier can provide here today, to consider providing us more information later via legislative return or letter. I would note that if there are matters that are particularly sensitive from a security perspective, we would also certainly be open to considering whether some of those details would be provided confidentially to MLAs, out of respect for the importance of cyber security.

I just want to move on to another couple of areas on my list.

Also related to the Arctic energy program and IREI and the spending under the Yukon Development Corporation this year, there's the grid-scale battery project. One thing that we had asked officials, but they didn't appear to be at liberty to make the decision to provide us with that information, was information about the financing structure for that battery and what the arrangement is regarding the development corporation that has an interest in it, what that structure would be, what the rate of return would be, and what funding they were required to provide, if any, as part of that. At this point, we haven't had a clear picture on that and would appreciate receiving it.

I'm going to just also touch on an area that the Premier mentioned earlier — that being self-isolation facilities and

costs. We understand, throughout this, that in Whitehorse, through most of the time, the High Country Inn was being used as an isolation facility for people who required it and that now, according to what officials indicated, it has gone to the Yukon Inn in Whitehorse and I believe they indicated the Big Horn in Watson Lake. I would ask whether there was a competitive process for making that choice, and if not, why not?

The last question I'll ask before ceding the floor to the Premier is: With a significant number of employees — hundreds on leave without pay, due to the vaccination mandate — there would have been presumably some financial lapses in planned personnel spending within departments.

Could the Premier provide us information about what those lapses were within departments — what the total amount is and a breakdown by department?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the member opposite's understanding of the security and considerations when it comes to some of the information shared about Arctic sovereignty or any of the cyber security issues. There is some stuff I can share, for sure.

We can start with the fact that Russia's actions are a threat to global security and the international rules-based order that we enjoy as democratic societies. They have caused disruptions to the economy right across the globe, and everyone is very nervous as we look to the coming days, weeks, and months; that is for sure.

We are definitely keeping a watchful eye on Russia's actions in the Arctic. There has been increased attention on, and investing in, the Arctic over the last several years, as I have mentioned in the past. It's time that Canada starts doing the same. That was the message that I brought when I was on *The National* on Monday. That was the part that they used, but we were going into a longer conversation of exactly that.

We will continue to remain in close contact with high-level Canadian officials on this. The Russian invasion of Ukraine will affect the Arctic Council and its working groups as well. Such an egregious violation of international law calls into question the possibility of cooperating among council membership, especially since Russia is the chair until May 2023. There was aggression in the Arctic by Russia in 2019 when they changed their stance and brought their argument right to the 200-mile limit of Canada. We are in conversations with Canada — because that was the year that both Canada and Russia made their submissions, so we will see what Canada does in response to that.

I know that, as key partners in the Arctic Council network, our government and the other northern premiers have called on the Government of Canada to recognize that cooperation at the Arctic Council is being jeopardized, given the current realities. We are looking to the federal government to respond, and we will continue pressing.

When it comes to cyber security specifically, we are aware that cyber attacks have occurred in relation to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. The Yukon government is in regular communication with the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. Through that relationship, you would receive notices of threats

to enable us to immediately act on any known digital vulnerabilities.

That's the scenario; that's the arrangement. The Canadian Centre for Cyber Security assesses that the threat to critical national infrastructure is paramount — to have the assessment done. We are advised that the threat from Russian state-sponsored actors — that assessment right now — is low, but they are remaining very, very vigilant on this file, not surprisingly.

Our Government of Yukon has defences in place that include redundancy, third-party security, monitoring, and an agreement with Microsoft as well for accessing a quick reaction time if required. That's about all I will say right now in general debate on that.

I'm going to have to ask the member opposite to repeat some of his other questions, but he did ask about the Yukon Inn being used for isolation and if that was a competitive process. The answer is no. Due to the urgency, the need, and the fact that the High Country Inn was sold, it didn't go through a competitive process.

I will beg the member opposite's forgiveness and ask him to repeat his other questions. He had a specific question, I believe, about Yukon Development Corporation and energy projects there, but I just don't remember the question.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answers that the Premier provided.

The question that I had asked specifically about the Yukon Development Corporation was regarding the battery project, which is included in both the year that we're closing off and then the next year. At this point in time, to the best of my knowledge, I don't think that the government has provided clarity on exactly what the financing structure is there and, with regard to the Yukon Development Corporation that has a stake in it, how that has been set up in terms of what investment was required from them and what the rate of return they would be receiving is and how that is set up. If the Premier could provide that detail, that would be appreciated.

As he will recall in proceeding with the development of the LNG facility that Yukon Energy has, we made a joint announcement with Kwanlin Dün about investment by their development corporation and did share information about the details of what they were providing and what they would receive in return. We are just asking for the same level of transparency and information as we provided during that announcement that we made jointly with Chief Bill.

Moving on to another area, Madam Chair, with the electric vehicle charging stations that the government has already proceeded with, as well as the ones that they have in the works, one question that I have received from a number of Yukoners is about the structure and whether people are having to pay for that power at this point in time, whether they are expected to have to pay for it, and, if so, how that is all being set up.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as the charging stations, nobody is paying at them now. It is free to use that service now. We will get there, and I will rely on the minister responsible to get more details as far as the timing on that. But, to answer the member's question, no, there is not a charge for the users of

those facilities. Of course, if you are charging at home, you are paying for it there, but not for the publicly accessible ones.

Again, with the grid-scale battery project, I will leave most of the details to the Minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation to answer much of that questioning. Again, in the supplementary debate for the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — it is not a line item that I can necessarily speak to in this supplementary budget, but as far as the ownership structure, I can say that it is 100-percent owned by the Yukon Energy Corporation, however, with First Nation investment opportunities as well. This is very similar to what the member opposite mentioned — similar opportunities as with the LNG project.

As far as any form of payment from YDC to YEC for the battery project, the payment is not alone, and it is funding that is made available through ICIP, which is ultimately recoverable from Canada.

I'm not going to go on about that too much more. I know that the minister has, in the Legislative Assembly during Question Period, talked about the benefits of not borrowing and being able to apply this to some of the flexible funding that we got out of the ICIP funding over the years, but I will leave it at that and let the minister, who is probably champing at the bit to give a whole bunch more details on this because it's something that he is very passionate about as we move toward a more non-fossil-fuelled future for our energy needs here in the Yukon.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that partial answer. I still don't have the clarity on what the financial structure is in terms of the interest that the development corporation has. Do they have to pay for it? What do they receive in return per year? How is that structured?

Again, much as with the announcement that we were proud to make with Kwanlin Dün regarding their investment in the LNG project, it may be a good news story. We're just asking what the details of that story actually are so that we can understand it and so that people can understand it.

I want to move on to Health and Social Services and to some of the questions that really are kind of big picture questions and not just ones that would have been made by the minister herself. There have been some significant changes within the department itself. It seemed odd that insured health is no longer part of Health Services, or the renamed branch, but has moved in with Social Services. I would ask why that decision was made.

Secondly, we have heard reports that big changes are coming in that area and that, following the hiring of two deputy ministers, the government is actually planning on splitting that department in two.

Can the Premier confirm if these reports are accurate? If so, when is the Department of Health and Social Services actually going to be split into two?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am not going to get into too many details about speculating and forecasting for the member opposite, as far as the split of a department or anything like that. What the member opposite can look to is *Putting People First*. That is our guideline. That is the document that will show what

we hope to accomplish, and are accomplishing, when it comes to a health authority.

Moving from acute care to a person-centred, collaborative approach is something that this Yukon Liberal government has been extremely passionate about. When it comes to a complete change in how we provide health care here in the Yukon, I would urge folks to go back and take a look at the Office of the Auditor General report way back when that spawned into the Peachey report that really, to me, as I sat in opposition, started conversations where we wanted to make sure that we had an authority that did its best to be more collaborative, as the Office of the Auditor General Peachey report told us to do, but also to be more inclusive. There is an obligation under the *Health Act* that every Canadian can enjoy the same level of care and services. We know that even through insured health benefits, compared to other streams, there are so many different areas where we can do better to make sure that we have supports in place for Yukoners that are parallel and equal.

As far as any rumours of splits, I am not touching those leading questions from the member opposite, but feel free to ask the minister responsible when it comes to insured health, or anything else, as far as the department structure and status, moving forward.

I will answer a little bit more of the member opposite's questions when it comes to the energy projects, I guess as they relate to the supplementary budget. The changing invoices and timing for Yukon Energy projects — the Mayo transmission line and the battery grid — did lead to increases of \$3.7 million in the budget that we are looking at today. I can say that there is no increase in the total funding for the project and also that funding is accessible in future years and is 100-percent recoverable from Canada, which is great, as far as moving forward into a future for the Yukon that is less dependent on fossil fuel, which is extremely important to this side of the House, the Yukon Liberal government.

The new grid-scale battery is a critical investment in Yukon Energy's ability to meet the growing demand for electricity in Yukon. The project is an excellent example of how Yukon Energy is working with First Nation governments to displace fossil fuel, diesel, and secure Yukon's clean energy future. When this is completed, I can say that the battery project will replace the need for four diesel generators each winter. I also know that Yukon Energy has selected SunGrid Solutions to build its off-scale battery in Whitehorse, and the decision follows a year-long competitive process that first pre-qualified battery vendors and then rated vendors' proposals after that.

So, SunGrid Solutions is a Canadian company with a proven track record of building battery storage and solutions right across North America, which is great to see moving forward. This is an extremely important investment. Last year, Yukon Energy estimated that the battery was going to cost about \$31.7 million, plus or minus 30 percent, and that the proposal for the battery has been received and that Yukon Energy's final cost estimate for the battery project is \$35 million. With the additional time that Yukon Energy invested in the procurement process this past year, the battery is now expected to be operational in the spring of 2023.

That is what I can share with the member opposite. I would urge him to ask more specific questions about ownership and the specifics about that to the minister responsible.

I can say, as well, that this timeline is about three months longer than originally planned, and it is taking more time — the procurement phase of this project, which was critical to ensuring the best battery and the best price, as well, was secured for Yukoners. That can explain a little bit of the delay as well.

That's about it. I would say, just for the record as well, that it was this past January that the Yukon Energy Corporation signed a lease agreement with Da Dan Developments, a subsidiary of Chu N'ikwān Development Corporation, for a 25-year lease of land needed for the battery. That lease rate secured for the land is competitive with prices that are comparable in other vacant lots here in Whitehorse.

Mr. Cathers: That still wasn't actually an answer to the detail on the battery project, but I'll look forward to hearing either the Premier or the minister provide that later.

Again, I just want to emphasize that, for everyone listening, we're not saying that there is anything wrong with the structure that they have; we just want to know what it is and believe that transparency is owed to taxpayers as well.

I want to go back to the question about — I had asked the Premier about what we had heard, that the Department of Health and Social Services is going to be split. The Premier refused to comment. Now, government is either planning to split the Department of Health and Social Services into two or they're not. The Premier should know. It's a yes-or-no question. Or perhaps, if they're discussing it at Cabinet, maybe "maybe" is the answer. But, is it a yes, a no, or a maybe?

We've heard those reports from sources that we consider reliable enough to ask the question, and it's a department that deals with about a third of the government's budget — about half a billion dollars. And the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services know the answer to it. They're either planning to split the department or they're not. So, if you're planning to split the department, then tell us when that is scheduled for, when the announcement is being made, and what the effective date of that would be. If you're not planning on splitting it, then just tell us that, too.

So, it's a pretty simple question affecting a large number of employees and many Yukoners who depend on that system.

Is the government indeed planning to split the Department of Health and Social Services into two? What is the effective date of that split?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, just because the member opposite doesn't like the answer doesn't mean that I'm avoiding the answer. I can't recall him ever, in the five years that I watched the member opposite as a minister, waiting to make new announcements or announcements in the Legislative Assembly that weren't previously announced outside of the Assembly. He is asking me to speculate. He is asking me to answer questions. Really, as I said in my answer, the pathway forward for the health authority is written in the pages of *Putting People First*. The member opposite is making it seem like there is some kind of conspiracy here or something; whereas, really, the pathway forward is a document that went

through years of consultation with health care providers, different levels of government, and independent reviews. It came with a document that shows the future of the authority. There is nothing to hide here at all.

I remember hearing the Leader of the Third Party, when this report first came out, saying, "If they don't implement this, we will; this is a great report." I am paraphrasing, obviously, but it was something along those lines. Again, we are committed to establishing a health authority — absolutely. We now are making moves already. The members opposite can tell what we have been doing so far, so as the announcements become ready to come out, as far as the pages of that document and how we implement them moving forward, there is no mystery there. It is there; it's written in the pages of *Putting People First*.

We have made announcements already about what we have done so far and about the creation of a health authority and the transfer of the territory's health services into a health authority. We have made no bones about that. It's exactly from the *Putting People First* report. The independent expert panel recommending the establishment of "Wellness Yukon" — again, written in the pages of the documents here — a new arm's-length statutory agency that will develop a whole range of health and social services.

Drawing down a bit more on that, this authority may also contract with non-governmental organizations or other providers to deliver some services there, as well. Again, it is all written in the pages of this document. There is no mystery here. Park the mystery van. In response to the *Putting People First* report's recommendations 1.2, and as part of our commitment under the 2021 confidence and supply agreement to implement *Putting People First*, we are working on policy options to establish a health authority in the Yukon.

We have been very forthright as far as how that will work out. That authority is going to take significant time to develop and, as the department, through consultation — again, you are not just talking about one department; you are talking about a department that has non-governmental organizations and responsibilities to First Nation governments, and so announcements will be made about the future plans for wellness as they become available.

I will say — not much of a departure from the question, although the question really is not based upon the budget that we are debating here — that, as far as those partnerships go, we are about to enter into the debate of a bill in the Legislative Assembly that was — I think "co-developed" is a good word, as far as the work that has been done with the First Nation governments on a concern through Health and Social Services — that is extraordinarily important — responding to a 2019 report and moving forward into partnerships where those partnerships with the Yukon government and First Nation governments have never been before. So, I don't know if the member opposite expects me to make some new announcements about what is coming down as we implement *Putting People First* or the health authority, but this will take significant time to develop. Our intention is to do this in partnership with the Yukon First Nations. We are more than

well into the initiation phase of these conversations, including conversations through the Yukon Forum as well.

We will always ensure that we work with all of the affected partners in health care before we make announcements, including the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, nurses, physicians, and also Yukoners who access health services.

I can say as well that the initial conversations have begun with physicians and the hospital, as well as the Yukon Employees' Union, as far as drawing down on the health authority and also that further work awaits with the finalization of the partnership structure with Yukon First Nations. So, this is an exciting time in health care — it really is — in Yukon.

We have done a paradigm shift since the previous government as far as moving from acute care — which focuses more on “Wait until you get sick and then we will do our best” — to a people-centred and wellness approach. We have talked a lot about our investments in wellness, mental health, supports with the hubs, and clinical supports offered therein. All jurisdictions around Canada, except for Yukon and Nunavut, have some form of a health authority, so we were starting from a deficit here. The time had come a long time ago to make this move, and the establishment of that health authority is foundational for all of the things that we're doing. It's foundational for almost every single page of *Putting People First*.

Again, the member opposite wants us to speculate about departmental shifts and switches. I guess he has — on some good authority, something that he won't share with us, I guess — but I will say that, on this side of the House, we will make announcements — as it is pertinent to our partnerships with the organizations, agencies, and governments that I mentioned. I am not going to speculate, as the member opposite will, but I will say that moving service delivery outside of government will also allow for increased agility and accountability for service delivery. We are focusing in on this as an oversight function.

I think that this is about all I am going to mention right now. I know that the day is coming to an end, but I will give the member opposite the opportunity to close the day, ask more questions, or respond to my answer.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Premier for the partial response and look forward to actually hearing more information about what they are doing in Health and Social Services later.

In wrapping up here today as we reach the end, I would just ask the Premier to provide more detailed information to the House on what the status is of the discussions regarding the development of the health authority. We understand from officials that they have reached out to First Nations, asking for feedback on the oversight model and structure for a working group on the health authority, but I would appreciate clarity from the Premier about what exactly has been offered to First Nations and what the government is hoping to hear back.

I have also heard and understood from officials that the government doesn't plan to have any health professionals on the oversight group, board, or whatever the structure is — that they would just be on working groups. It is something that —

if I understood that correctly from the briefing from officials — is concerning to me that, when embarking on major systemic change, government would not ensure that health professionals are represented at the table as those discussions are occurring — not on some sub working group, but right as part of the major discussions. I would appreciate it if the Premier could clarify what the intention is and whether what we understood from officials is indeed correct on that.

Finally, I would just ask what work has started on drafting the legislation or developing the structure for the health authority.

Last but not least, as the Premier will recall, the Yukon Medical Association had previously passed a resolution at one of their AGMs urging government, instead of developing new legislation, to consider making use of the *Hospital Act*. It was envisioned, when it was drafted and passed in this Assembly, that it would allow the Hospital Corporation to eventually become a health authority — whether the government is considering listening to that request from the Yukon Medical Association to do that instead of developing another health authority through different legislation — and if they are not considering that request from the Yukon Medical Association, indicate why they have ruled that out.

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

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.

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

Chair: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, and directed me to report the bill with amendment.

In addition, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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 document was filed March 16, 2022:

35-1-51

Fleet Vehicle Agency Business Plan 2022 to 2025

(Clarke, N.)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 51

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 17, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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

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Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier 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

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 17, 2022 — 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

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Here for the Global Recycling Day tribute, I have a number of guests in the gallery. I would like to welcome: Erin Loxam, communications analyst at Environment; Bryna Cable, director of Environmental Protection and Assessment branch; Nahanni Sager, environmental protection analyst; and Christine Cleghorn, assistant deputy minister. From the City of Whitehorse, we are introducing: Faith Green Mykituk, who is the environment coordinator. As a late-breaking addition, we have Heather Ashthorn, who is the executive director of Raven Recycling.

Please welcome them all to the gallery.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Today, here for the tribute to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry — there are many retired members around the Yukon and we have a few of them here today: Paul Brais and his wife, Melanie Brais; and Mr. Morris Cratty.

Please welcome them.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like my colleagues to help welcome a number of guests who are here today for this important piece of legislation. Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate, and Bengie Clethero, the Deputy Child and Youth Advocate. We also have with us Kayla Brinda, Shadelle Chambers, Tanya MacKenzie, manager with Family Resources at the Department of Health and Social Services, and Economic Development McLean, supervisor of Family and Children's Services. We have Bobby Prematunga, who also works with Health and Social Services. Alisha McLean and Leeanne Kayseas — and I'm told also that Lee Rannells and Lee Hoffmeister have joined us. Thank so much for being here.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of World Recycling Day

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to World Recycling Day, which is tomorrow, Friday, March 18.

Recycling is a crucial part of the waste management system in the Yukon. It is part of the waste management system that many of us take for granted. Maybe you have it picked up

at your home. Maybe you truck a load over to the depot or transfer station every month. Once it's gone, you never think about that tin can or other garbage again.

I want to start by recognizing the work of the Raven Recycling Society, P&M Recycling, Conservation Klondike Society, Whitehorse Blue Bin Recycling, transfer stations and free store staff, and other people and companies that ensure that waste is diverted for reuse and recycling. Without their facilities and efforts, we would not be able to divert 25 percent of our waste from Yukon landfills, but we know that there are significant challenges with the recycling system.

We need to ensure that our recycling systems remain robust and sustainable to handle our territory's growing population, thus the growing need to increase waste-diversion levels. One way we have done this is through the single-use plastic bag ban. By encouraging Yukoners to bring reusable bags for shopping, we are diverting more waste by not creating it in the first place.

Another way is through extended producer responsibility, or EPR. EPR can provide a waste management approach that is fair and more sustainable. It means that the responsibility for end-of-life products and packaging waste moves from municipalities, governments, and taxpayers to producers and consumers.

This means that even if a package is cumbersome and costly to recycle, it is the producer's responsibility to pay for recycling. EPR is central to our effort to increase waste diversion to 40 percent by 2030 and develop a circular economy.

Over the last two months, staff have been meeting with our extended producer responsibility advisory committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of that committee from local governments, the business community, and the recycling industry. Your feedback and perspective are essential for us to create an extended producer responsibility framework that works for the Yukon. I had the privilege of attending one of their first organizational meetings by Zoom. Thanks to this committee, we will have a better sense of how to structure the new regulation and consider small business and municipal interests.

We are also learning how local businesses and organizations will be able to continue delivering recycling services to Yukoners under the new framework. We thank you for your commitment to ongoing collaboration on waste management issues in our territory. Tomorrow, for Global Recycling Day, we thank everyone who has contributed to creating and maintaining our system and those who will help make it even better.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize tomorrow, March 18, as Global Recycling Day.

While waste management is largely a local issue, Global Recycling Day allows jurisdictions worldwide to have conversations at multiple levels around the importance of implementing waste-diversion practices. The mission of Global

Recycling Day is this: to tell world leaders that recycling is simply too important not to be a global issue and that a common, joined approach to recycling is urgently needed and to ask people across the planet to think “resource”, not “waste”, when it comes to the goods around us. Until this happens, we simply won’t award recycled goods the true value and repurpose that they deserve.

We would like to thank and recognize the communities, organizations, and businesses across the territory that handle all that goes into recycling in the Yukon, from planning to pickup, to sorting and compacting. Thank you, as well, to all of the organizations that are dedicated to moving the territory toward zero waste.

In reality, every community and every individual produces waste and should be doing their part to reduce their waste output as much as possible. As municipalities and governments continue to hold conversations around how to deal with the bigger picture surrounding solid waste and recycling efforts, we must remember that recycling and waste diversion begins with each individual and household.

Buy with purpose to cut down on waste, recycle what you can, and try to reuse what you can’t recycle.

As for those higher level conversations around solid waste, we encourage the government to ensure that every community has the resources it needs to allow Yukoners to be diligent in their waste-diversion practices.

Applause

Ms. White: Today I have the pleasure of rising on behalf of the Yukon NDP in tribute of Global Recycling Day. This recycling initiative encourages us to look at trash in a new light. In the Yukon, we have an amazing recycling history. In 1989, a dedicated group of Yukoners came together to do something that had never been done before: bring recycling to the territory. Their vision blossomed into Raven Recycling, a not-for-profit service that saw 85 percent of Yukon’s recycling pass under its one roof.

Since then, we have seen other innovation across the territory, from recycling societies in rural Yukon to for-profit businesses in Whitehorse and incredible leadership in rural transfer facilities. We’ve seen repair cafes where goods are saved from the landfill or recycling depot.

Recycling is great, Mr. Speaker, but the honest truth is that we’re part of a much bigger problem, and that’s our ever-increasing need to accumulate stuff. Although we may love stuff, non-recyclable or not easy to recycle, poorly made products are bad for the planet; clothing that doesn’t hold up is bad for the planet; and single-use products are bad for the planet.

Assuming that we can buy whatever we want and just throw it into the recycling stream and be done with it is disingenuous. This waste, even if it’s recyclable, needs to go somewhere to be repurposed, and that has an immense cost to the planet. Our little territory is already full of amazing stories of innovation and entrepreneurship in helping Yukoners to reduce, reuse, and recycle. We’ve seen what Yukoners have been able to do since 1989 when it comes to recycling. Now it’s

time we put that same energy into working toward a truly sustainable future, one that focuses on reducing and reusing the items that we buy.

Applause

In recognition of Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry

Mr. Istchenko: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party caucus and the NDP caucus to pay tribute to the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, generally referred to as “the Patricias”, “the Pats”, “the Picklies”, “the Vicious Patricias”, or, as I know them, the “Dirty Patricias” — one of these three regular-force infantry regiments of the Canadian Army and the Canadian Armed Forces.

This decorated and famous regiment was formed in 1914, and today is actually their 108th regimental birthday. The unit was raised on the initiative of Captain Andrew Hamilton Gault in 1914. It is named for Princess Patricia of Connaught. She was the daughter of the then-Governor General of Canada.

The regiment is composed of three battalions, for a total of around 2,000 soldiers. The PPCLI is the main unit of the Canadian Forces Base in CFB Edmonton, Alberta and CFB Shilo in Manitoba. Attached to three Canadian divisions, as such, it serves as a local regular infantry regiment for much of western Canada. In its early conception, it became a fierce fighting unit. In World War I during the Battle of Passchendaele on October 30, 1917, Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie and Sergeant George Harry Mullin both won the Victoria Cross for gallantry.

When I was researching the unit, what struck me was the regimental vision. The Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry is a proud, confident regiment with outstanding leadership, strong discipline, and highly developed military skills that enable it to fight and win on the battlefield of today and tomorrow. They are a strong, regimental family focused on supporting and maintaining cohesion among serving and retired members and their families.

The PPCLI do not have an official motto; however, their unofficial motto is “First in the field”. They are usually first in every situation where Canada enters war. The unit has served in every Canadian war, operation, campaign, and peace-keeping mission. They serve at home and abroad. There were PPCLI members that helped with sand-bagging last summer. I think you will all remember that. Mr. Speaker, I have trained with the unit on many occasions as a Canadian Ranger.

Many Yukoners today who are here were members of the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry and served in the Balkans, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo in response to the civil war between the Croats, the Serbs, and the Bosnian Muslims. Major General Lewis MacKenzie, a Patricia officer, had overall command of Sector Sarajevo during the worst ethnic fighting over the summer of 1992. The Third Battalion was the first Patricia unit to serve and was in theatre during 1992-93, followed by 2 PPCLI in 1993 and 1 PPCLI in 1994.

The Commander-in-Chief Unit Commendation was awarded to the Second Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group, for courageous and professional

execution of duty during the Medak Pocket Operation in the former Yugoslavia in September 1993. Under conditions of extreme peril and hazard, facing enemy artillery, small arms, and heavy machine gun fire as well as anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, the members of the 2 PPCLI held their ground and drove the Croatian forces back.

I know that it's evident in the Yukon that these members will be supported today. The Ric-a-Dam-Doo always flies high with pride for the PPCLI.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regiment day.

As the Member for Kluane indicated, we have a special recent connection to this regiment here in Yukon — in fact, thanks to events that occurred here just last summer. Just this past August, we gathered at Camp Boyle to thank the soldiers with the First and Third Battalions of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. They were just about to return to Edmonton after a month spent fighting the worst flood provoked by climate change that we have ever had here in the territory. These members were part of the largest flood-relief effort in Yukon history. We could not have done it without their expertise, strength, dedication, and willingness to quickly rise to the challenge.

It is truly an honour to pay tribute to the current members as well as veterans of this regiment today. This regiment is named after Her Royal Highness Princess Patricia of Connaught, who was born on this day in 1886. Members are best known as the "Princess Pats" or the "Patricias". Formed in 1914, this distinguished order of troops has provided outstanding and valorous service for the past 108 years. During World War I and World War II and other conflicts, the Patricias fought courageously, winning deep respect. The Patricias distinguished themselves in the Medak Pocket in 1993 during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia and in other UN peacekeeping operations and other operations around the globe.

I would briefly like to share one tale of bravery about Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie from the second battle for Passchendaele, which is situated in modern day Belgium, on the western front that took place on October 30, 1917 in World War I. This was shared in a newspaper from the time: "Seeing that all the officers and most of the non-commissioned officers of an infantry company had become casualties, and that the men were hesitating before a nest of enemy machine guns, which were on commanding ground and causing them severe casualties, he handed over command of his guns to an N.C.O., rallied the infantry, organised an attack, and captured the strong point." Finding that the position was controlled by machine-gun fire from the enemy position, Lieutenant McKenzie made a reconnaissance and detailed flanking and frontal attacking parties, which captured the enemy position. He lost his life doing so. In these acts, he saved the lives of many men and enabled the objectives to be attained. For these acts, Lieutenant McKenzie received the Victoria Cross, the highest military decoration for valour awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

On behalf of all Yukoners, I wish to praise and thank the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry for its recent significant assistance in the Yukon with flood mitigation and for their years of outstanding service and sacrifice for us all.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a *Whitehorse Star* article showing the Yukon Party and its leader's support for rent controls.

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling an update from the chief coroner regarding opioid deaths released earlier today, March 17, 2022.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 303: *Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Tredger: I move that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Third Party House Leader that the act entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 303 agreed to.

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
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 Premier to live up to his promise to release the cost of deputy ministers' severance packages, including the cost of the deputy minister change announced yesterday.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase housing options for Yukoners by working with the City of Whitehorse to provide a better variety of lot types, including country residential or rural lots.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase housing options for Yukoners by making more land in all Yukon communities by working with municipalities and Yukon First Nations.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand the Yukon Housing Corporation owner-builder loan program eligibility to all Yukoners.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to allot a percentage of single-family residential lots to individuals and a percentage to developers in the current and ongoing land lotteries.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cross-border tourism

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In partnership with the Canada Border Services Agency, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, White Pass & Yukon Route, and the Borough of Skagway, the Yukon government formed the border working group, which has been working to identify ways to adjust border measures to better support our tourism industry. This includes the requirement for testing at international borders and the designations of airports that can accept international flights.

Over the past several weeks, the Government of Canada has eased restrictions at Canadian borders, and earlier today, they announced that they would no longer require pre-arrival testing for travellers entering the country as of April 1. This is good news for our neighbours in Alaska as well as those in the Lower 48 and further abroad who want to visit the Yukon.

Last month, Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport was once again permitted to receive international passengers. This is excellent news, as Condor has announced that it will be resuming direct international flights from Frankfurt, Germany to Whitehorse this summer.

Today, I am happy to announce that, as of May 2, the Dawson City Airport will be staffed with Canada Border Services Agency staff and ready to welcome international flights as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is big news as the Yukon prepares for a strong return of summer tourism and plans to welcome visitors from around the world to enjoy our territory. In 2022, Alaska is anticipating a return of cruise ships carrying about 1.5 million passengers over the upcoming summer. Cruise ship passengers will no doubt be looking forward to also visiting the Yukon.

Tourism is set to have a strong rebound this year, and our government looks forward to working with partners to help welcome more visitors to our territory throughout the spring and summer. Thank you to the Department of Tourism and Culture for their hard work over the past several years to support the tourism industry, which was hit the hardest by the pandemic.

I look forward to seeing more visitors in our communities, our tourism businesses thriving, and our economy continuing to grow.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you for the opportunity to reply to this ministerial statement today concerning one of the Yukon's most important industries — tourism.

We all know that tourism was hit hard during the pandemic with flight cancellations, border restrictions, capacity limitations, operating plans, extra PPE, and reduced hours. The numbers to keep tourism businesses functioning plummeted.

Like Yukoners themselves over the past two years, this industry has remained hopeful that there was a light at the end of the tunnel. We thank those business owners who have hung in there, and we are hopeful that those numbers boost their bottom line and that they come back roaring stronger than ever.

This industry relies on certainty. That is why, last fall, the Yukon Party first asked about COVID testing requirements to enter the country and asked the Yukon government to work with the federal government on a solution. Tourism businesses were rightfully concerned about how this might impact them, particularly for cruise ship excursion tours from Skagway. They need answers to make staffing decisions for the upcoming season. There has been silence on what progress or decisions would be made.

When the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon requested that we send a joint letter on their issues, I was happy to sign a letter with the minister asking the federal government to help provide certainty. The letter requested the removal of COVID testing for international air and land arrivals, for all custom ports in the territory to be fully staffed, and for international arrivals to be allowed at airports in Whitehorse and Dawson. It is good to hear that our bipartisan efforts have yielded results.

With spring around the corner, businesses will need to hire staff. I know a lot of tourism businesses ended up laying off staff or had staff snatched up by the public service during the pandemic. We are hearing that many operators in the hospitality sector are facing staffing shortages — so much so that it is impeding their hours of operation and their ability to open doors to customers.

Can the minister tell us how the government plans to support those who are facing a staffing shortage, particularly in the face of the current housing crisis?

I would also like to ask the minister if he can share what plans are in place to mitigate any impacts that the work at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport may have for tourists. How will the department ensure that the upgrade work doesn't hinder airlines from providing the best possible visitor experience? As well, is there a timeline for the restaurant to reopen so that visitors will have service options available this summer?

Finally, I want to reiterate that the government needs to do more to start addressing property crime in our community as, if left undealt with, it could negatively impact tourism.

We once again thank those tourism operators, the hospitality industry, and anyone who relies on visitors coming to our beautiful territory for navigating the challenges of the past two years. We certainly hope that brighter days are ahead.

Ms. Blake: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the ministerial statement.

The tourism season is upon us already. Tour groups have been coming to the Yukon through the winter, with hopefully many more to come as the weather warms up. We know how hard tourism-related businesses are working to offer safe, exciting adventures throughout the Yukon. We were pleased to see the requirements for COVID testing from our international visitors being removed by the federal government as of April 1. Even for Yukoners returning to the Yukon from spring break and winter holidays, the testing requirements were often complicated and costly.

This is also important for so many First Nation families that have not been able to connect with their extended families in Alaska throughout the pandemic. Historically, those borders didn't exist and allowed easier travelling and visiting.

Having federal regulations allowing international flights to return to the Erik Nielsen International Airport and the Dawson City Airport is welcome news. It certainly will provide many more options for all the guests arriving in our beautiful territory. More importantly, we hope that this is the upward swing for our many tourism businesses and operators who have been so drastically impacted by COVID restrictions over the last two years. Mahsi'.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just in response to the members of the opposition, I would like to first thank both opposition parties. Yukoners, I think that it is important to know that we did work together in a very collaborative manner to ensure that the federal government knew the importance of our season, and I thank both individuals who are in critic roles to the Tourism and Culture department for their work. I think that this is important for Yukoners to know because everybody in this House knows the importance of tourism and they also know how much our tourism operators have gone through over the last two years.

Just in response, I think that when it comes to labour market issues and staffing, this is going to be a challenge from coast to coast in Canada right now.

A lot of people have moved into different types of occupations, so what we're doing on our end right now is that we have made a move with labour market — and we will discuss that probably deeper when we get into budget debate — from Education over to Economic Development so that we can fast-track some of the work to pull people into the territory and, for people who are in the territory, get them skilled up and into tourism.

Also, the Immigration unit has done some great work in reducing some of what I would call the red tape, in order to get people into our hospitality workforce.

Again, I think I'll hold off on the airport work because our understanding is that there will be no disruption to the work this summer, and I think that it will be in a future conversation in year two and three of that project that we'll have to discuss it. We're looking to work with folks like Condor, right now, to come up with solutions to do that, but the opportunity that's

going to come with those upgrades for increased travel into the Yukon is extremely exciting.

I'll get back to you on the restaurant. I don't have the opening date for the restaurant at the airport, but I'll work with our friends at Highways and Public Works who have also done a fabulous job helping us throughout this time.

When it comes to crime, I'll just say this: I want to commend Mike Pemberton and the team at Crime Stoppers. They're doing an incredible job, along with working with the RCMP, and we'll continue to support organizations like that, which are really pulling our community together to take on this significant effort.

Yes, I also appreciate the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin touching on our winter tourism. Some operators have had an extremely strong winter. I know I have gone out to try to book and, in many cases, some of the operators were completely booked and filled. I think people have seen international travellers coming here for a while, but this is really about making sure the cruise ship traffic comes back.

In closing, I just want to thank Neil and Blake at TIAY. They have been tireless. They speak the facts; they make sure they keep me on my toes; and I think TIAY, the entire group in the industry, has come together, along with the chambers, the people at CBSA, and the government at the federal and territorial levels. I think we're looking at a very good season in front of us. Great words from the member opposite — we need to think about those people who have not had an easy two years and probably got hit the hardest.

Locally, get out and spend your dollars on our local tourism operators. Spend local.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Dixon: On March 11, 2019, the former Minister of Education said — and I quote: "... schools do not necessarily need a unique design in each and every case and that a core design with the ability to scale it for certain circumstances would be a valuable tool..."

The former minister also told the Legislature that the Department of Education would spend between \$2 million and \$3 million on that generic, scalable design, but that it would save about \$7 million overall. Yesterday, the current minister was unable to tell us what had happened to that generic design, but we're hoping that she has had a chance to get briefed.

Can the Minister of Education tell us what happened to the scalable, generic school design that the former minister committed to?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start by just talking about the work that we do in the department with our school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. We are pleased that work is underway on new schools, such as Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. We are very happy to have a five-year capital plan before us.

Yesterday, I had a chance to go over some of those proposed projects that are underway — proposed for the next

five years — such as the Whistle Bend school. We are also planning a replacement of an aging Whitehorse school. We have a number of other smaller projects, like modular classrooms, that are underway. Of course, there is the Burwash Landing school, which is an exciting project for us. We are continuing to work on the Ross River School stabilization.

In terms of the specific question, we completed a generic design — or what we now call a “functional plan”. I will continue to build on my answer around this as we move forward.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the tail end of the minister’s answer there because it sounded like she was getting to the actual issue that I asked about. Her preamble, of course, had very little to do with what I had asked.

The promise made by the former minister was a lofty one. She told the Legislature that they were spending \$2 million to \$3 million on this generic design — at that time, it was called that — but that it would save \$7 million. The current minister was unable to tell us if that generic design has been used at all so far.

Can the minister tell us how much money was actually spent on the creation of that generic, scalable design for Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we completed a generic design, which we now refer to as a “functional plan”, that can be used in terms of scaling projects for multiple types of schools.

This is now referred to as a “Yukon schools functional program”, and the plan outlines consistent standards for school design and construction that are scalable based on school population, grades, and urban or rural contexts. This plan was used as the basis of the design and planning for Whistle Bend and for the Burwash Landing schools — two very different school settings, and so there is a uniqueness to these two schools.

With each school design, we expect a certain amount of customization to ensure that the school meets the needs of the community. We make capital planning decisions based on current information. I am really happy to have these types of tools that we have developed as a government.

Again, yes, we are working toward meeting the needs of all of our learners throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: I would remind the minister that the question I had asked was how much was spent on developing that, which she didn’t answer.

As well, yesterday the minister told us that she only makes evidence-based decisions when it comes to school replacement, so I am sure that, when it came to this generic, scalable school design, she has asked the department for the evidence to support the former minister’s claim that this would save \$7 million.

Can the minister provide us with any evidence that the former minister’s investment has saved anywhere close to the \$7 million that she promised?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, yesterday I had some opportunity to talk about the great work that we are doing as the Yukon Liberal government. We came into government in

2016 and found that a lot of decisions — especially around capital and infrastructure builds — were really not based on evidence-based decision making, but rather were more political. So, we have really taken the time to ensure that we are doing our due diligence and that we are making good, informed decisions on behalf of Yukoners.

I am happy that the Yukon Party is now interested in actual schools being built, because they actually didn’t build any schools during their whole term — 14 years. They proved to not be very reliable, really, in terms of the information that they are bringing to this House. We are happy about the planning that we have done and the investments that we’re making. We have \$200,000 in our capital budget for a new Whitehorse replacement planning process, and we will continue to make good, informed decisions.

Question re: Capital plan for schools

Mr. Kent: The Yukon government has done a seismic evaluation for a number of our schools. Some of the older buildings were identified as requiring mitigation based on that evaluation, and we know from a document that we acquired through access to information that École Whitehorse Elementary, Christ the King Elementary, Takhini Elementary, and the Wood Street Centre are all rated high for seismic risk.

So, how much money is in the 2022-23 budget to reduce the seismic risk in these schools?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have received some of the preliminary data with respect to those schools. All of the Yukon schools currently are safe, but the member opposite is correct that schools such as Whitehorse Elementary, Takhini Elementary, Selkirk Elementary, and the Wood Street Centre are certainly — with respect to the facility management index and review of which schools ought to be replaced in sequence or prioritized purely from a building perspective — schools that have to be considered.

I know that, even from my time on Whitehorse Elementary School Council, we were always very concerned about the safety of Whitehorse Elementary School, and we reviewed facility management reports going back 10 to 15 years, and in Highways and Public Works’ view, the school is safe, but it is certainly one of the schools — in addition to the other three schools that I have mentioned — prioritized for consideration for replacement in the future.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response. To be clear, we are not suggesting that those schools aren’t safe. What we are saying is that the evidence provided in this document suggests that they are all rated high for seismic risk. In that same document, we understand that the seismic mitigation will be addressed through the longer term renovation or replacement plan for the schools. However, we can’t find any mention of this in the five-year documents tabled with the budget.

So, what are the long-term plans to deal with seismic mitigations in these schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I’m happy to talk about the safety and well-being of our schools. This is absolutely one of our top priorities. Seismic standards for buildings have changed over time. Some older school buildings need work to bring them up

to current seismic standards. They continue to be safe for students, as the minister has just talked about, and for staff to occupy.

Since our 2013 seismic assessment, school emergency plans and non-structural mitigations have been completed. Examples of this include securing furniture, shelving, filing cabinets, HVAC systems, pipes, retrofits, et cetera. There are a number of other examples of this. The structural work related to seismic mitigation will be addressed through longer term renovation and replacement plans for our schools, as I had an opportunity to talk about over yesterday and today — that this is certainly one of the areas that we take into consideration when we are making decisions about these types of investments in our schools.

I'll continue to build on this answer as we go forward.

Mr. Kent: So, again yesterday during Question Period, the Minister of Education mentioned that one of the criteria for new school builds is seismic mitigation considerations. That document that we received through ATIPP identifies those four Whitehorse-area schools that are at high seismic risk.

Can the minister tell us when those four high-risk schools will appear in the budget documents for replacement and what the seismic mitigation plan is for them in the meantime?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, I am happy to stand and talk about our school infrastructure. It is a high priority for me, as a Minister of Education. As I have stated, there are a number of considerations when we're looking at small renovations, medium renovations, or even the replacement of schools. The priority for renovating or replacing schools is based on criteria such as the building age, seismic mitigation considerations, and programming needs.

Some of our Whitehorse schools are nearing capacity due to consistent enrolment growth. We expect this to partially be resolved with the opening of the Whistle Bend elementary school. We do have, in our capital budget this year, \$200,000 that has been identified in the main estimates for preliminary consultation and initial design of an existing, aging Whitehorse replacement school.

As I stated yesterday, I certainly will be continuing to work with our school communities. I have met with almost all of the school councils across the territory since starting this position. I will continue to have those conversations and work with our partners.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. Blake: Today, the Yukon's chief coroner released an update on opioid-related deaths in the territory. From January to mid-February, we lost 10 Yukoners to opioids. These deaths were entirely preventable. One way to prevent drug-poisoning death is to make safe supply widely available, but we have heard from both front-line workers and individuals in Whitehorse that they have no idea where or how to access a safe supply of opioids.

Will the minister explain why a safe supply of opioids is not automatically offered to people who need it at the Referred Care Clinic in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yukon is facing an unprecedented rate of drug-toxicity deaths. We now know from the report issued by the coroner today that we have lost nine Yukoners — possibly 10 — in the year 2022. This comes on the heels of 2021 when Yukon saw a record number of deaths.

We recognize that drug poisoning in the Yukon is growing in scope and devastation. The illicit drug supply is increasingly toxic, contaminated, and unpredictable. If I have any message that I can send today through this Legislative Assembly to all Yukoners, it is that the drug supply is increasingly toxic, contaminated, and unpredictable.

We are making evidence-based decisions to address the drug-poisoning crisis. I hope to be able to speak about our substance use health emergency and its declaration, but I can assure the member opposite and all Yukoners that we think that a cornerstone of that work is a safer supply of drugs for individuals who choose to use or are addicted to using. The street drug supply must be sidetracked by a safer supply.

Ms. Blake: Ten people might not seem like a lot, but if this rate of death happened in the City of Toronto, it would mean 700 people dying from preventable drug poisoning in just over a month.

Communities have also lost friends and family members to the opioid crisis, and they don't have equal access to treatment or supports. One way to close this gap is to follow the BC model and allow registered nurses to prescribe safe supply in communities.

When will the minister allow registered nurses to prescribe safe supply in Yukon communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I must speak to Yukoners about the intensity and the seriousness with which our government — and I would say every member of this Legislative Assembly, but I'm not speaking for them — is taking the number of the deaths in the territory — the absolute devastation. I would say that absolutely everyone in our small community here in the territory is likely affected by an individual or a family or a tragedy that has occurred in relation to these activities.

As a result, in January 2022, our government declared a substance use health emergency. We have money in our budget to address that. I am happy to speak about it more, but it must be recognized as a health issue. It must be recognized that there are a number of harm-reduction avenues that we can go down for the purposes of achieving success or progress in this area. One of those is safer supply, as mentioned by the member opposite. One is additional mental health and substance use supports.

I look forward to continuing to speak about this important topic.

Ms. Blake: The people who died by overdose could have been protected, and their deaths could have been prevented. In January 2022, multiple individuals died while at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. This is a government-run facility, which means the government is responsible for what happens in the shelter. The minister has the power to trigger a coroner's inquest into these two deaths.

Will the minister request a coroner's inquest into the two deaths by drug poisoning that occurred at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I need to defer, in relation to that question, to the coroner and her advice about what should or should not happen as a result of any particular matter in which she is involved as primary investigator.

Our government recognizes that the substance use health emergency has a devastating effect, as I've said earlier, on our families. We have noted that, in relation to the substance use health emergency and the declaration that I've noted, there have been really amazing responses to that. I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the First Nation governments and communities that have come forward indicating their own responses to their community and to their citizens — the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Little Salmon Carmacks yesterday noted that some signs with photos of elders will warn against substance use and promote community safety. These are critical. In our budget this year, we have \$5.5 million to address the immediate response to the substance use health emergency here in the territory.

Question re: Capital project development progress

Ms. Clarke: In the last election, the Liberals committed to a number of new housing projects. One that stood out was the commitment to relocate the Marwell grader station and convert the site into housing lots. This was notable because the site is a former oil refinery and will likely have contamination.

Can the minister responsible for housing provide an update on the progress to convert the Marwell grader station into housing?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The grader station located in the Marwell area of Whitehorse is in poor condition and is no longer meeting the needs of the department. The current grader station sits on riverfront land that may be more suitable for other types of development or usage.

In 2021, Highways and Public Works completed initial planning for a replacement grader station that will now be considered for inclusion in the five-year capital plan. There are several possible sites for the new grader station. A final decision on the location will be part of the next phase of planning. Under the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Final Agreement*, Kwanlin Dün First Nation has the first right of refusal for the existing site.

I can advise that the Yukon government will work closely with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation as this project moves forward.

Ms. Clarke: Another commitment made by the Liberals in the last election was related to 5th and Rogers. Last year when I asked the minister about this, he suggested that a deal to sell the lot was close to completion. Now we hear that there has been a delay. Can the minister update us on efforts to sell 5th and Rogers and why there was a delay associated with the sale?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, we are extremely excited about the opportunities with 5th and Rogers. In September 2020, there was an expression of interest that was put out to the public,

overseen by Community Services. In response, there were a number of local companies that had replied to that expression of interest.

We then requested further information over the winter of 2021. In January 2022, we dug into those applications and felt that we needed further detail. What we're really trying to ensure here is that we have substantial density in market housing, but more market rentals because of the lack of rental options here in the territory.

We will be making an announcement very soon and will be going out for a more detailed process. This one will be in the form of an RFP versus an expression of interest, but we want to also ensure that local companies have the ability to join together. This is the potential for hundreds of millions of dollars of development on that lot. We think that we have a strong process with multiple government departments, and we look forward to sharing that with the House later this spring.

Ms. Clarke: Yesterday, the minister provided an update on the Macaulay Lodge lots, which the government intends to convert to housing. In his ministerial statement rebuttal yesterday, he noted that the government believes that there is hydrocarbon contamination on the site.

Does the minister have a plan in place to assess the site? What plans are in place to conduct the necessary remediation?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, there was an extensive building condition report that has been completed and that the member opposite can certainly review. It does talk about various substances that may be found in the process of demolition.

So, when demolishing this building, it may contain asbestos, and contractors are required to have an approved work plan in place and to dispose of asbestos safely and properly. Such processes will be in place for other substances as well. Macaulay Lodge will have a qualified hazardous build-material abatement contractor removing and disposing of the hazardous building materials in accordance with the local authority having jurisdiction. The work plan to remove asbestos and other materials includes containment, disposal, and safety measures for the project. The work plan also calls for the contractor to conduct air monitoring tests.

I can also advise that the perimeter of a potential work site is fenced with steel construction. The building quality report talked also about the potential for hydrocarbons and that will have to be investigated after the demolition.

Question re: Immunization program

Mr. Cathers: While we applaud the efforts of health professionals and officials in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccination campaign for adults, and more recent efforts in providing vaccinations for children aged five and up, we do have concerns about the impact that this has had on the delivery of other vaccinations.

For instance, we know that during the Omicron outbreak, there was a gap in delivery of infant-series vaccines that are offered to two-, four-, and six-month-old children. These immunizations include things like diphtheria, tetanus, and polio. This means that children who were scheduled for vaccination had their appointments bumped.

Can the minister confirm whether all of those children who were bumped have been rescheduled and what steps or additional resources the minister is providing to ensure that the infant immunization schedule gets back on track?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. Our government continues, of course, to respond to COVID-19. We know that the COVID-19 vaccine is the most effective way to slow the spread of this virus, and I am very pleased that the member opposite is asking about other vaccines because they are also critical to the health and safety of Yukoners.

We are following the advice and the guidance of the office of the chief medical officer of health on the prioritization of vaccines, including non-COVID-19 vaccines. The infant-series primary vaccinations are a very high priority, and we have been able, at the Whitehorse Health Centre when resources permit, to continue those vaccinations. There was some interruption of that service, but we continue to work with the chief medical officer of health, although there have been some delays with the delivery of publicly funded, non-COVID-19 vaccinations through the pandemic. The Community Nursing branch has continued to deliver routine, publicly funded vaccines for children under five.

By way of an example, in December 2021, which was one of the biggest pressure months for vaccines, our teams were delivering both adult boosters and first doses for children aged five to 11 at the Whitehorse Health Centre, and they maintained an average vaccination rate of 95 percent for children aged three to 18 months.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the minister seems either unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge the fact that other vaccination delivery for children and adults was indeed impacted by the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. We do appreciate that staff in public health were overwhelmed and focused on working hard to administer COVID vaccinations, but we think that the government — and the minister in particular — missed the opportunity to lean on non-governmental providers for help.

In particular, we think that they could have better utilized pharmacists in private pharmacies to administer vaccines and boosters normally available through public health. Immunizations, such as tetanus and Pneumovax, could be made available through pharmacies, which would take pressure off the public health clinics that were and remain focused on COVID-19 vaccinations. There are also a range of routine boosters that could be offered by pharmacies.

Will the minister consider working with pharmacies to make sure that immunizations normally offered through public health are made available through pharmacies?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pretty sure that, in my first answer, I recognized what the member opposite was noting. I am certainly not unaware of any of this. I noted that, as an example, in December of 2021, which was one of the biggest pressure months for vaccines, our teams were able to deliver both adult boosters and first doses for children aged five to 11. In addition, the Whitehorse Health Centre maintained an average vaccination rate of 95 percent for children ages three to 11 months, which were their routine vaccinations, not COVID vaccinations. This is a testament to the dedication and

hard work of the Whitehorse Health Centre team to infant care here in the territory.

Regular childhood vaccinations for children under the age of five require more specialized training and expertise, and not all health care staff can administer those childhood vaccinations. Public health nurses conduct additional health assessments at the time of vaccination for children under the age of five. This is a very important public health service to our families here in the territory.

The Department of Health and Social Services has worked with pharmacies to implement the delivery of publicly funded vaccines, and I look forward to continuing to provide that information to Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, the minister seems to be minimizing and glossing over the impacts on other vaccination campaigns. While it is important, of course, to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination campaign — and we appreciate the work of staff in that area — the impact to other vaccination campaigns is concerning.

Another aspect of vaccination that has faced challenges since COVID put so much pressure on public health is the rollout of the HPV vaccine that is normally offered to grade 6 boys and girls. We have heard from some parents that there are delays and concerns about the HPV vaccination program that normally rolls out through the schools.

Can the minister confirm that the HPV vaccination will go ahead for the grade 6 cohort in schools? If not, will the minister consider working with pharmacies in this area to offer this time-sensitive immunization?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: If I am not conveying this in some way, I certainly wish to convey not only the importance of vaccines generally — we have spoken about this endlessly during COVID-19 — but the primary opportunity for Health and Social Services to respond to the needs of our Yukon families — absolutely.

The Department of Health and Social Services has worked with Yukon pharmacies to implement the delivery of publicly funded influenza vaccines for individuals over the age of five, Shingrix, and the HPV vaccines. We appreciate our relationship with Yukon pharmacies. We appreciate the relationship and the very hard-working individuals who have been delivering vaccines in this territory — almost endlessly, daily — for more than two years — and for the purposes of the Whitehorse Health Centre and their prioritization of childhood vaccines all at a very extremely difficult time.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 11, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to present these amendments, which respond directly to our mandate to work in cooperation and partnership with Yukon First Nations to realize the challenges and the changes that stem from the *Child and Family Services Act* review, with the goal of enhancing opportunities and outcomes for all children, youth, and families.

This work also aligns with our commitment to reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action to address the over-representation of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children involved in the child welfare system.

I want to acknowledge the historical context and complex circumstances of Canada's child welfare practices that have had detrimental effects on all indigenous families and communities across Canada, including Yukon First Nations. Over the past five years, we have been working hard to reduce the number of children in the care of the director of Family and Children's Services here in the territory. In December 2021, there were 84 children in out-of-home care here in the territory, and 72 percent of those children were Yukon First Nation children.

A key component of this work is a philosophical shift at the Department of Health and Social Services — a shift that has been a long time coming, a shift that I am truly proud of, and a shift toward working together with families and communities to find extended family members able to care for children instead of bringing children into the care and custody of the director. This act will incorporate into law the pathway as to how this will be done.

Getting to this day has been an unprecedented process that deserves to be explained here. In 2018, the *Child and Family Services Act* advisory committee was established by the then-Minister of Health and Social Services. This committee was independent and determined the mechanisms for gathering information for its own review, according to the *Child and Family Services Act* legislative requirements.

Mr. Speaker, committee members completed 18 months of public engagement, travelled to all Yukon communities, and held meetings and interviews with Yukon First Nations, citizens, communities, community organizations, and individuals, as requested.

Information was gathered through focus groups, community-specific meetings, individual meetings, and written submissions by individuals, community organizations, experts, and key stakeholders, including the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate. This extensive consultation resulted in the final report entitled *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, which was tabled in October 2019. The first recommendation put forward in that report was as follows: "To implement the changes that are needed, Yukon Government

must work in partnership with Yukoners and individual First Nation Governments when drafting and implementing necessary changes to the Act, and its policy and regulations."

Given this recommendation as well as the overrepresentation of indigenous children and families in the Yukon's child welfare system, we considered it essential to engage with Yukon First Nations using a government-to-government approach to discuss and come to an understanding of the actions needed to address all of the recommendations. We took all of the recommendations very seriously. We have worked together with all Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations on the *Child and Family Services Act* legislative changes, responding to the report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*.

There were hundreds of hours of collaboration that resulted in the bill here before us. Let's be clear: These amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* will serve all Yukon children and families who need services and supports, but these amendments are primarily designed to fundamentally change how the child welfare system works in relation to indigenous children by embedding in law respect for the children and their cultural background. This reconciliatory process shows this government's commitment to working with Yukon First Nations to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children in care.

In July 2020, the *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee was established with representation from 12 Yukon First Nations. It was co-chaired by the Council of Yukon First Nations' executive director, Shadelle Chambers, who I note has now joined us, and the director of Family and Children's Services, Geraldine MacDonald. The steering committee provided direction and advice on proposed amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, this Bill No. 11.

The legislative work will make a real difference in the lives of children, youth, and families. These efforts are focused on supporting children involved in the Yukon's child welfare system to remain with, and connected to, their families and communities, whenever possible. There has been an incredible declaration by Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to this legislative work. This collaborative work does not go unnoticed. I believe, and our government believes, that such a process is the way forward to develop legislation that impacts our First Nation citizens and communities.

I want to thank the steering committee members for their significant efforts in working together on amending this bill. These legislative amendments will carve a path forward that will work to reduce the number of indigenous children in care and improve outcomes for all children and families who are involved in the child welfare system. *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* called on the government to amend legislation to fully support the child welfare reform that is taking place in the Yukon.

The amending bill clarifies the Yukon government's commitment to reconciliation, to working government to government, to family preservation and reunification, and to honouring cultural and community connections. It also

acknowledges the historical trauma caused by the child welfare system.

The amended *Child and Family Services Act*, or Bill No. 11, here before you has a clear purpose: to protect the safety and well-being of children and families and to support continued connection to family, community, and culture. This act works to support family preservation and reunification and honours cultural and community connection.

I would like to turn, for a moment, to the preamble that is proposed to be included in the *Child and Family Services Act*. The preamble suggested in Bill No. 11 includes the following ideas: that every child is entitled to personal safety, health, and well-being; that children are dependent on their families for their safety and guidance, and as a result, the well-being of children is promoted by supporting the integrity of families; that every child's family is unique and has value, integrity, and dignity; and that members of society and communities share a responsibility to promote the healthy development and well-being of their children.

It also notes that Canada has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It also notes that there is an act respecting First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families in Canada that sets out the principles that are applicable on a national level to the provision of child and family services, particularly in relation to indigenous children.

The preamble notes that the Government of Yukon will continue to work with Yukon First Nations to fulfill commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The preamble notes that the Government of Yukon is committed to implementing recommendations outlined in *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*.

The Government of Yukon is committed to reconciliation and honouring the spirit and intent of the final and self-government agreements. The Government of Yukon acknowledges the legacy of the Indian residential school system and the ongoing systemic barriers of racism and the ongoing intergenerational trauma and harm to indigenous peoples and individuals and that it must be considered in dealing with child welfare policies and practices.

It recognizes that the Government of Yukon affirms the need to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children involved in the child welfare system. It recognizes that the Government of Yukon acknowledges the importance of a child's connection to their cultural, racial, and linguistic heritage and is committed to supporting and strengthening those connections.

Lastly, it recognizes that the act has been developed through the combined efforts of representatives of the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, as well as groups and organizations with interest in child welfare.

Mr. Speaker, I defy you to find another piece of legislation, maybe anywhere, that recognizes these rights in this way. This preamble and the other proposed amendments integrate Yukon

First Nation perspectives and values and require that they be considered and taken into account when determining what is in the best interest of the child. There are preventive services that will look to support children and their families to address their child protection concerns and to keep families together whenever it's possible.

The act further clarifies that at-risk families can self-refer and request services and supports to de-escalate their risks and to preserve their family units. This is an incredible shift, Mr. Speaker. These amendments will significantly enhance cultural and community connections.

The *Child and Family Services Act* outlines the obligation to support children in out-of-home care to maintain their connections to family, to community, and to culture to the greatest extent possible. Extended family care options are being expanded here in this bill to include children under the care of the director, and this will support more placement options, particularly in rural communities, to allow for children to remain closer to family, community, and culture.

The legislative amendments here in Bill No. 11 will further support successful transition into independent living by youth when they reach 19 years of age and will continue to support them to reach their transitional goals until the age of 26. Youth who are receiving care in the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services, as well as those who are living with extended family, in their formative teen years will receive the support, which includes assistance with living expenses or housing supports, educational training supports and opportunities, and tuition expenses.

Culturally appropriate processes have been integrated into the act. Peacemaking circles, family circles, and clan meetings are included as options to be explored with families and Yukon First Nations, where appropriate, to support collaborative planning for children in care and dispute resolution processes.

There are amendments to include Yukon First Nations in decision-making processes, including providing consent to any adoption of a Yukon First Nation child. There are, in Bill No. 11, amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* to work to support family needs and giving more opportunity for reunification during the court processes and throughout the involvement of the Department of Health and Social Services.

This act is the work of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon coming together to discuss complex issues relating to the most important aspect of our community — our children and our families. This collaborative work with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations will continue as we move toward implementation of the act.

Across Canada, child welfare reform is underway, and it is taking many forms. Mr. Speaker, our government is leading the way and will continue to work together with Yukon First Nations on child welfare reform at every turn. The presentation of this bill and the amendments that it brings to the *Child and Family Services Act* are a significant step along that path to reconciliation.

I spent many years, in my prior career, working with the *Child and Family Services Act*, the act before this one, and families involved in the child welfare system. It is truly my

honour to bring this bill to this floor. It will change the lives of these children.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise and speak to this. I would like to thank the committee that was involved in reviewing and making suggested changes to the act, as well as all the government staff who were involved in that. I also want to acknowledge and thank the people who were involved in the drafting of the original *Child and Family Services Act*, which replaced the *Children's Act*. I had the pleasure of tabling that, as Minister of Health and Social Services, back in 2008.

I just want to thank everyone who worked both on the original bill as well as coming up with changes to it, because there was a substantial amount of work put into it. While we do look forward to discussing the changes here and think some of them do, indeed, appear to be improvements to the legislation, I also want to give credit to all those involved in the original process for the substantial work that went into this over a five-year period, which included jointly working with First Nations, jointly consulting the public, and jointly developing policy and informing the legal drafting. It included public consultation with meetings in every Yukon community. More information about that can be found on page 2416 of Hansard from April 10, 2008. I won't go through the entire list of the topics that were consulted on at that point, or the information about the stakeholder meetings, but people who wish to reference it can find it there.

It also included, at the time, one theme I will talk about. The *Child and Family Services Act* recognized the importance of "Interventions to start with the least intrusive approach, based on an assessment of the situation." I want to note, as well, that while I am not taking away from the fact that the people who have been involved in suggesting changes to the act have likely come up with some good elements contained in here, the minister is overstating a little bit how new some of these concepts she was talking about are. Some of them were referenced in the original bill, and I talked about them in introducing the original legislation.

So, while some of these changes may indeed be improvements on the language that was included in there, it would be disingenuous for the minister to suggest that they are new concepts, such as providing support beyond the age of 19 for those who need it. They are not new. The change that is new in this is, instead of providing support up to the age of 24, it has been changed to 26, which seems fine enough, but it should be noted for the minister that she was implying that it was a new provision to go beyond the age of 19, when that is not, in fact, the case.

For the ease of Hansard, I'm just going to note that I am going to briefly refer to the speech I made at second reading on April 1, 2008, which can be found starting on page 2250. Included among the provisions in here — and I quote: "The bill recognizes the importance of culture and community in the lives of children and families and ensures the involvement of First Nations in planning and decision making for First Nation children involved.

"Perhaps the most significant change in the legislation is the focus on preventive measures and strengthening families through supportive and voluntary services.

"These changes, coupled with the emphasis on cooperative planning and involvement of families in decisions that affect their children, bring the legislation in line with current best practices."

I also went on to note at that time: "It is important that we are able to meet the unique needs of children and families in ways that best keep them safe and support them as a family unit. We want to strengthen families and believe we can best do that by supporting them and involving them in the planning, either for the child or for the support services that the family receives."

As I also noted in my speech at the time: "Another new feature of the bill is the mandate to provide voluntary services to youth ages 16 through 19 years, and transition services to youth up to the age of 24, who have been in the continuous care of the director until their 19th birthday."

I also want to mention a couple of key provisions that were in that legislation. One of them includes the provision for a five-year review. In introducing the legislation, I acknowledged the fact that there would be adjustments necessary, based on the experience of bringing this act in. I noted at the time: "The citizens of the Yukon want children who are receiving services through the child welfare system to receive quality services. They also want the services to be accountable to the public; hence the inclusion of a five-year review."

Another key provision that was in the original act was, of course, the provision for the creation of the Child and Youth Advocate, which I believe has served the Yukon well. I would like to thank the current advocate for the work that she has done in her time in that role.

I also would be remiss — in addition to thanking CYFN and the team who was involved in the drafting of the original legislation, as I mentioned, the process involved jointly doing public consultation on the *Children's Act* to jointly develop the policy around changes to the act and jointly inform the legal drafting. That process took years in the making, with a considerable amount of work by a considerable number of people. In addition to thanking those staff, officials, and drafters, I also want to thank the former Minister of Health and Social Services, the late Peter Jenkins, for his role in that. He was the minister when that process was embarked on, and it would not have happened without his work in doing so.

Again, we will be supporting this legislation at second reading. I look forward to hearing some of the rationale behind some of the suggested changes in here. I note that a substantial amount of the bill does include, as well, changing the many, many sections where the word "shall" was used and replacing it with "must". My understanding from officials is that is the change that was requested by the committee to make it more plain language, but that it doesn't actually have any legal effect, since the terms, from a legal perspective, are identical in terms of their effect.

Yes, I thought I had one other thing to mention, but perhaps I will mention that at a later stage. I do, again, just want to thank

the many people, both now and during the previous iteration, who led to the drafting of this legislation. There are many people from across the Yukon who have been involved in suggesting improvements to the legislative structure then and in now suggesting further changes to that. It is a very important area of law, and when the act is being used, it has a significant effect on children.

Oh, the one other thing that I did want to touch on, that I missed mentioning earlier on, is that another notable change that was very important that we included in the original legislation — which, of course, is the law today — included: "... the mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. This change further emphasizes the importance of community involvement in the safety and well-being of children." That is again a quote from page 2250 of Hansard from April 1, 2008.

I would remind the government that we have recently seen a serious situation where the government, including the Deputy Premier, failed in performing their obligation to inform parents regarding a situation involving sexual abuse in a Yukon school, and it is important that they keep that in mind and that they recognize their own obligations to the public.

Ms. Blake: I want to start today by thanking and celebrating all of the hard work that was done to make this bill what it is. I was personally able to see the process that it took to get here and the collaboration between all Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the department to ensure that these amendments have children and First Nations' best interests in mind.

For so many generations, child and family services have been focused on apprehension. Anytime a family might have been struggling or in need of support, they felt fear. Instead of feeling comfortable enough to reach out for help, these families had to worry about whether their child would be taken away and placed under the care of the director.

Our First Nation children have been overrepresented in child and family services for so long but have almost never been heard when they have voiced their concerns. This bill shows that things can be different. These changes are a long time coming. The consensus-based approach in developing these changes with the steering committee, which had representation from each First Nation, was so important. This is how all bills should be reviewed and amended, moving forward. By having input from leaders, not just in government, but those who know what the daily struggles and needs are for families, child and family services will be better able to help children and their caregivers. First Nations were heard.

This act is shifting focus from apprehension to prevention-based supports. From prenatal support to family reunification, I sincerely hope that these amendments will mean that more families can get the help they need to stay together, whether it's financial, cultural, or other forms of support that are available to them.

I also want to take this time to highlight concerns that were raised by other organizations. I spent a lot of time reading the *Child Rights Impact Assessment* from the Child and Youth Advocate office. It was interesting to see a child rights lens

applied to a bill that directly impacts children the most. I was glad to see the letter of support from the Council of Yukon First Nations, which discussed the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate and the necessity to move forward in making this important bill happen sooner rather than later.

I look forward to discussing the advocate's recommendations in more detail when we get into Committee of the Whole. The Information and Privacy Commissioner also highlighted some concerns, and I look forward to the minister sharing with us how they will also be addressed.

A final thing that I wanted to touch on before I wrap up is how this act is going to be operationalized. This act is a huge cultural shift in the role of child and family services. It will take a lot of work and a complete change in philosophy for this act to be implemented in the way it is intended.

The department will need a lot of support in taking on these new and very important responsibilities in prevention and support. How is the minister planning to support child and family services workers to make this shift? What resources — financial, training, and others — is she planning to provide to the department to make this act a success?

I look forward to discussing this act during Committee of the Whole and hearing the minister's response to the questions I have asked.

Again, congratulations to the authors of this bill, to the people at the department who listened, researched, and collaborated for a year, and to the steering committee. Because of your work, you have changed the landscape of child welfare in the Yukon and the supports available to our families across the territory.

This act has the potential to be a positive change for Yukon families and children's lives for decades to come. It sets a precedent for how legislation should be done here and across Canada.

Mahsi'.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am so honoured to be here today to be part of a monumental shift in how child protection is delivered in our territory and to speak to Bill No. 11. I want to thank the Health and Social Services minister today, but I also want to acknowledge the former Health and Social Services minister, Pauline Frost, for establishing the committee to do the review and for bringing us to where we are today. I think that there has always been a collaborative approach among our colleagues. I really want to hold my hands up to all those who have been involved in this, because it is truly a remarkable day when we can all come together in this way for the betterment of our children and our territory.

I will speak mostly as the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I have had the privilege and responsibility to also serve as a co-chair for the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+. Addressing the injustice of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people has been among the most important work that I have done in this role.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, released on June 3, 2019, acknowledges the contribution. We acknowledge the contribution of the commissioners of the national inquiry for really bearing witness to the truth of a part of our historical relationship between indigenous people and Canada and our critical role in hearing from families and calling for justice.

The final report acknowledges genocide and identifies four pathways that continue to enforce the historic and contemporary manifestations of colonization that led to additional violence against women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people. These pathways that they identified were historical, multi-generational and intergenerational trauma, maintaining the status quo, institutional lack of will, social and economic marginalization, and ignoring the agency and expertise of indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S+ people.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, which was released in 2019, included 231 calls for justice; 15 are related to the calls for social workers and those implicated in child welfare. I want to just read one of those. Again, you can find all of this. There's actually a portion within the report that goes into a deeper dive into this whole area of child welfare, and it can be found on pages 339 to 354 of the report, but I'll focus on one particular area.

It's in 12.2: "We call upon on all governments, including Indigenous governments, to transform current child welfare systems fundamentally so that Indigenous communities have control over the design and delivery of services for their families and children. These services must be adequately funded and resourced to ensure better support for families and communities to keep children in their family homes."

I focus particularly on that one because I think that it really — I'll get into where we embedded this in our strategy, but there was a major focus. I witnessed the inquiry from start to finish, and there wasn't a story that was told by a family, or someone impacted by the murder of an indigenous woman in this country, that didn't include child welfare.

I know that it is certainly one of the foundational issues that have brought us to where we are today. These are huge strides that we are making in our territory.

Yukon's strategy addresses all four of the pathways — which I mentioned — to violence, and it maps four corresponding paths to dignity and justice. There are 31 specific actions in the Yukon strategy designed to address the paths. They are: strengthening connection and support, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability. Many of the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* before us today directly support actions and changing the story to upholding dignity and justice — Yukon's strategy on MMIWG2S+ — but the ones that are mostly connected, I think, for today's discussion are under the pathway of strengthening connections and support.

So, in 1.3 — "Strengthen First Nation Identity and Connections: Acknowledge and increase actions that

strengthen connections to the land, language, culture, spirituality and traditional livelihoods" — and in 1.6 — "Indigenous Children and Families: Improve and expand culturally appropriate supports to Indigenous families so that Indigenous children are raised in their own safe and loving families and communities" — and in 1.7 — "Improvements in Health and Social Programs and Services: Work with partners to appropriately implement 'Putting People First', the April 30, 2020 final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services."

These amendments also support the principles in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* around child welfare.

"We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by:

"i. Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations.

"ii. Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.

"iii. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools.

"iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.

"v. Requiring that all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers."

Further, the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples clearly speaks directly to child welfare and family preservation.

Ensuring that children and families are supported and have access to their culture through collaborative care between Family and Children's Services and First Nations is one way to prevent violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus individuals. Intervention and resources that support the entire family and reflect cultural values help to decrease trauma and recognize the systemic issues at play. The history of the forced removal of children reminds us that it is critical to think of the entire family unit and the community when children need support and, to extend that, that families should be supported to stay together and connected to their culture.

The *Child and Family Services Act* advisory committee — I really want to speak to this a bit. They provided a great report with a review of the *Child and Family Services Act*. That is the first review that has been conducted since the act was brought into force, which I believe was 2010. The report, entitled *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, which included 149 recommended actions — this review should have taken place in 2015. I want to make note of that. I am really proud that our Liberal government is living up to the laws of Yukon to review important legislation, such as the *Child and Family Services Act*.

I want to point to part of this report. It's the preamble found on page 10 of the report. I want to quote it:

“Embracing the children of yesterday, today and tomorrow”

“We recognize that ‘yesterday’ Yukoners were not invited to be part of the solution. Solutions have been imposed rather than created in partnership. This has created division and distrust.

“In the Yukon, the introduction of western society brought many things that affected the well-being of First Nation people. First Nations were forced to assimilate and change their names. They could no longer practice their traditional ways; they were told where to live, their language was taken away and their children were placed in residential schools.

“We are seeing the effects of assimilation today in the loss of parenting skills, familial connection and heritage resulting in violence and addictions as a way of coping with these losses.

“We recognize that First Nations have been resilient; many have kept their language, culture and identity and are helping others to regain their culture and traditions.

“This report outlines what Yukoners are experiencing ‘today’. This is their reality. Some change is happening — for example, there are several Yukon and national initiatives currently underway; this report will touch on many of them. In addition to the changes brought forward in these initiatives, there must be a shift in the prevalent underlying attitudes, and an openness to work together for change.

“We have noted throughout this Report, building capacity is the most important step in achieving true partnership. Individual First Nation Governments and communities cannot participate as meaningful partners unless and until they have capacity.

“This shift is something that must happen for Yukon to succeed ‘tomorrow’. We must repair the past damage and eliminate the current divisions and distrust; we must walk a different path — a path that is created in partnership.

“‘Nothing about us, without us’, Yukoner.”

I listened carefully to the comments made, particularly by the Member for Lake Laberge, today, and I want to reflect a little bit about that. I will go back, as he did, in history, quoting himself from debate that happened in 2008. I do want to say that the shift to a new act was an important shift for the Yukon, and I don't want to take anything away from that, but I also want to point to the fact that, at that time, there were a number of issues happening and unfolding. I remember the day that this act was enacted.

There was actually a protest at the Legislative Assembly, because there was a haste to bring this into effect without all of the insights and amendments that First Nations were asking for at that time. I just want to remind the member opposite, and particularly those from the Yukon Party, about the historical piece of this. We have gone back and worked closely with Yukon First Nations and our partners to truly work through each and every one of the issues in the legislation and address them. Again, this is something that our government has taken on. This review should have happened in 2015, as it is written in the act to have a review every five years.

I am very proud that our government has taken those steps. I think that we are on a good path here, in terms of making the necessary shifts.

The enactment amends the *Child and Family Services Act* to address the recommendations put forward by this independent *Child and Family Services Act* advisory committee in their report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, to address the response to those recommendations given by the *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee so that Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government can take a government-to-government approach to amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* to fill legislative gaps in the current legislation, so that it does conform to the requirements under the federal act, an act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families, and to make other amendments.

I worked for a number of years within the Yukon Kwanlin Dün First Nation. I worked very closely, front line, directly on child welfare matters. I can really point to the changes that are being proposed in this act that stand out for me.

I'm really happy that we are modernizing and clarifying terminology. That is very important in all of our legislation. We are adding provisions requiring that, in the case of an indigenous child who is in need of protection or intervention, a director notifies the child and their parents, their parent's Yukon First Nation, if any, and the indigenous governing bodies that represent the indigenous groups, communities, or peoples to whom they belong, providing those First Nations and bodies with the right to be involved in collaborative case planning. This is really important. Words matter and actions matter. Shifting to talking about and expecting collaborative case planning is a very big shift, whether the Member for Lake Laberge thinks that way or not. I think that part of breathing life into legislation is having the right political will and the right leadership at the helm. I think that's what you have here. We see the changes that are necessary, and we are providing the leadership that's necessary as well to enable our public servants to do the work that's necessary to really build true partnerships.

I think the other part that stands out for me is expending the provision for supports for youth transitioning to independent living. This is an area that I found incredibly challenging in my work that I did with youth who were transitioning. It was incredibly difficult to help children transition into independent life, without all of the collaborative work, the true collaboration that was required to help them have a life plan. So, extending to age 26 is a huge step, and there are so many others. I could go on all day, and I know that I don't have all of that time to do that, but I am really honoured to have been able to be here in government for this review and to be here to speak about it in this way today. I think that the work that has been accomplished in a government-to-government way, enabling the right types of services, supports, and collaboration with our partners, is really evident. Again, you have a team of leaders who are breathing life into the legislation in the way that it should be.

Again, thank you very much for all of the work that has been done and to all of those folks who are doing this work on our behalf each and every day.

Mr. Dixon: It is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill today. I will be fairly brief in my comments, but I did want to make a few notes.

I would like to begin by thanking the minister for bringing this bill forward and thanking the staff who have put so much work and effort into creating this bill and bringing it forward to the Legislature today.

I know very well how much work goes into the development of a bill like this and how much work has gone on throughout the different branches and levels of government to arrive at this product that is before us today. I would like to thank all those involved.

The *Child and Family Services Act*, of course, affects the most vulnerable in our society, and therefore, it certainly elicits strong emotions in all those who deal with it. I think we have seen that evidenced today, and I appreciate that and respect that very much.

As this bill is before us now, it falls to us as legislators to discuss it, to debate it, and to ask questions about it. From our perspective, of course, those questions necessarily include what is in the bill, what is not in the bill, and what should be in the bill. Of course, this particular bill has been subject to a great deal of work, not just from those in government, but from other levels of government as well as members of the public who have submitted their interests and input into this process.

I think that, for many, this process began with the creation of the original *Child and Family Services Act* Review Advisory Committee. The creation of their report, which is entitled *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, was a tremendous amount of work, and I would like to name and thank those members of that committee. First of all, Mo Caley-Verdonk was the chair of the committee; Ray Sydney was the vice-chair; and Doris Anderson, Lori Duncan, Debbie Hoffman and Rosemary Rowlands all sat on the committee and provided an excellent analysis of the bill in its previous or current form and a very large number of recommendations for government to consider.

I said the word “recommendations”, Mr. Speaker, but that is actually not right. The committee made a very clear point that they didn’t feel that these should be considered recommendations. They made the explicit comment on page 4 of their report, which I would like to quote: “We were asked to look at the Act and its implementation together with the way supports and services are delivered under the Act. We were asked to produce recommendations following our review. However, ‘recommendations’ do not capture the type of change that is needed, and we have therefore outlined the ‘Required Actions’ that must be taken to show Yukoners they have been heard.”

Now, I know, from speaking to members of the committee, that this was a very profound and important aspect of this report. The committee felt that what we refer to as “recommendations” should not just be considered simply

“recommendations”, but rather that they should be considered “required actions”. So, given the fact that there are so many of those required actions and so much thoughtful consideration put in by the committee, we obviously will be looking forward to discussion and debate in Committee of the Whole and look forward to the minister’s explanation of how those required actions have been addressed and which ones, perhaps, were either not addressed or were different from what the committee discussed in their report. That is certainly one aspect that we will look forward to discussing in Committee of the Whole.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, obviously the other big piece of this was the *Child Rights Impact Assessment*, which was completed by the Child and Youth Advocate’s office. I would certainly like to thank the Child and Youth Advocate and the Child and Youth Advocate’s office for the excellent assessment that provides very strong comments and contextualization of this bill. Included in those recommendations, of course, are a number of suggestions for us as legislators to consider.

I would like to quote from the executive summary of the *Child Rights Impact Assessment*: “The amendments to the CFSA as proposed are strong, and taken as a whole would create a significant positive impact on the rights and well-being of children in need of services under the CFSA. But there are also a few changes that require a second thought, and still other areas where no changes were proposed but may represent a missed opportunity to meaningfully impact children’s lives. If the enclosed recommendations are considered carefully, this CRIA would represent an opportunity for the government to implement exemplary and transformational legislation, providing the benchmark for jurisdictions across the country.”

Obviously, those are strong words and recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate’s office, and I think that they are something that we will want to consider. So, as indicated, I believe that Committee of the Whole will be an opportune time to go through those recommendations and discuss them with the minister. I look forward to hearing the minister’s explanation and outline of how the recommendations in the CRIA have been met or addressed.

Finally, the Leader of the Third Party, the minister, and I, as the Leader of the Official Opposition, were all addressed a letter from the privacy commissioner who also raised concerns about the bill and had questions and suggestions for changes. I would be interested in hearing the minister’s response to those suggestions and whether or not the amendments that are proposed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner are necessary and required or if they should be set aside and dealt with at a different date or what the government’s response to their recommendations are in general.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will indicate now that the Yukon Party will certainly be voting in favour of the bill at second reading. We do look forward to getting into Committee of the Whole debate so that we can discuss in detail the various provisions of the act in the context of not only the initial advisory committee’s report but the *Child Rights Impact Assessment*, the input from the IPC, and the input from a range of others as we consider this bill.

In closing, as I said, this is an important bill. We are pleased to see it come forward. We do have questions. We believe we have an important role to play now as legislators in debating and thoroughly assessing and considering this bill, and we will certainly take that role very seriously. I want to note for those who have worked on the bill, or who have had input on the bill, that our asking questions is not meant to be critical; it is simply us fulfilling our role as Official Opposition, ensuring that the best possible legislation comes forward and that we meet our obligations as outlined in other areas.

With that, I look forward to voting in favour of this bill at second reading. I look forward to digging into the details of the bill in Committee, as is our job as legislators.

Ms. White: Before I continue on today, I want to thank my colleagues for their words. It is a really powerful day. It is especially powerful to have the people who are behind it and did all the work. I do really appreciate that the Leader of the Yukon Party did list out the folks who were behind *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. That group of people listened to hard stories. It is interesting because the *Putting People First* document came to government in April 2020, and then we had them in as witnesses. I know that, in having conversations with the chair of *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* when they tabled that document, they felt like it didn't go anywhere because they weren't able to come in and talk about it. They were so worried because they made a commitment to people when they listened to those stories. They made a commitment that it would go somewhere and that they weren't just taking in that information to leave it.

We have people in the gallery who honoured those stories with these changes. I just want to make sure that we acknowledge the committee behind the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* for the incredible work of listening and honouring those stories because, when I had conversations with them, it was hard. It was hard. As the Leader of the Yukon Party said, it wasn't recommendations that they made; they said that they had to be changes. A big thank you to the people in the gallery who made those changes happen, because this is an opportunity.

I thank my colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin because she is a person who has a lot of experience in this, and those experiences have been hard, so if we have an opportunity to change the path for children in the Yukon for the future, then that is not only our obligation, but it is our privilege. We look forward to the conversation, but more than that, we look forward to having this act have life. We want to make sure that children at 18 know that they have the support until they are 26. We want to know that families have that support. We want to see how that happens.

It is important that we change the legislation, but what's more important is that we give that legislation life. That will be the responsibility of everyone in this Chamber, no matter the stripe of government, because it is our responsibility as people in this Chamber to make sure that this legislation has the life it deserves, that it supports the family and the children that it is

supposed to. That will be something we will need the support of the people in the gallery to hold us accountable to. Because when we make this shift, we can't just make it words; we need to make it in actions. I look forward to seeing what these actions are.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would just like to take the opportunity to thank those who spoke today to Bill No. 11. I certainly appreciate their comments. I too look forward to discussing all of those issues, including the 2010 legislation and how that came about. I note that there is much evidence that it came about without the support of Yukon First Nations. If the member opposite wants to discuss that more in detail, I certainly will be pleased to do so.

I too have met with the committee that produced *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. I too have talked to them about their concerns about how this went forward and I too have made note to them that this is happening today and that their work has culminated here.

I appreciate the information that has been brought forward by the Child and Youth Advocate and by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and I truly look forward to speaking about those and having discussions with the members opposite about those issues. But, Mr. Speaker, that is not for today. Today is to bring Bill No. 11 to the floor of this Legislative Assembly and to celebrate the work that has been done to date and to celebrate the people who have done that work and enabled us to bring a truly groundbreaking piece of legislation.

Amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* will change the lives of Yukon children and families — should change the lives of Yukon children and families — and must be implemented with our partners, with our First Nation governments, on a government-to-government basis. The implementation of these changes that I hope eventually will pass this Legislative Assembly is absolutely critical and must be done with our partners. It must be done with the teams of people and the dedication from Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations in the way that brought us to bring Bill No. 11 here today. I thank you for the opportunity to address this. I have heard from my colleagues opposite that they will be supporting this at second reading. I thank them for that support and I look forward to the bill passing this Legislative Assembly.

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.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

Bill No. 13: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022) — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 13, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I mentioned in second reading and during Committee of the Whole, this amendment will require that a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* — what is often known as the acronym “SCAN” — be completed. To be clear, our government sees the amendment before us today as a necessary step that will allow us to ensure that the SCAN act represents the needs of Yukoners and assists them in making their communities safer. We believe that providing for the review through this amendment serves the best interests of Yukoners while also providing the Department of Justice with the authority and responsibility to complete a thorough review.

In conclusion, I recommend that the Members of the Legislative Assembly support the passing of the *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)* as a means to ensure that this legislation continues to represent Yukoners’ interests and well-being. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it today.

Mr. Cathers: It really is unfortunate that earlier, at the Committee stage, the government rejected our suggestion of making a review of the *Safer Communities and*

Neighbourhoods Act a priority. Putting in a legislated timeline of five years takes it well beyond the life of this government. In fact, with the government not expected to stay in power beyond next year, under their current support arrangement, this will very likely be a matter dealt with by not just the next Minister of Justice, but whoever is Minister of Justice after the second territorial election following today. So, it is putting in a commitment for someone else to do a review.

In fact, because of the implications of this act and the serious concerns that have been heard both in court and in public about whether the use of it has, in some cases, caused people to be without a home in a way that questions the balance in the act, we believe that there are serious matters that actually should be made a priority for review and that, rather than pushing off the start of that review until next year, the government should actually act on it now and should have the review completed before 2027, which is, in fact, what this legislation proposes — and is in the current wording of the bill since our constructive amendment at the Committee stage to make that review mandatory and that required it to be tabled within two years of passage. The government, by changing it to five years, has pushed the review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* off to the point where the legislation itself would not have to be subject to a review and have the review tabled in the Assembly until 21 years after the original act was passed.

So, again, I do want to note that we do believe that the act itself has value. We certainly don’t object to there being a mandatory review clause in the legislation. It should have said “two years”, we believe, instead of the five-year provision that the minister has proposed.

I also want to note that this provision that the minister is proposing is a one-time shot. It doesn’t provide for ongoing reviews at all. It simply suggests that, by 21 years after the original act was passed, a review should be done and tabled in the Assembly. So, we will be supporting it at this stage because we don’t have a problem with the mandatory review, but putting it into the five-year mark is pushing out serious concerns of Yukoners to some day in the future, probably after not one but two territorial general elections.

Ms. White: I hadn’t planned on saying anything, but revisionist history is fascinating in this Assembly. Between 2011 and 2016, the Yukon NDP was working toward trying to get this reviewed under a Yukon Party government. I am relieved to know that it will be reviewed. It’s long overdue. I think that, as we go forward, understanding the ramifications that this act has had and its intentions, it will be strengthened with the feedback from those who have been most affected by it. I do look forward to this review, and I look forward to changes to this legislation.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close the debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I won't be long, but I do have to make some reference to some of the comments made. I am certainly seeking support for this amendment to pass here today at third reading.

I am going to note that the Member for Lake Laberge clearly misunderstands, I think, the purpose and the function of clauses like this one. This is the second time that the member has mentioned here in the Legislative Assembly something about the future of laws. I will take the opportunity to remind everyone — but really that member, based on the comments — that all laws bind future governments. They lay out the responsibilities of government going forward, and they must be honoured.

We just spent some time speaking about the 2008 — again at the initiation of the member opposite — *Child and Family Services Act*, which had a five-year review clause that was ignored by the then-government. They were 14 years in power when they could have reviewed this act. They could have reviewed the *Child and Family Services Act*. They could have reviewed a lot of acts, but they didn't.

I appreciate, as well, that the member opposite seems to pine for the day when our government is not in power and when I am not the Minister of Justice, but this is what's happening now. This is what Yukoners have done. They have sent us here to work together. They have sent us here to take on incredible responsibility. One of the responsibilities in my role is to make laws responsive to the needs of Yukoners, and that is what we are doing in bringing this bill, Bill No. 13, before the Legislative Assembly.

This is third reading. I truly look forward to it passing and us being able to proceed with the work of a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. I have spoken about this matter before and indicated that this review will begin in 2023 and that it will be a priority in the legislative agenda at that time. I certainly look forward to that work on behalf of all Yukoners.

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.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 13 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 13 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): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Cathers: I would just like to recap before turning the floor over to the Premier. When we finished yesterday, I had asked the Premier a number of questions. Those include what the status is of the development of a health authority, particularly what the status is of discussions that officials told us about with First Nations.

Secondly, we understood from officials that the government doesn't plan to have any health professionals on the oversight group, board, or committee. Could the Premier confirm or correct that?

Thirdly, as I noted, the Yukon Medical Association passed a resolution at one of their AGMs urging government, instead

of developing new legislation or a new health authority, to consider making use of the *Hospital Act*, which includes the provision in it for the potential of the Yukon Hospital Corporation eventually becoming a health authority, which was envisioned as a possibility when that act was tabled and passed in this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There are a couple of other questions that the member opposite had asked as well. What I will do is head back that way as well. The member opposite asked for a breakdown of the \$9 million in COVID spending for Health and Social Services. It's probably something that normally would be better discussed in debate when Health and Social Services arrives here in Committee of the Whole, but I spoke with the minister today and just had some numbers, so I can provide that information now.

The \$9.097 million total can be broken down as follows: Economic Development has the Yukon emergency relief program for \$820,000; the Economic Development department also has the vaccine verification rebate program for \$157,000; and TNASS, the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, is \$3 million. By the way, that was all mentioned in my preamble, but they asked for a breakdown.

Health and Social Services communication support was \$200,000; Health and Social Services vaccine rollout was \$400,000; testing, same department, was \$300,000; Yukon Hospital Corporation overtime and lost revenue was \$1.5 million; self-isolation was \$1.5 million; rapid test implementation was \$600,000; and miscellaneous needs was \$500,000. All of those were for Health and Social Services. The Executive Council Office cleaning services were \$120,000. So, that is the total of \$9.097 million.

There was also a question asked by the member opposite the other day, and it was about whether the process for selecting the High Country Inn was competitive or not, and I did say that it was not. No invitation or procurement process was there, as it was an urgent need to support Yukoners. Speaking to the department today, they did want me to mention, as well, that the High Country Inn was the only facility that offered both the SIF capacity and also the space for the vaccine clinic and had a close proximity to the hospital as well. So, there were some specific considerations as to the need for this to be expedited and specific.

This service is now available, as folks know, in other areas in the Yukon, and there is more information available online for all members on support services for self-isolation, and that can be found at yukon.ca.

The member asked here again today — providing more information on the status of the development of that health authority. Yesterday, his question was — and I quote: "... I would appreciate clarity from the Premier about what exactly has been offered to First Nations..." and he asked it again here today. He also asked yesterday — that they heard there would be no health professionals on the oversight panel. That is an interesting one, Deputy Chair. I stated yesterday, in response to the *Putting People First* report, recommendation 1.2, and as part of the commitment under the 2021 confidence and supply

agreement to implement *Putting People First*, that we were working on policy options to develop that health authority.

Government-to-government work with the First Nations is essential — of the system transformation — and the Government of Yukon is absolutely committed to that partnership and working with the First Nations, as we have all along the process, from the independent review all the way forward to *Putting People First*.

We have initiated discussions with the First Nation governments to designate a structure that will support the development of a set of shared principles to guide the system changes, as we move forward, as well as collaborative planning, priority setting, and decision-making. We will definitely ensure that we will continue to work closely with not only First Nation governments, but all the affected partners in health care, including the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, nurses, and physicians, and also Yukoners who access these medical services.

An additional deputy minister is now in place with the Department of Health and Social Services — that was Mr. Hale — to oversee the creation of that health authority. That is extremely important, as we do that.

As far as where the members opposite heard there was not going to be any health pros or officials on the health authority, that is news to me; that's for sure. If the member opposite can maybe give some more information on that — I don't see that as being so.

There was also a question about what work has been started on the legislation for the health authority. I can say that a lot of prep work for developing a legislative plan and identification of policy issues is definitely underway now. Development of legislation to support the creation of a health authority in the Yukon is a priority for our government.

There was a question, as well, about whether or not the government is considering listening to the advice of the Yukon Medical Association to use the *Health Act* to develop the health authority, rather than set up one from scratch. Again, as I said today and in the past, we consider a number of legislative options that will support a comprehensive health authority for the Yukon, and all voices are absolutely welcome in that pursuit.

I think that's the questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate receiving an answer to some of the questions I had asked. I am pleased to hear the Premier saying that there may be health professionals on the oversight committee for the development of the health authority. My understanding was based on the briefing with officials. Perhaps what they said, or what I understood, was different from that. It was, I should say. I will just leave that issue there, as far as whether they didn't explain it well or whether I perhaps misunderstood something.

I would move, then, to just asking for some clarity on what consultation has happened with health professions, including the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Pharmacists Association, and other health professions throughout the territory on their involvement in this process. Has the government reached out to them and

consulted with them on what they would like to see? Have they offered them a seat — or seats — on this oversight body, however it is being structured, and what is the status of that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that I have answered the member opposite's question as far as an update to date. If he wants to get into more detail about something that is outside of the second supplementary budget in general debate, I would ask him to bring it up with the minister when that minister is available during Committee of the Whole or in Question Period. I have given the member opposite an update on where we are on the legislation and on the process beforehand, the policies and procedures, and in general debate, that's all I have for the member opposite at this time.

Mr. Cathers: I gather the Premier either doesn't want to or is unable to answer the question at this point in time, but I would note that, since this is related to one of the government's key policy announcements and involves more than one department that would be affected by the implementation of the comprehensive health review, it is something that I think is appropriate to bring up with the Premier and not just with one minister, even if it is with the lead minister on this.

We do have questions about the structure also, since the Premier has made reference to the fact that there is consultation with First Nations going on. Typically, First Nation consultation does involve, at least peripherally, the awareness of the department that is usually the lead on that, which is the Executive Council Office, which reports to the Premier. I would expect the Premier to be fully briefed on what the government is doing with regard to the health authority. So, again, the question I am asking is: What opportunity will there be for health professions to be represented on any oversight committee? Has the government made an offer or an invitation to those health professions, either to nominate a member or perhaps to seek their advice on what the structure should look like? Have they reached out to them at all, and if so, what have they said in reaching out to those health professions?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is speculating and reaching right now, so I have no answer for him. We have a list of the questions that were asked in the briefing. The member opposite is incorrect right now. Their party asked: What is the status of the work with the new authority?

The answers that we gave didn't speculate on anything as far as an authority having a council that doesn't have any health professionals on it, so I'm not going to answer the question — pure and simple. It's speculation, and he is incorrect, so I'm not going to go there. He can try embarrassing me all he wants, as far as what I know and what I don't know. So, okay, I can talk about the health authority. I will spend my time answering his question on the health authority, but I'm not going to answer his speculations.

We know that we are the last jurisdiction, really, to go into this arm's-length, independent body from government approach — a people-centric approach — when it comes to the health and well-being of Yukoners. We believe that we have a responsibility to have that coordination of delivery of services in this way. Examples of these arm's-length types of bodies — we have examples that the member opposite can take a look at,

as far as structure, boards, and these types of things. He only needs to look as far as the Yukon University as an example. Imagine us not having educational professionals on these types of bodies.

I don't know where he's going with this, but he can browbeat me as much as he wants about my intelligence, but I'm not going to speculate. The health authority and their bodies are accountable to the minister, and the proper human resources — professionals — will be in those roles. We hold this model very high. We think that this is the right way to go. I talked yesterday about the Peachey report when his government was in power, and they developed hospitals in rural communities without a plan. When we asked questions about collaboration, their answers on the floor of the Legislative Assembly were that they collaborate all the time.

Again, we believe that this is the right way to go. We believe that, like I said, all jurisdictions in Canada, except for Yukon — sorry, I misspoke, Nunavut as well doesn't have a health authority yet — but it's time. It's well overtime.

The establishing of that health authority is foundational to the recommendations from *Putting People First*, moving the service delivery outside of the government, allowing for increased agility and accountability in that service delivery as well. I think that this is important work to be done. I hope that the member opposite is excited about the pathway forward. I don't have much more to add today on his speculations. He has an opportunity to talk directly to the Minister of Health and Social Services when she appears in Committee of the Whole for that department as well.

Mr. Cathers: Again, this is a major policy issue, something that was addressed in the mandate letter from the Premier to the minister, and as I mentioned because of the aspect of this that relates to First Nation relations, certainly that part of it would seem to be directly the responsibility of the Premier through the Executive Council Office. I don't understand why the Premier is not willing to share the information that I am asking for. These are not "gotcha" questions. I am just asking for public transparency on what the structure is and what government has said to date to organizations representing health professions in the territory. Have they reached out to them about the oversight of this process? Have they offered them the opportunity to participate? Have they asked for input on the structure? Ultimately, have they said something to them and, if so, what have they said to them?

With all due respect regarding the Premier's relaying of what questions were asked and answered at the briefing, I was at the briefing; the Premier was not. I am well aware of what was said. I can't speak to what was passed on to the Premier or what his understanding of it was, but I know what we asked and what the answers were.

So, fundamentally, what I am asking here — for something that has been a signature commitment, a keystone commitment of the government's approach and their plans — is: What is the plan right now? What efforts, if any, have been undertaken to reach out to health professions about transforming the health system?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the member opposite doesn't like my answer; I have answered his question. I said earlier that we were working closely, and ensuring that we will continue to work closely, with affected partners in health care. He is asking if we have done that and I am saying yes and yes. So, I don't know — again, I am just confused. The member opposite is stalling here, I think. We talked about including the Yukon Medical Association. I just answered that question. We talked about the Yukon Hospital Corporation, nurses and physicians, and Yukoners who access health services. We also talked about, in response to *Putting People First* recommendation 1.2, how we are moving forward on these particular conversations and engagements. Government-to-government work with Yukon First Nations — absolutely essential to a system transformation. We are very much committed to continuing down that road. I spoke yesterday about our government being very committed to establishing that health authority and also talking about that in the *Putting People First* report, also the independent expert panel recommending the “Wellness Yukon” existence — and so establishing that new arm's-length, statutory agency that would deliver a range of health care services.

We spoke to an update as far as where we are right now. We are continuing to engage with these entities. The member opposite keeps asking if we are engaging with these folks and what the update is. We've answered the question. I don't know what else the member opposite is specifically looking for, but I can take these questions back to the Minister of Health and Social Services, because it sounds like he is not willing to ask those questions of the minister responsible. As far as government-to-government work, I can talk about that policy. We could talk about the good work that we just witnessed here today — a milestone in the Legislative Assembly as far as working together with First Nation governments and stakeholders and in consultation.

I believe I answered the member opposite's question. I am trying my best to stay within the eight minutes, as we try a new way of doing business here in the Legislative Assembly, but I will keep on answering the member opposite's question over and over again if that is how he so chooses to use his time in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier indicated that the answer was yes but then didn't provide the details. All I'm after is the key details and information about this. If the Premier is wondering if we want to use our time on this — well, to get information about the government's proposed transformation of our health system, yes, we are going to take time to ask questions about what they have done, particularly in terms of what outreach has or has not occurred to health professionals and to partners in health care, including the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Hospital Corporation, the pharmacists, physiotherapists, optometrists, dieticians, et cetera. I could go on at length listing health professions, but my key point comes down to this very simple question: Has the government reached out to them regarding this process in an official manner and, if so, what have they said, offered, or asked?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have talked about the initial conversations that have begun with physicians at the hospital. We have talked about the work with the Yukon Employees' Union. I know I have mentioned it. The minister has mentioned it. Further work does await the finalization of partnership structures from the Yukon First Nations. We have had conversations at the Yukon Forum. I will let the chiefs know that the Member for Lake Laberge is not satisfied that we are moving fast enough on this, although, I will say that there was an acute care model with them for years. We are moving at lightspeed when it comes to changing the paradigm here in the health care system.

I don't have anything else to update the member opposite with, but I do appreciate his tenacity on this particular subject.

Mr. Cathers: What I would encourage the Premier to say to the chiefs at the Yukon Forum, instead of what he suggested, is just to relay the fact that we're interested in the process and would like to know what government has offered to them or asked them for and what government has said to health professions regarding this and what have they offered, asked, or invited regarding the process — and to emphasize to them, and indeed to all Yukoners whom they speak to about this, that we want more information about the process, the timelines, and especially the involvement of health professionals in transforming our health system. We don't think that it is unreasonable for us to ask these questions or to think that the Premier would be willing to provide information and key details about the process, the attempts to involve health professionals, and the timelines.

I do have to remind the Premier — I know that this is a sore spot for him and for the Health and Social Services minister, but the government fumbled their process before and the Yukon Medical Association was upset at being reduced to being treated like a minor stakeholder in the comprehensive health review process. It was expected to participate at public meetings rather than actually through direct consultation by the committee. That was not the right way to go about that process, not only for them, but for other health professions — though the YMA was the one that publicly came out expressing their strong concern about it. I think that ordinary Yukoners would agree that, if you are considering changing and transforming the health care system, health care professionals should be front and centre and deeply involved in providing the advice on what those changes should be. Otherwise, you have people redesigning the health care system who are not working on the front lines and do not understand the aspects of what they are dealing with.

I know that the Premier doesn't like this line of questioning, but the simple fact is that, if you are changing the health care system and want to change how doctors, nurses, or others are involved in it, starting by talking to them is pretty darn important. What I'm asking the Premier for is information and clarity about the timelines for this process — and particularly what the government has said or is planning to say to health professionals about this — and what formal communication, if any, has occurred with them regarding this, particularly about the development of a health authority.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, these are the member opposite's words, not ours, as far as who is going to be on these authorities and these panels — as far as not having health officials on these panels. These are his words that he is creating. As he keeps saying it over and over again, he is convincing himself that this is true. At no time has anybody from our government told that to him. He is now accusing the officials who gave him the briefing of being disingenuous to him.

Again, I am beside myself —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: In suggesting that I was making that accusation to officials, the member, I believe, is in contravention of Standing Order 19(g), imputing unavowed motives to another member. I certainly was not impugning officials. Those are the Premier's words and I believe that those words are a contravention of Standing Order 19(g).

Deputy Chair: The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Standing Order 19(g) talks about imputing false or unavowed motives. I think that what the Premier talked about was “disingenuous”, so, I don't think that is talking about unavowed or false motives.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: I do not find that this rises to the level of a point of order, but I would caution members to be careful with their choice of words.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I have a list of the questions that were asked from the member opposite and his team to the officials. I don't even see the question about health professionals on the authority, so it doesn't even seem like that question was asked in the briefing.

Again, you can understand my non-understanding of where the member opposite is coming from when this wasn't even a registered question.

I am looking at the responses from the team, and I'm looking at the responses today, and it is parallel. I will spell it out for the member opposite, and I will go back to the questions that they asked in the briefing. They're right here. With COVID-19 in the territory, we are currently providing isolation facilities. We talked about isolation facilities. They responded about where they are in Yukon — at the Yukon Inn, the Riverview, and the one in Watson Lake, at the Big Horn — with the assessments moving forward on a need basis for that, as far as the status of those isolation facilities.

He went on to ask about the status of the work on the new health authority. Again, we talked about ongoing conversations with First Nation governments. We promised that we would move forward with them on this, and that is what we are doing. The member opposite is saying that we are not moving quickly enough, because he wants updates. He wants to know what's

going on tomorrow and the next day. I can't answer that question for him. I can't, and the officials couldn't either.

There will be a joint oversight committee developed, which will help shape how the new health authority will be defined. The member opposite knows that, because that is the answer that the officials gave him during the briefing. Yet he's demanding to know about that here in the Legislative Assembly. Again, I don't know why we are going over these questions when the member opposite already got the answers in the briefing and we are really trying to manage our time here in the Legislative Assembly.

What is the anticipated timeline on this? Has the work started? He asked that question of the officials. He asked me about eight times here in the Legislative Assembly. The response they gave was very similar to mine. It's about scope; it's a multiple-year process for *Putting People First*. There has been an internal scan to develop scope, is what the officials told him, yet he is still asking if work has started on this legislation. The question was answered in the briefing. The member opposite is wasting the time in here by asking again and saying that he's not getting the responses. Again, I'm not sure what he's getting at here.

Another question asked by the Member for Lake Laberge during the briefing was, what discussions have been had with YMA, YRNA, et cetera? They told him at that time, again, as we are in the process — government-to-government — of working with First Nations, that we will do that first. At this time, those detailed discussions have not been happening yet, but where relevant, they have been involved in the process over the years, months, and weeks leading to today. They have been involved and will be involved — not they're not going to be involved, which is what the member opposite is telling us in the Legislative Assembly. They will be involved — it says it right here — as will health care partners. Again: doctors and nurses will be involved. The member opposite is telling us that he heard otherwise in the briefings. Now he is telling us in the Legislative Assembly that we're recklessly moving forward without the professionals involved. I just don't understand what he's doing right now.

With the reduction in health care providers, our community health centre is fully staffed. That was another question from the member opposite, and an excellent response there. Because we are trying to keep our time limited here, I'm not going to go through all the questions, but again, we have the questions that he asked. We have the responses. Not only did I answer them here in the Legislative Assembly yesterday and today, but the officials from the department also answered his questions in the briefings.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the Premier is being pretty combative and pretty confident about what happened at a briefing he wasn't at. I was at the briefing. I know what was said and what answers were provided. I don't know what information was provided to the Premier. I would point out as well that, considering the change that the Premier announced yesterday shortly after the House wrapped up, that said — and I quote: “Current Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services Stephen Samis is leaving the Government of Yukon.”

That wording in a press release does tend to suggest that the Premier relieved him of his post. Since he was one of the officials at the briefing, the Premier might want to be a little less confident about what was asked and what was answered at the meeting.

I would also note here that the Premier is trying to spin a narrative that I'm suggesting what the membership is going to be on the oversight committee, when, in fact, if he would actually listen to what I have been asking, I am asking him. He has indicated that health professionals will be on the oversight committee. At least, I think he said that, but we haven't heard a clear response. If they are going to be on the oversight committee, what is the structure? Is there going to be one representative from the YMA, one representative from the YRNA, et cetera? What structure are they looking at for involving them? If they haven't yet made a decision on that structure, are they asking for feedback from health professionals on the structure? If not, when do they expect to be in a situation where they can provide some clarity on how health professionals will be involved, because we know that they screwed it up during the comprehensive health review.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The structure has not yet been decided.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that answer. Next question: Have they reached out to health professions about the structure and asked for input? If not, do they plan to, and when?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes — how many times do I have to say that though? Again, the member opposite is repeating a question over and over again that I answered. Initial conversations have begun with physicians at the hospital, and also with the Yukon Employees' Union. These folks will be involved. Work is ongoing. The structure has not yet been decided.

Mr. Cathers: I would note that one of the things we have seen here is that the deputy minister, who was the DM of Health and Social Services for most of the Liberals' time in office, is no longer with the government. The wording in the press release issued yesterday, suggests that it was a decision made by the Premier, not a decision made by the former DM. Of course, that is the Premier's prerogative, but when government appears to have dismissed a deputy minister who was responsible for spending roughly one-third of the government's O&M budget, and was responsible for leading both the response to COVID-19 and the response to the comprehensive health review, it suggests a lack of confidence in how things have been handled, and suggests the possibility of a major shift in what government is going to be doing in the future. So, we are asking for clarity about that.

I would also note that the Premier, prior to taking office, promised that, if elected, he would release information to the public on the costs of severance for deputy ministers. So, I would ask, with both the decision yesterday and anything else throughout the year, what is the total cost of deputy minister severance in this current fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is incorrect. Deputy Minister Hale is responsible for the development of the health authority piece, so he is again connecting dots that are not

connected, and very much speculating unfairly about the situation — personal and private information, really — and the members keep on going back to, yes, when I was in opposition, I talked about providing that severance, but today, I don't recall the Yukon Party government ever releasing those details about deputy minister severance, and when I took office, I looked into this practice.

There is a reason why the members opposite never did that. It's illegal. It's illegal to do that. So, the member opposite knows that, but yet he is asking me to do something that he knows would be illegal. This is personal disclosure of information, and our laws prohibit it.

Mr. Cathers: For starters, the Premier is effectively telling us that he made a promise without checking into whether he could actually deliver on it, then got elected, and decided he couldn't keep the promise after all.

Also, I should note, in asking for the total amount of deputy minister severance that the government has paid, they could do it in an aggregate manner. If the Premier feels he is legally prohibited from talking about the exact amount for the person who appears to have been relieved of duty yesterday, and wishes to provide an aggregate number, that at least would be some progress in keeping with the Premier's commitment to disclose the cost of deputy minister severance. I would ask him, can he, either for the fiscal year, or for the total life of his government, if he prefers, tell us the total amount they have paid in deputy minister severance packages?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is right. When I was in opposition, I thought that was something I could do. I looked into it, and I can't. He knew the whole time that we couldn't, yet he still asked these questions. I don't know what to tell him, other than I would expect a former Cabinet minister would understand this. As far as an aggregate, I don't have any aggregate numbers in front of me right now. I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I do understand what is legal. I also understand that the government has the ability to change the law. They have made changes to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, which could have dealt with this issue in the same manner as some jurisdictions. The Premier knows very well that there are some jurisdictions in the country that have what they typically refer to as a "sunshine list", where government employees who are paid over a certain amount have that information about their salaries disclosed online. There are those who would argue against that on the basis of privacy, but the point is, it can legally be done, and has legally been done in other jurisdictions.

The Premier made a choice not to do that when they changed the ATIPP act, but they could have considered doing it at that time. If the Premier doesn't have that information at his fingertips, I would appreciate him getting back with that information on the total deputy ministers' severance costs paid during his time in office.

I also want to return to another issue that I asked about yesterday. Upon reviewing the Blues, I note that the Premier didn't actually answer the question. I asked how many government employees will still be on leave without pay after

April 4. The Premier noted during his announcement this week that most of the employees who have been on leave without pay because of either being unvaccinated or unwilling to fill out the attestation about vaccination status will be able to return to work on April 4. The question I asked yesterday was about how many of those employees will still be on leave without pay after April 4, because the Premier himself has indicated that in some sectors, such as long-term care, those employees will not be allowed to return to work on April 4.

What I got back in response was that the Premier gave me the breakdown of the number of government employees on leave without pay as of March 2. I appreciate that information, but it doesn't answer the question. The question is: Of those government employees who are on leave without pay because of vaccination status on March 2, how many have the opportunity to return to work on April 4 and how many of those employees will not be allowed to return on April 4?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the fiscal year is still underway, we cannot necessarily identify a specific amount of fiscal lapses — I know that was part of the question that the member asked — for staff on leave without pay at this time. The full expenses for 2021-22 will continue to be analyzed and will not be finalized until the Public Accounts are completed, as they are every year.

Not all positions being done by employees on leave without pay are identified as essential work. Any essential work that was previously being done by employees on leave without pay was and is still being done by departments. No departments identified a lapse in their variance reports yet, and none have reflected that in these secondary supplementary estimates as well.

So, there is nothing in the supplementary estimate on this particular question. An example of this would be if a grader operator was on leave without pay, highways would still be cleared — so to alleviate the member opposite's concern — but I don't have specific numbers. Those are things that are being worked on through the Public Service Commission, and I know that the minister responsible can answer more detailed questions as time becomes available and also as information becomes available.

Mr. Cathers: I guess I am not going to get an answer to that question here today, based on the Premier's response. I would just note that, based on the number that the Premier provided to me — he indicated that, as of March 2, 92 full-time employees and 294 in total were on leave without pay. Every one of those people is a Yukon resident, every one of those people has a family, and it is affecting a lot of people, so I just would urge them to come back, if he is unable to provide it today, to provide that response early next week so that we can share that information with people who are affected by it, and also just for public understanding of the impacts of this. When government made the choice to implement a vaccination policy — and to do one that applied to more areas of government than many other provincial governments have done — that did have an effect on families, and there are people who have been, in some cases, without employment income since the beginning of December. I know that those people reach out to government and they also reach out to us, and that information is a pretty

important question to answer, so I would ask the Premier to provide that information early next week, or for the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission to provide it and tell us: Of those 294 employees who are on leave without pay as of the beginning of March, how many of those people will be able to come back to work on April 4, and how many will not be allowed back?

I am going to move on to another area, which is flooding costs. As the Premier will know, there weren't additional appropriations asked for Community Services in this supplementary bill, so the only chance that we have to ask questions about Community Services or others that didn't request new money is during general debate.

As of the fall, we had the government's estimate on what the flood response was going to cost in total, but there was some indication that, just because of the timing of the variance reports, there might be additional costs coming in later. So, what I'm asking for now is what the current number for the total cost of flood response by government is, preferably broken down by department, if the Premier can provide it that way.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is correct that there is no money in this supplementary budget for the question that he is asking about, so I do not have those numbers in front of me. I do know that in the 2021 flood season, for that upper Yukon River — the whole watershed — that was the most extensive flood season on the record in the Yukon. It affected homes, property, and critical infrastructure, and it involved a heavy cost in response. Our first priority when addressing this and when responding to floods is obviously public safety, the protection of critical infrastructure, the vital community services, the environment, and the economy.

We are preparing to support the flood response again this spring. It is hard to speculate how much it is going to cost moving forward. As the member opposite also knows, Public Accounts will have complete finalized costs of flood seasons. But, as I said, we are preparing to support a flood response this spring in the event that it is required. We hope that it isn't required. Engineers have been hired to assess the existing berms that are in the Marsh Lake area right now. They have also been advising on community-level infrastructure needs and trying to help inform us of our response if needed, basically. They are also providing guidance on the decommission of some of the temporary berms that were not needed if they are not needed. Also, as we all know, one of the important things to look at right now as we prepare for this year's flood season is to track the snowpack. This year, the Water Resources branch began snow surveys one month earlier than previously, knowing that this is probably something good to do after looking at last year's levels of snowpack.

The first snow surveys occurred in February of this year. We are continuing to go until May 2022 as well. I believe that the minister responsible spoke to this in the Legislative Assembly already, but the snowpack in some of those areas in the territory is currently above average, but it does remain well below the peak snowpack of 2021, which is really good to hear. It's the snow up in those mountains that really caused a lot of concern last year from the folks at the Water Resources branch.

The average snowpack suggests that there is an elevated flood potential, so we have to be on guard for sure. Information on water levels for some of the Yukon lakes and rivers, including current advisories and flood warnings — the member opposite and others who are listening in can get that information at yukon.ca/water-levels. The member opposite also knows very well that, in Supplementary No. 1, there was \$11 million put aside there for flood relief. The minister spoke about that in the fall, thanking the coordination of efforts that we had. It was unbelievable to see everyone coming together last year, including military individuals and all of our community members. I have to give a bit shout-out to the Filipino community of Yukon. They really stepped up, that's for sure. It was really great to see all of the different contributions. It's what makes us all Yukoners.

I think that's about all I can say at this point, other than that there have been a series of community meetings planned this spring to share the latest information on moving forward the flood recovery efforts for this year. This is including the Yukon Housing Corporation program along with work that is now underway by engineers as well, as I mentioned, to assess those berms and the infrastructure. All of the information is being gathered there and community meetings are being set up. We are, again, very grateful for the outpouring of volunteers, municipalities, First Nation partners, and contractors. It was unbelievable to see all of the partners.

We have learned a lot from our efforts. Preparing is extremely important. We know that we are also preparing a request for financial assistance from the Government of Canada's disaster financial assistance arrangement in order to offset the costs of responding to this type of a natural disaster.

We will keep the member opposite updated with any other information, but that's all I have to share with the member opposite at this point.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that the Premier doesn't have those numbers at his fingertips, but I would ask him to get back to us expeditiously with the total costs of the flood response last year. He noted that there was \$11 million added in the supplementary last year related to that. I appreciate that number, but as the Premier knows very well, it is quite common and could be expected that it very likely may have happened that government may have used resources already voted to departments through internal transfers, et cetera, to cover additional costs once the full number for that flood response came in. I would just ask him to look into that and to get back to us by way of a legislative return with that information on the total cost of the flood response for 2021, as of now. I appreciate that some of the stuff like the disaster financial assistance costs could still be subject to change. All that I'm asking for is him to get back with a legislative return with the total number known to date of costs to Yukon government that apply in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Just in closing on that, I want to note that I do give the government credit, and give officials credit, for listening to citizens earlier in the beginning of this year with public meetings and information about the flood. There were also some gaps in communication, as the Premier will be aware —

including people both in my riding and at Marsh Lake, who had been seriously impacted by the flood — in some cases not actually receiving an invitation themselves to that. I would just urge the Premier and his ministers to work with officials and ensure that every effort is being made to ensure that those who were seriously impacted are invited to any meetings. I would also urge government, in addition to that, to ensure that they are advertising those meetings in social media, newspapers, et cetera, so that if there are any gaps in their contact list — such as through changeover in home ownership, et cetera — people aren't being missed in that.

Last but not least on the topic of flood response, I do just want to thank all of the staff, contractors, and volunteers who helped out last summer for the work they did.

In the interest of moving on to individual departments — and the fact that we would like to spend most of the time for our questions related to budget and policy matters on the main estimates rather than on the supplementary estimates — I will ask the Premier to get back by legislative return, as I indicated, and I will turn the floor over to the Premier or the Leader of the Third Party, whoever wishes to stand at this point in time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as a legislative return, I am not sure if that is necessary. The \$11 million that was spent in this fiscal year was sufficient. Otherwise, you would see a budgetary item in this *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, which you don't see.

I will take the member opposite's point, though, that we can learn more from what we experienced last time. One thing that I noticed was a lack — I think it was based on the sheer size of the outpouring of volunteer help. We weren't ready for that; we really weren't ready for that. We didn't have enough bathrooms for people — porta-potties — and that type of thing, and the Leader of the Third Party and I have spoken about this in the past as well.

So, having such an outpouring of support took people by surprise in a way, but I take the member opposite's point as far as residency and those who are on lists and not on lists. I know that it is going to be part of the conversation with the community engagement that is happening as well.

I can give one example of a department's flood response — because the member is right that there are other budgets and other ways of utilizing funding for floods. I could talk about the Yukon Housing Corporation, for example. They joined our efforts and were collaborating with the government in an intergovernmental way, working on remediation and recovery programs to assist Yukoners in restoring their properties and mitigating against future flooding costs. So, inside their own appropriations, they can do that work.

We have also involved the corporation in the community open houses, which took place in October of last year, to make sure that impacted homeowners had information that they needed and were able to provide feedback as suggested as well. The Housing Corporation distributed a survey, as members opposite would recall, to residents who were impacted by the flood, and they received 57 completed questionnaires and completed 51 on-site residential property inspections to understand and to assess.

So, all of this feeds into a greater intergovernmental response to flooding, but as I said, direct money needed for flood mitigation — you won't see a line item in the third appropriation because the department didn't go over the \$11 million that was appropriated. To the member opposite's points, there are different ways in which other departments will use funding to help out, so I just wanted to provide an example of that to agree with the member opposite.

Ms. White: Although the debate over the last number of days has been enthralling, my interest really is in discussing the mains. There are a few questions that we have for the departments about the supplementary budget, but for the most part, we are looking forward. We want to know what the 2022-23 year has and talk about those programs.

I thank the Premier and my colleague from Lake Laberge for the riveting conversation. I look forward to the next steps.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1. The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of these schedules is schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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 five minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: I will now call the House to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Economic Development

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to welcome officials as they come into the Assembly today with me. Here is our director of Finance, Beth Fricke, as well as our acting deputy minister, Michael Prochazka. I would like to welcome Michael to the Assembly on his first visit. I know the opposition will be kind to him and kind to me.

I will just start with some opening comments before we get into the detailed supplementary budget. As the Minister of Economic Development, I rise today to introduce the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* for the 2021-22 fiscal year. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Yukon has taken focused steps and implemented rapid responses to support the Yukon's economy. As we step cautiously through this evolving situation, we are committed to supporting our residents, businesses, and communities through this global crisis. The supplementary budget includes supports for businesses affected by the pandemic and the additional funding for new media development programming. The total increase is \$3,977,000 for our COVID-19 response.

Costs incurred for the new programming to address the impacts of COVID-19 on Yukon businesses are reflected in this estimate. This includes the Yukon emergency relief program, which supports Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations financially impacted by the orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. This program increased the departmental budget by \$820,000. The department also offered the vaccine verification rebate to support businesses and non-governmental organizations that needed to purchase equipment to ensure that visitors are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The program provided a 50-percent rebate toward the purchase of equipment up to a maximum rebate of \$500. The vaccine verification rebate added an additional \$157,000 to the department's budget.

The main contributor to this supplementary budget request is the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement for restaurants and bars. The original supplement program provided funding to non-accommodation businesses that relied on tourism and were operating at a loss. This was recently expanded to provide greater assistance to restaurants and bars. This increase adds an additional \$3 million to the departmental budget. In total, these pandemic supports created to keep our territory's economy strong have increased the department's budget by, again, \$3,977,000. Operations have also increased by \$500,000. In addition to our pandemic response programming, the department recently announced updated media funding programs to support the territory's film sector. In order to stay aligned with the film funding programs across Canada and to grow the industry, we are asking for an additional \$500,000 to be added to the program's annual budget.

Across the department, as we worked proactively to determine the support needs, we recognized the need for flexibility in how we approach this, whether through changes to existing programs, variations and uptake based on the progression of the pandemic, or new programs for new challenges. We will continue to work with industry organizations and local businesses to support Yukon businesses and workers impacted by the pandemic. This important work will continue. Through the supplementary budget, we are seeking an increase of \$4,477,000 to support these efforts.

To summarize, we are putting forward a total of \$27.88 million in operation and maintenance and capital for the Department of Economic Development. The work that the department undertakes using these funds will continue to pave our path to recovery during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will continue to adapt and respond as the impact on the Yukon evolves. I would like to thank the department for their efforts, local chambers of commerce, as well as our local private sector leaders for their commitment to supporting the Yukon's economy and our local businesses.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to thank the officials and welcome them to the House this afternoon as we discuss the supplementary estimates. The briefing was very succinct and very clear, as most of these dollars were expended on the COVID response.

I was a little curious about the \$500,000 for the review of the film funding program. Is that review finished, and what were the expected goals to come out of those changes to the programs? Was it increased dollars for applications? I am just curious.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have concluded that work. We have four new media funding programs, including the administrative business guidelines that were announced on January 10, 2022, to support the production of professional film, television, and digital media projects. The key changes, which are consistent with the national funding agencies, were requested and supported by industry. We have simplified the administrative processes for the media programs and reduced red tape. The budget to support these new programs is \$1,160,000, which includes the increase of \$500,000 that we're talking about today. The four programs are: a pre-development fund, which is \$60,000; we have a development fund, which is \$80,000; we have a media production fund, which is \$940,000; and a training fund for \$80,000. These programs support the growth of Yukon's growing media industry, which creates local jobs, builds capacity, supports Yukon businesses and entrepreneurs, and contributes to economic diversification.

For folks who are watching, you will see that the local talent continues to grow. We are seeing amazing work from our local producers and directors. The goal in the department is to have as many homegrown projects as possible. If folks go back over the last decade or two decades, what they will remember is that a lot of the push was around bringing feature films from outside of the Yukon here. You might remember the motto on different clothing and hats that said "Need snow". It really talked about the spring season and that last quarter of the fiscal and the first quarter of the next fiscal — in that spring session where this was a great spot for people to come and shoot. We have phenomenal light at that time of year. It would definitely provide positive impact, but now we are seeing a lot of homegrown talent. They came and spoke with us. We had multiple meetings. It was a very significant process that was undertaken. In the end, we settled on these programs.

One of the other things that is important for Yukoners to be aware of is that it is really challenging, when you provide a tax incentive that you provide for coming here for a filming location — it is really difficult — we have talked about that in the Assembly before — to understand exactly what the demand is going to be for those programs. You try to risk-manage it as best as you can. An example that I sometimes use is that, in my first couple of years in this job, we had a really significant feature that reached out to us. They likely were going to spend \$20 million over a short period of time. They reached out to us and said that they are going to need 300 tradespeople, and they are going to come and build a very significant set. You never want to turn that down, but at the same time, you then have to start to do the calculations on that to figure out how much for an incentive. What I have heard from officials on many occasions on this is that, as a jurisdiction, you don't want to turn down a significant player to come and shoot because that conversation moves throughout the industry — whether it be through Vancouver, Toronto, or Los Angeles — and it's harder

to get folks to come back in the future because, like anything in business, they want to see certainty.

With that, what has really been an advantage to us is to continue to have the local talent work with us. We can manage that better when we are projecting out what our costs are going to be. As well, the new funding programs address the four themes identified through the engagement, which included: streamlining production funding; strengthening support for development; simplifying access to training supports; and standardizing business policies.

After announcing the new programs, the department held 10 online information sessions with industry representatives to provide detail on each individual program, the business guidelines, and to answer questions. I am hoping that members of the Assembly or those who might be listening in today would be aware that there was overwhelming support from our industry association, SPYA. They were there when we made this announcement. This is something that they felt was long overdue. I want to thank Kelly Milner who was there and really shared some very positive words. One of the talents as well was Teresa Earle, who has been doing so much. There were a number of people, but I think it would be appropriate to mention those two individuals who have been extraordinary in building and increasing the local industry here.

Ms. Van Bibber: The close to \$4 million for COVID response — that will be my last question and then I will turn it over to the Third Party. I am assuming that this total amount was fully subscribed to and is also 100-percent recoverable from Canada. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I should add that, no, this comes out of the Yukon framework. This was a commitment by the government. This government felt that this was an appropriate place to allocate these funds. They are not funds that, at this time, we would be refunded. I am not aware of that happening. It would come out of the TFF that receive and, of course, would have to be budgeted that way.

I will quickly just go through it — I know that the Third Party may have some questions. The department did an extraordinary job. Just to let folks know that I can't get into the detail. We have what we have allocated broken down by every sector, and then I can cross-reference that by all nine programs that we delivered over two years. If the Third Party would like, I can then break that down by every single community and then again over the nine programs.

I guess I would start by saying that I can bring that down — so when we talked in the opening comments, I talked about the fact that our total appropriation that we are looking at in this particular case was going to be \$27,088,000. Then what I can do with our programs alone is bring that down to \$26,962,907, so you can see that we can pretty much bring that right down. That is the exact allocation across, so I think it is important. Economic Development has just been doing an absolutely extraordinary job through this whole process. It is nation-leading work.

I will just touch on a few things that, I think, address the question: Was it fully subscribed? Absolutely, we have put that

money out there. I will just quickly go through the nine programs and then I will give you the communities.

The Yukon business relief program — without getting into it by sector — we allocated \$13,486,426; the Yukon emergency relief program, we have provided \$66,042; the Yukon essential workers income support program, we have allocated \$5,470,399; the paid sick leave rebate, we have allocated \$1,949,711; the regional relief and recovery fund, we have provided \$3,446,202; the tourism sector support — and this is just between October 2021 and March 2022 — we have provided \$570,368; the tourism sector support, hospitality, we have provided \$297,667.

The temporary support for events fund — which you will remember from last year and through this past bump we had — we have allocated \$1,665,369; the vaccine verification rebate, we have provided \$10,723; and that gives us our total of \$26,956,755.

I will just touch on the communities, which I think is important. Through our funding, to Beaver Creek, we provided \$111,936; to Burwash Landing, we provided \$9,322; to Carcross, we provided \$215,926; to Carmacks, we provided \$143,459; to Dawson City, we provided \$1,063,239; Destruction Bay, \$67,543; Eagle Plains, \$1,484; Faro, \$109,988; Haines Junction, \$701,387; Keno City, \$1,931; Mayo, \$23,225; Old Crow, \$27,896; Ross River, \$158,046; Tagish, \$83,643; Teslin, \$46,096; Watson Lake, \$596,809; and Whitehorse, \$10,124,496; for a grand total in those categories — this is just the business relief program — of \$13,486,426. I think that is appropriate, because that program — essentially, we funded almost every community, and the other programs, we have gaps where, depending on the program, it wasn't subscribed, if you look across the entire Yukon.

Again, to the department, thank you for this work and amazing detail. Again, it just shows the complete integrity and accountability in the work that is undertaken, but it is so — you know, I think that the other point is, when you are trying to do public policy in this level of speed, you are taking chances. Usually, opposition parties, as well as the public, don't give public servants and politicians much room when you are trying to be innovative, and usually your mistakes get highlighted and magnified immensely.

So, when you take the chance to build programs like this — in some cases, just over a week or two, and you do your best due diligence — coming back and seeing this level is something that we — we actually spoke with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business the other day and asked if they would be doing a grading for all of the provinces and territories, because we feel that the work that has been done here has been exemplary.

I could get into more detail, but thank you for the questions, and I look forward to speaking with the Third Party.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you also to the staff again.

Ms. White: It is a pleasure to have the officials today in the Assembly, and I will just build on both what the minister and my colleague have said, that there is great work done by this department.

I appreciated that the minister just read off that long list of successful programs, but this would be a pitch that I would make toward departments, as that is the kind of information that is incredibly valuable — to be able to have in front of you — because I am not going to lie; the chicken scratch numbers that I have for programs right now may not be accurate, but I hope that the minister will correct me as we go through it.

So, having those programs, especially split out through communities and the different streams, is really valuable, because it shows not only what was happening in communities — and by that, I mean individual rural communities, the City of Whitehorse, but in different industries — but where we needed to put that support.

I have a question about income support, and I think I heard \$5,770,000, but I could be wrong. Can the minister again tell me — when we talk about income support or income supplementary — it was the program that I believe was a top-up that mirrored the federal government. You can correct me, but I believe it was up to \$20 or a maximum of \$4 per hour that was given. Can he break that down for me a bit? I would like to know how many individuals, as a grand number, and then I would like to know if we had people who were topping up before the \$4. Were they closer to \$20 than not? And how many got the full \$4 amount? Because I'm trying to get an idea of where we're at and the spectrum of employees who were being supported with this program.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I will do is give a bit of a breakdown about how many folks used the program. I will go back, and then I can give a quick summary of which areas in the economy people received it in the business sector, and then maybe I'll just do a quick run through the communities, if we have time. We will see where we are at. If there's anything I miss, certainly when we come back next week, I can get any additional information for the member opposite.

There was a great dialogue with the member opposite through this process. There were many individuals who the member opposite was advocating on behalf of, and we went back and forth on a number of things. I think we worked through some challenges that some people were having. It's important to state that not all employers embraced this originally, which was a bit sad to see, because we thought it was a fairly generous program. We can say that we are aware that folks who are in these industries continue, and have continued, to continue to do strong work and have been on the front lines. I think that's important to note. Our hope was — of course, we've seen some other changes within the rates of pay over the last year, and that partially has to do with the agreement that we have in place — our confidence and supply bill — and I think that has given many folks on the front line what they have seen as a bump. Of course, these are the people who we have all held up for their work.

Again, the Yukon essential workers income support program provided wage top-ups of up to \$4 per hour to essential workers until February 2021. We paid out \$5.4 million, of which the federal government provided \$4.3 million, to more than 2,000 workers employed by 160 businesses.

Again, I will just go through some of the sectors. What is interesting is that, when you think about this program, of course, the accommodation and food services had the second largest allocation, and that was \$1,899,610. The administrative and support, waste management, was \$143,863. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting was \$40,539. Arts, entertainment, and recreation was \$22,050. Construction was \$12,412. Finance and insurance was \$24,574. Health and social assistance was almost a quarter of a million dollars — it was \$232,793. Information and cultural industries was \$7,636. Management of companies and enterprises was \$16,008. Manufacturing was \$51,135. Other services — we can dig into that, but we are at \$45,846. Professional, scientific, and technical services came in at \$89,414. Real estate, rental, and leasing was \$10,126. Of course, our largest sector, which was retail, was \$2,778,460. Transportation and warehousing was \$71,095. Wholesale trade was just under \$25,000, at \$24,839, for a total of \$5,470,399.

You can see those sectors that we are all probably quite aware of. Accommodation and food services and the areas of retail trade were where the majority of the money went. Again, what's also interesting — which the member opposite may touch on — is that these are the areas that we are going to have the most difficulty — at least with accommodation and food services — getting people back, because we have a situation right now within our economy where those other sectors that we touched on, where you saw that there wasn't as much need, had higher wages.

Folks are now pivoting off for these higher paying jobs, and of course, that has left us with a real challenge in those two sectors.

Ms. White: I gave up trying to write down the numbers at a certain point, but it will be in Hansard by the time we come back the next time. Within those numbers, did the department do a breakdown to figure out, again — I was just looking to figure out a percentage — like, how many individuals — so, we said that there were 160 businesses and 2,000 individuals. Out of that 2,000, what was the percentage of the top-out for the \$4 and the percentage that was not — because, again, it was a maximum of a \$4 top-out to a maximum of \$20. So, that would mean that someone who made \$16 an hour, they could get the whole \$4 — \$16 and below — but if they made \$16 and above, it would just top out at \$20.

I am just looking to try to figure out what that breakdown is.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have, of course, our director, who will endeavour to take a look at that. She feels confident that is possible — a superstar when it comes to pulling these numbers together — so, I will leave that to director Fricke. But I will share one thing with you, through the data collection from the wage support programs — one thing I think that is important — suggests that the average hourly wage in Yukon that we're seeing is just under \$25, so it is \$24.67, is what the data poll has shown us, which I think is good to see.

But, again, it is going back to that question that was tabled by the member opposite: What is that delta between folks? First of all, what does it look like? How many people were topped

up, and how many people maxed out? Then again, I think that it is important for business owners to be aware — when you're thinking that is the average wage that is out there, that \$24.67. We have seen in the economy over the last number of months — and I will apologize to the Assembly that I don't have the exact, this month's, number yet — but we have been in that range of probably, I don't know, somewhere between 1,300 to 1,500 job openings. With our newest employment numbers that we saw, the good thing was that our unemployment rate has risen a bit, but that is because there are 300 more people looking for work, which we are very happy about. We have seen the business sector and the Yukon chamber come out and say that is a healthier place to be, because now we have more people working; we're not as tight and restricted within our available workforce.

Again, there is a lot that we can pull from this and things that we can learn, especially in Economic Development. As we move the labour market team over, these are things that we will be looking into and using it to guide us as we move forward and as we build a new strategy moving forward.

Ms. White: I will just get a couple of questions on the record, just because I am sure that this information will have to go back to the department. I look forward to having that conversation when it comes forward.

The minister just said that the average wage in the territory was just under \$24. Understanding that there are approximately 4,500 employees who work for the Yukon government, when we do that calculation, can the minister come back with the number of how many employees there are in the territory?

When we talk about an average of \$24, we understand that the biggest employer in the territory is the Yukon government. The Yukon government doesn't pay \$24 an hour. The City of Whitehorse is around that point. When we talk about \$24, we know that 2,000 employees needed a wage top-up, which means they made below \$20 an hour. I would like to have that conversation when we come back.

Things that I will also be asking about include the breakdown for sick leave — how many employees had access to sick leave and the average number of days — some of those numbers that the minister spoke of.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge 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. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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: 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 5:27 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 52

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, March 21, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring Sitting

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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

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Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier 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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 21, 2022 — 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

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am wondering if I could ask all of my colleagues to please welcome several folks here for our tribute today. Je vous présente: Manon Moreau, sous-ministre, DSF; André Bourcier, directeur, DSF; et Nancy Power, gestionnaire, communications et politiques, DSF.

Also, from l'AFY, we have: an old colleague, Edwine Veniat, vice-présidente; Edith Bélanger; Pamela Battiston; et Cynthia Labonté. Also, from Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, we have: Marc Champagne, directeur général; et Jean-Sébastien Blais, président, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, who just recently, I think, in honour of International Francophonie Day, wrote an article in France about the Yukon and what a great place it is to visit and live. So, if we could please welcome them all.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like my colleagues to help me welcome some folks here today for the tribute. From the Human Rights Commission, we have Birju Dattani, who is the executive director of the Human Rights Commission; we have Vida Nelson, legal counsel of the Human Rights Commission; and we have Keely Bass, who is the newest member of the Human Rights Commission. Welcome to you all.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to ask my colleagues to help welcome some guests here today for a ministerial statement later on in the Order Paper. First, Dr. Lesley Brown, president and vice chancellor for Yukon University — welcome; Blake Buckle, associate VP, Internal Relations for Yukon University — welcome; Brooke Alsbury, early learning coordinator and instructor for Yukon University; Laurie Parker, early learning practicum coordinator and instructor, Yukon University and chairperson of the Yukon Child Care Board — welcome; and Maggie Powter, instructor and advisor for the professional diploma pathway program at Yukon University — welcome.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome a number of representatives of environmental groups in the Yukon. From Yukoners Concerned, we have Spence Hill;

from Raven Recycling, we have Heather Ashthorn; and from For Their Future Yukon, we have Peggy Land. I would also like to welcome two wonderful environmental activists, who I am lucky to have as constituents: J.P. Pinard and Sally Wright.

Applause

Ms. White: I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming Mary — I totally blanked on your last name. Mary Amerongen is responsible for making sure that we have a lot of literature around environmental causes and steps forward, and, of course, Tom Parlee is also here in the Chamber. Thank you for coming.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Francophonie Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Bon printemps, Honorable Président. Je suis fier de me lever pour rendre hommage à notre communauté francophone au lendemain de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Cette journée phare est au cœur des festivités des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. Les Rendez-vous, qui se déroulent tout le mois de mars, sont une occasion privilégiée de célébrer et de promouvoir la richesse de la francophonie canadienne qui est enracinée dans l'identité de notre pays.

Nous avons plusieurs raisons de célébrer au Yukon. Non seulement parce que le français est bien présent dans nos rues, nos écoles et nos commerces, mais aussi au sein de notre gouvernement. Je veux reconnaître le travail du personnel de la Direction des services en français qui appuie les efforts des ministères de servir et d'informer les Yukonnais et les Yukonaises en français. Grâce à nos actions concertées, nous avons pu fournir des communications en français plus rapidement que jamais face à la crise de la COVID-19.

À la lumière des progrès accomplis cette année, le futur des services en français s'annonce radieux. Cette année, le thème de cette vingt-quatrième édition des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie est «Ces traditions qui forment les identités». Comme l'une des traditions canadiennes-françaises les plus prisées ici est la cabane à sucre, j'invite avec plaisir mes collègues à manger de la tire sur la neige ce jeudi, de 14 h à 15 h, au CSSC Mercier. Cette activité s'ajoute à la quinzaine d'activités organisées au Yukon. Vous pouvez retrouver la liste sur le site Web de l'Association franco-yukonnaise et dans les pages du journal l'Aurore boréale.

Honorable Président, je tiens à souligner le travail remarquable des organismes, des artistes et des entrepreneurs francophones qui contribuent à bâtir un Yukon prospère où il fait bon vivre. Je salue également toutes les personnes qui participent activement à la vitalité de notre communauté francophone et qui choisissent, chaque jour, de vivre et d'apprendre en français.

Bons Rendez-vous de la Francophonie.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Salam, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 20 as International Francophonie Day. The francophone community in the Yukon is stronger and more vibrant than ever. While the Yukon population continues to grow, so does that of the francophonie people.

Our French immersion stream of education has increased in popularity so much that there are two schools offering French immersion education. I understand that an additional kindergarten class was added at École Whitehorse Elementary School to accommodate this growth and to maintain a steady stream of students through to graduation.

Students are settling in well at CSSC Mercier. I was fortunate to join in a tour of the new school early in the school year. The new school is beautiful and allows French first language education to flourish.

According to a Statistics Canada census, 14 percent of the Yukon's population speaks both French and English. With the number of kids moving through French immersion, that number is sure to grow. Currently, around five percent of the population identifies as francophonie. I'm sure we will see that number rise as well in the future.

French programming and bilingual government services have also been on the rise in the last decade, thanks to the good work of the French Language Services Directorate. These services have been expanding over the last number of years. I understand that during the 2020-21 year, the directorate translated 5,801 documents — an average of 483 documents a month.

On top of translation services, government employees continue to take advantage of the French language courses offered. The directorate is busy, and we thank them all for all they do.

L'Association franco-yukonnaise, in addition to the numerous programs and services offered to the francophone community, also offers French second language courses for adults.

Les EssentiElles is dedicated to representing the interests of francophone women in the Yukon and works on numerous projects and campaigns to promote awareness for community and women's issues.

I would like to give our thanks to AFY and Les EssentiElles for their continued dedication and work on behalf of the francophone community.

Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. White: Merci Monsieur le président, je suis fière de prendre la parole au nom du NPD du Yukon pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

La Journée internationale de la Francophonie est célébrée partout sur la planète. Aujourd'hui, l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie a 88 États et gouvernements membres. Dans le monde, plus de 320 millions de personnes sont francophones. Il s'agit de la cinquième langue parlée dans le monde.

Au Yukon, la francophonie occupe aussi une place importante. Nous célébrons d'ailleurs notre propre Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise, le 15 mai. Avec fierté, le Yukon a le 3e plus grand pourcentage de gens qui parlent le français et l'anglais au Canada, après le Québec et le Nouveau-Brunswick. Les touristes francophones qui visitent le Yukon sont souvent surpris par le nombre de francophones qu'ils rencontrent ou par les services en français qu'ils peuvent obtenir à différents endroits.

J'aimerais en profiter pour reconnaître la contribution de l'Association franco-yukonnaise. Depuis plusieurs années, l'AFY offre des programmes, des cours, des activités dédiées à la population francophone et francophile du Yukon — en plus de l'accueil aux nouveaux arrivants, l'aide à l'arrivée dans un nouveau pays et un nouveau territoire, mais aussi des initiatives culturelles et artistiques, et j'en passe.

En terminant, comme à chaque année, je veux conclure cet hommage à la Journée de la Francophonie en adressant un merci tout spécial à mes professeurs dans le programme d'immersion grâce à qui j'ai appris cette belle langue qu'est le français.

Applause

In recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today to pay tribute to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this day in 1960, 69 people who were peacefully demonstrating against apartheid were killed by South African police. This tragic event is known as the Sharpeville massacre. In response to this act of violence, the United Nations declared March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

It is an important day intended to raise awareness about how racism devalues individuals and denies their basic human rights based on race or ethnic background. Mr. Speaker, we in Canada are not free from the challenges of combatting racism. We have faced the continued discovery of thousands of unmarked graves at former residential schools across the country — graves of children.

We have also seen a sharp rise in racially motivated violence, especially against Asian and Moslem peoples and communities. The continued discovery of unmarked graves of indigenous children has renewed trauma for generations of indigenous peoples and brought the horrific actions of Canada's past into the world spotlight.

In response to worldwide mistreatment, indigenous peoples developed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, or what is also known as "UNDRIP", a framework for indigenous peoples' individual and collective rights which speaks to the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous peoples of the world.

The role that our leadership and government can play is absolutely crucial and is evident as we ensure that our workplaces, schools, and gathering places are inclusive and free of racial discrimination. National reports, including those of the

Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, have identified comprehensive actions that can be taken to address racism against indigenous peoples here in Canada.

As well, movements such as Black Lives Matter have highlighted the need to address systemic racism in our country and our territory. Educating ourselves on the histories and cultures of black, indigenous, and people of colour and speaking up when someone makes a racist comment are important steps to addressing inappropriate and damaging behaviour. To be an ally means that we actively promote inclusion for communities that face discrimination. This is not done solely through words; to be truly an ally requires us to recognize that our role is one of support and action.

The Government of Yukon is committed to combatting systemic racism and taking action against the racism that continues to affect Yukoners and Canadians alike. I am pleased and proud to speak to this important issue today.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is observed annually on March 21. I would like to start by acknowledging that we have the fortune to meet and support one another today on this beautiful land that is the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. We all know that First Nation individuals have long been facing the inequalities that we are standing up against today.

It was on this day in 1960 when 69 people were killed and over 180 were seriously wounded by police when police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration against apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville, South Africa. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was proclaimed in 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly, which called on the international community to work to end racial discrimination. Unfortunately, there is not some standard metric by which we can measure whether the steps we take are contributing toward eliminating racism.

Different ethnic groups continue to experience different levels of discrimination. We still see general racism and hate crimes. We see religious and cultural discrimination. It is an ongoing challenge throughout the country and the territory. Every Yukoner has a role to play in ending racism. It starts with an individual and family unit and a goal of ensuring inclusion and respect are taught at home. We must encourage our children to embrace our differences. We want the next generation to live in a Yukon where they are free to express their beliefs, traditions, and fully embrace their cultures without worrying about discrimination, racism, or violence.

Let us celebrate the increasing diversity of the Yukon. I encourage members of this House and all Yukoners to stand up to racial discrimination and to ensure that tolerance, respect, and inclusion are practised within your homes and throughout the community.

As the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said: "Let us work to eliminate messages of hatred – the concept of 'us' and 'them'; the false attitude that we can accept some and reject and exclude others simply for how they look, where they worship or who they love."

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to support the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The UN called for meaningful and safe public participation and representation in all areas of decision-making to prevent and combat racial discrimination. As much as we in the Yukon want to believe that racial discrimination is not a part of our community, it is still alive and well across systems and structures of our society and intersects with other forms of discrimination.

Racial discrimination is entangled in many of our systems in the Yukon. From health care to justice to climate action, the decisions that each of us make in this impact racialized Yukoners in unique ways. For those of us who are racialized, we witness this kind of discrimination daily. For those of you who are not, it is your responsibility to challenge your assumptions and your biases to make sure that your decisions are making our community better, healthier, and safer for everyone.

This year's theme is "Voices for action against racism". As leaders in our communities, I am reminded of just how loud and powerful each of our voices is. We each represent our own ridings and we represent all Yukoners. To truly end racial discrimination, we need to ensure that the people in charge reflect our society.

Today, I encourage each of us to look inward and ask ourselves important questions: Are we representing everyone in our communities? Do our communities, departments, and social circles reflect today's Yukon? What do we need to do today to ensure representation?

Salamat po.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a *Yukon News* story that shows the Yukon Party and its leader's support for rent controls.

Ms. Tredger: I have a letter from the Premier of the Yukon to the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change responding to the recommendations.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Are there any petitions?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 10

Ms. Tredger: I have the following petition for tabling which reads:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

That: The Yukon Government has declared that we are currently in a state of climate emergency and so has committed to reducing Territorial Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 45 percent over 2010 levels by the year 2030, in order to take responsibility for our part in helping to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius; and

That: The Auditor General's 2017 Yukon report stated that: the government's climate action commitments and progress reports were "weak, with many lacking milestones or completion dates," also that the government "did not systematically assess the risks associated with climate change before it defined its commitments"; and

That: The Yukon's 2021 State of the Environment report found that between 2009 and 2019, Greenhouse Gas emissions had increased by 24 per cent; and

That: GHG emissions from the mining sector constitute a significant and varying proportion of the Yukon's emissions which could easily make it impossible for the Yukon to reach its emissions target; and

That: The scope, complexity and urgency of this necessary 45 percent reductions target is unprecedented and affects the future of all Yukon residents, yet is still lacking are specific commitments to successfully identify and narrow the knowledge gap regarding all current sources of GHG emissions, in order to enable and prioritize well-informed decision-making;

Therefore, we the undersigned respectfully request that the Yukon Legislative Assembly urge the Government of Yukon to commit to each of the following essential steps:

1. starting immediately that the government will establish a policy to ensure that whenever capital decisions are being considered from across all government sectors and industry for all items worth over five hundred thousand dollars, a complete analysis of multi-phase GHG emissions from all up-front and operational activities expected, will be included. To avoid conflicts of interest and to ensure objectivity and accuracy, all such analyses will be completed by qualified professionals from private companies independent of government, legislative body, or development proponent;

2. Such complete, multi-phase GHG emissions analyses for pre-approved projects will also be completed and made public when associated funds are due to be released;

3. The Yukon Government will set an emissions cap for the mining industries by December 2022 similar to the cap being set by the Federal government on the fossil fuel industries; and

4. Whenever GHG emissions analyses have been completed, the data will be entered into a publicly accessible database for purposes of transparent accountability and for yearly progress reviews.

Mr. Speaker, this has been signed by representatives of a number of environmental organizations in the Yukon,

including CPAWS Yukon, Yukon Conservation Society, Yukoners Concerned, Raven Recycling Society, For Their Future Yukon, and a number of individual Yukoners.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented? Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 304: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Tredger: I move that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 304 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the continued transition away from fossil fuels by investing \$2.1 million toward zero-emission vehicles, including rebates and charging stations, in this year's budget.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the work of the Dawson Regional Planning Commission.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Les EssentiElles to establish sustainable core funding for staff and provide flexible and predictable project funding beyond 2022-23.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to support the development of communications infrastructure in rural Yukon, including working with the private sector to expand cellular phone coverage to people without service in rural areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fossil Point, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Silver City, and Junction 37.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Medical Association to create the position of a Yukon territorial medical director that will be tasked with leading the advancement of the transformation of Yukon's health system.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to rescind its response to the recommendations of the Youth Panel on Climate Change and accept all of their recommendations.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Early learning childcare

Hon. Ms. McLean: Every child in the Yukon deserves to have access to high-quality, affordable care that promotes early learning opportunities and builds a strong foundation for when they begin school. The Yukon's universal childcare system aims to do just that with access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and childcare supports. On Friday, alongside the Government of Canada and Yukon University, I announced a new accelerated education pathway for early learning childcare educators, also known as "ECEs".

With \$217,000 from the *Canada-Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*, the new professional diploma pathway program will support early childhood educators with an individualized plan to complete the required training to achieve the full level 3 status. This status is the highest credential for early learning childcare educators in Yukon. Another \$120,000 from the agreement will enhance course offerings for rural communities.

We know that when preschool-aged children have access to high-quality early learning and childcare experiences, they have a better chance of succeeding on their educational journey as young adults. These individualized plans will support educators by providing the flexibility that they need to continue working and providing care for Yukon children while having the time needed to complete the required coursework and practicums to get their full level 3 status.

We have identified a cohort of 100 educators in licensed programs in the territory who are eligible for the accelerated upgrade, and I hope to see them take advantage of this opportunity when the program begins next month.

By providing additional training opportunities for ECEs in the Yukon, we are delivering on our commitment in the *Putting People First* report to increase accessible training opportunities that support early learning for Yukon children. This only builds on our government's historic investments in early learning and childcare.

The Yukon's universal affordable childcare program offsets the cost of childcare by up to \$700 per month per child and ensures that fully qualified early learning childcare educators receive over \$30 per hour, the highest minimum wage for ECEs in the country.

By investing in early learning and childcare, we are making life more affordable for Yukon families and providing Yukon children the best start on their educational pathway. This is an exciting and transformative time for early learning in the Yukon, as we know that each educator who takes advantage of

this opportunity will, in turn, pass on benefits to hundreds of Yukon children in their care.

Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to respond to this ministerial statement.

The statement by the minister is essentially a reprint of the press release that went out on Friday. I did have a chance to review it over the weekend.

We are certainly happy to see this investment from the federal government in training and development for early childhood educators, as we know that ensuring access to well-trained educators is a critical component of our early learning system.

Further, the recruitment and retention of ECEs has been a real challenge for the system as well.

While this statement is about a very specific initiative, I do have some broader questions about the training of ECEs.

Beyond this one-time investment in accelerating level 3 equivalence to fully credentialed level 3 status, what is the vision for early learning post-secondary education more generally? Does the minister anticipate working with Yukon University to create a degree program for early learning in the Yukon?

It seems to us that there is a real opportunity for the Yukon to explore this and to become leaders in this field. I should note that this was a part of the Yukon Party's 2021 platform.

I would also like to know if the minister is considering working with the industry to review the credentialing system for ECEs. I have heard from some in the industry that the current system of levels 1 through 3 is somewhat limiting and that there should be a review of the system to encourage ongoing professional development and advancements in education. I would like the minister to provide a response as to whether or not that type of review is being considered.

I would also like to ask the minister to consider working with Yukon University to ensure that the physical space at the Ayamdigut Campus is sufficient for the ELCC program. Is the government considering providing support to develop a more comprehensive teaching lab for the ELCC program?

I would also like to ask the minister whether this program will become permanent or if it's just in place with the funding provided in 2022. We know that we need more ECEs in the Yukon, so it would be very helpful if the minister could also offer some sense of how the ELCC program will be expanded to meet this demand over the coming years.

Finally, the recruitment and retention of ECEs is particularly challenging in rural Yukon. With regard to the 100 ECEs identified in its first cohort, can the minister tell us how many are from rural Yukon? As well, it would be great if the minister could expand on her indication that there will be funding provided to Yukon University to enhance course offerings for rural communities. If the minister could expand on that, it would be very helpful.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to receive this information from the minister but do hope that she can express some of the plans to address the broader challenges that the

ELCC system faces and provide a more forward-looking vision for the government's intent and plans to meet those challenges.

Ms. White: This past Friday was indeed an important day for Yukon children. Representatives of the Yukon government, the federal government, and Yukon University got together to announce an accelerated pathway for early childhood educators in the territory.

We agree that increasing the quality of early childhood education in the Yukon will have positive, lasting benefits for every Yukoner. For too long, educators moving to the Yukon have struggled with having their education recognized — some being classed lower than experience should put them and others left challenging courses at the university year after year, taking away valuable time that they should be spending in their classrooms.

We're thrilled to support any program that will allow children in the Yukon more access to highly trained educators, and it's fantastic that more early years professionals will be able to receive their level 3 qualifications, but the learning shouldn't stop there.

When will Yukon government implement mandatory professional development for early childhood educators? Why is it that Yukon government is holding and supporting public school teachers at a different standard to those who educate our youngest learners?

The childcare centres that take the initiative upon themselves to further educate their employees are left struggling to find professional development options that are in line with their needs. Going forward, it's important that we continue to listen to early years professionals and to what they need and that we continue working with them in striving to offer Yukon children the best opportunities possible.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much for the comments and questions that have been posed here today. I am excited to be talking about early learning and childcare and the investments that have been made. These are historic investments, Mr. Speaker — investments that we have not seen in Yukon's history. We know that investing in our children at this early age will bring great results and are really very much connected to our overall outcome strategy in terms of how we educate and support our early learning childcare in the Yukon.

This is why, when we invest in educators, in our children, and in schools, we are in turn investing in the territory and Yukoners. I definitely am looking forward to later debate in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker, where we will get deep into early learning and childcare in the Yukon.

Today, I'm really happy to be celebrating this milestone. That is why our government has been really focused on providing ECEs with the support they need to provide the best quality of care and education for all Yukon families. We know that — through additional learning opportunities, a diversity of languages and cultures, and other culturally inclusive programming in early learning years — children will have a strong sense of self and a foundation of learning as they enter the school system.

I would like to take the opportunity — and we will get a lot of answers to questions that folks posed here today because we will have a lot of time to debate this during this Sitting. I also wanted to bring some focus to another announcement that we had made last October. We announced cultural enhancement funding that will provide licensed early learning and childcare programs and ECEs in the Yukon with access to \$800,000 in cultural enhancement funding for the development of culturally rich early learning programs and environments.

These programs could include Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, learning, and being as well as outdoor experiential learning opportunities and education on francophone and other diverse language cultures.

Another announcement that we had made recently around our Canada-Yukon agreement — we have entered into, this summer, an agreement with Canada that will bring \$54 million, which is a new investment into early learning and childcare with our investment from Yukon.

Another new program that we announced earlier was the early learning and childcare benefits funding program. The new program is providing up to eight percent of staff wages for employers to select and offer a comprehensive benefits package that meets the needs of ECEs. Over \$800,000 in funding will be available to early learning licensed childcare providers and programs in the Yukon to provide benefit packages to ECEs, including operators currently offering benefits for their employees. This funding will become available on April 1.

I am really happy to have been able to speak about this important initiative and our investments from our government.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Kent: So, last week when asked which school in Whitehorse would be replaced next year, the Minister of Highways and Public Works told media — and I quote: "I am not going to be providing the big reveal." Instead, he indicated that this would be done by the Minister of Education. However, last week, the Minister of Education refused to answer which school would be chosen. So, can the minister first tell us: At this stage, has she made a decision about which school will be replaced?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I am happy to stand again this week to talk about our government's investments in schools and our learning environments for our young people. We continue to work with the school communities on planning for their short-term, medium-term, and long-term facility needs. We are pleased that the work is underway on two new schools now — Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. Government of Yukon, as I have stated a few times now, does have a five-year capital plan that includes school replacements and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for years to come. We are continuing always to work with our partners and school communities.

I have made it a point to meet with school councils across the territory and work with all of our school communities. We do have \$200,000 in our capital budget that has been identified for the 2022-23 main estimates for preliminary consultation and initial design of an existing aging Whitehorse replacement school.

Mr. Kent: Again, the record in Hansard will reflect that there was no answer to a relatively straightforward question about whether or not the minister has made a decision yet on which school will be replaced.

Last week, the Minister of Highways and Public Works made it very clear to media that the decision rested with the Minister of Education. He said that while he had personal opinions, it wasn't his call. He said — and I quote: “The Minister of Education may well ask for input, but ultimately she and perhaps the Premier will make the decision as to which schools.”

I am going to ask my question again, and it is a very simple one: Has the minister made her decision yet on which school in Whitehorse will be replaced next year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the supplementary question. I have indicated that we do have money in our 2022-23 budget for a Whitehorse replacement school. We are continuing to work with our partners and do our due diligence to make a decision around this replacement. It is an important investment, and it's really great that the Yukon Party is now interested in infrastructure development around schools. This was not their focus when they were in government. It is one of our focuses.

We are going to continue to work with our partners and we will be making that decision in an informed way with evidence-based decisions. We will make that announcement in a proper way and not on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. We will do that with Yukoners overall and find a very proper way to do that.

I am happy to keep answering the question that the member opposite brings forward, but it seems like it is the same question.

Mr. Kent: While it's clear that the minister didn't directly answer that question, I guess what we can infer from that response is that the decision on which school will be replaced has not been made.

So, again, we've heard from parents in a number of school communities since we raised this last week. They would like to know if their school is being replaced and, if it is, where it will be located. The minister's colleague has said that she may ask for input.

So, my question for the minister is: Will she consult with the affected school communities, and when will she finally make the decision on which school will be replaced?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I believe I have said repeatedly that we're working with our school communities. I have had discussions with them. I have talked with school communities across this territory and, for sure, in every conversation I have had — infrastructure, capital upgrades, renovation projects — replacement of schools has been a major topic in many of those discussions.

We do know and we are committed to replacing one of our schools in Whitehorse. When we look at these decisions, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of considerations and we are, again, making our decisions based on evidence and modern considerations as well. Education in the Yukon is very dynamic and we're in a really changing time, so we make our decisions, of course, partly on building age, seismic mitigation considerations, programming needs, and, of course, enrolment growth.

I will continue to build on this. If we want to have more questions, I'm happy to answer.

Question re: Dawson City recreation centre

Ms. Van Bibber: The Government of Yukon's five-year capital concept lists a new recreation centre for the City of Dawson. According to those documents, work is set to begin this year.

Can the Minister of Community Services tell us how much is budgeted for the new recreation centre in Dawson City?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's great to be on my feet this afternoon talking about all of the recreation facilities that we're building across the territory, one of which is for Dawson City.

I had a great conversation with the mayor just last week about the community centre. I have had many conversations over the last couple of months about this facility. We have been up in Dawson talking about it. I believe that the City of Dawson is finalizing the needs assessment for a new recreation facility. We currently have the project scoped out in the five-year capital plan, and as soon as we have proper estimates for the cost of the building, I will certainly come back to this House and let them know how much it is going to cost.

Ms. Van Bibber: This weekend, a city councillor from Dawson City expressed concern around a lack of support from the Government of Yukon with respect to a new recreation centre in that community. According to them, the community of Dawson would like their new rec centre to contain a year-round swimming pool.

Is the government going to support this request? If not, why not?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have been working very hard with the community of Dawson — both the previous mayor and the current mayor of Dawson City — on their recreation facility. I know that the facility is an integral part of the community. I actually toured the old facility just last winter, and it certainly is in need of repair and replacement. We are working very hard with the City of Dawson to make sure that they have the best recreation facilities. We're working very closely with the community. They will identify the needs, as seems fit, and we will do our best to give them the facility that they want and that will meet the needs of the community into the future.

I'm really happy to be talking about all the investments that we are making across the territory. This is but one; there are plenty more where that came from. Our government is working very hard to make sure that the citizens of this territory have recreation facilities in every community, because every community matters.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister tell us the total estimated budget for a new recreation centre in the community of Dawson City, and how much will come from the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There are a lot of hypotheticals in that question, Mr. Speaker. We are working very hard, as I said in my previous answers, with the community of Dawson on their new recreation centre. We are going to do a proper estimate of the facility once it has been properly scoped out. We hope to get that facility started this year. That's the plan.

I have spoken — as I said — as late as last Friday with the Mayor of Dawson about the recreation facility in that community. He is very excited about it. Once we have a proper estimate, we will then go forward.

I do know that we have put in a request to the federal government for funding for this program. It will be on 75-cent dollars. I believe the application went in for \$21 million. We're going to see how much the actual facility costs at the end of this. That submission went in a while ago.

We will actually work with the community. I know that the Mayor of Dawson has been talking about coming up with money for this from the municipality — that is the City of Dawson.

I know that the Yukon government is going to be working very, very closely with the community of Dawson to get them the facility that they deserve. It has been a long time coming, Mr. Speaker. I'm really happy to see this facility going ahead very, very soon.

Question re: Youth Panel on Climate Change recommendations

Ms. Tredger: It has been almost six months since the Youth Panel on Climate Change made their groundbreaking recommendations to this government. The youth pointed out all kinds of ways that this Liberal government is falling short on climate action. The government responded by saying that they're already doing the recommendations. I tabled that letter today.

So, let's start with a few of those recommendations: The panel called for free tuition at Yukon University, a ban on corporate donations to political parties, and veto power for self-governing First Nations.

Has the minister implemented any of these recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I wish to thank the Youth Panel on Climate Change for their recommendations to us. I believe that I, the Minister of Environment, and possibly the Premier have all stood in this House and said that what we would do is prioritize the recommendations that came from the youth panel that would directly affect our goals of reducing emissions in the territory by 45 percent, and that's our climate lens. That's what we stated that we would do in *Our Clean Future*, and that's what we're doing.

When I received the recommendations from the Youth Panel on Climate Change, we said exactly that to them as well — that we would prioritize those recommendations that would

help us in reducing our emissions and make life more sustainable here for our young folks.

I can let the House know that we have been working through the next intake for the Youth Panel on Climate Change where they will build on the work of the first one. I will be happy — myself or the Minister of Environment — to present those announcements shortly. I look forward to further questions.

Ms. Tredger: Young people already know that they will have to bear the consequences of government inaction for years to come. In the letter that I tabled today, they were told that it's too complicated to implement some of their recommendations.

I would like to remind the minister that he is just that: a minister. He has the power to take real climate action if he wants to.

The Liberals could stop accepting corporate donations right now. The Liberals could respect First Nation consent on extraction right now. The Liberals could make tuition free at Yukon University right now.

If the minister really believes that we are in a climate emergency, why isn't he implementing all of the youth panel's recommendations right now?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I do believe that we are in a climate emergency, and I appreciate that every member of this Legislative Assembly has agreed with that statement. That is why we are prioritizing those recommendations that will have an effect on addressing the climate emergency. That is the whole point with all of the things that we try to do — whether it be responding to a pandemic, or whether it be dealing with flooding, or whatever the issues are that we are trying to address here in the territory as a responsible government. The point would be that we should prioritize those things that have the greatest effect, and that is what we said to the young folks when we met with them early on, before they presented their recommendations to us. That is what we said to them when they presented their recommendations to us. That is what we will continue to say, because we do care about them and we do want to shift our energy economy. It is incredibly important. That is why we are investing so much in shifting our energy economy through this budget. There is a ton here around that, and it is really important that we make that prioritization around what is going to have the greatest effect to shift the energy economy to a more renewable, sustainable energy future.

Ms. Tredger: In the letter replying to the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change, they acknowledge the climate the panel talked about — shifting our relationships with the environment — and that is bigger than any one area. For the first few panels on climate change, the government was so happy to use their work to make it look like they were taking action on climate change, but the panel saw through this government's shallow action. They called for serious changes across the board. This government wasn't expecting that.

In response to these brave, well-researched calls to action, this government sent a pointless letter and hoped that the panelists wouldn't read it too closely, but they have. This is their future at stake, and they can see how much this government doesn't want to listen.

When will the minister start working on all of the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change's recommendations instead of sending letters of excuses?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As indicated by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, our focus with respect to *Our Clean Future* is the reduction of greenhouse gases by 45 percent in 2030 from 2010 levels. We, of course, are listening to the youth and to all Yukoners.

But these are exciting times, Mr. Speaker. You will know that we have the grid-scale battery project, and we have very promising negotiations taking place in Atlin. We will electrify the Yukon highways much ahead of the days that we said we would. We said we would do it by 2027; we will likely have that done much sooner.

We will work with the federal government to ensure that there is electric connectivity between Dawson Creek and Watson Lake. In my capacity as Minister of Highways and Public Works, we will identify the large public structures in the Yukon that will benefit the most from retrofits and that will meaningfully reduce greenhouse gases as well and provide, of course, a brighter and healthier economy and a brighter Yukon for youth and for all Yukoners.

This is an exciting time. We are taking action.

Question re: Transportation between communities

Ms. White: The *Yukon Community Travel Project Final Report* states — and I quote: “People need transportation to access the activities that contribute to their physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.”

Costs of living are skyrocketing, and there are many reasons why a person may not have access to a private vehicle. We're in a mental health crisis and access to transportation is so important to make sure people can access the supports they need. Whether that's clinical counselling, addiction services, health care, spending time with friends, or getting out on the land, it all contributes to the health of communities.

Does the minister recognize that affordable access to transit between communities is not just a matter of convenience, but of mental health and wellness?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to rise today to talk about our communities and access to transportation. Here in the territory, we have a road network that is the envy of many of the other territories.

We have lost, in recent years, access to a bus service — for example, Greyhound. That has been a national issue — one that a lot of jurisdictions are dealing with. In my past capacity as Highways and Public Works minister, we dealt with this on a national level.

These are thorny questions; there are no two ways about it. We have to make sure that we have good transportation throughout our communities.

We have companies up in Dawson — Husky Bus and others — that are starting to move into that sphere to actually provide transportation to people who are coming into Whitehorse from other communities. I am really hoping that those private individuals and companies fill the gaps that we

see throughout our territory in terms of transportation. I am happy to talk about this more in the future.

Ms. White: We hear the government talk on a regular basis about supporting local businesses and supporting folks staying in their communities. There is no better time to start talking about rural transit than right now. Not only would we be supporting the local economy and a green future, but we would also be allowing folks to age in place and raise their children in their home towns. Just imagine the benefits that this would have on mental health and affordability in rural Yukon. Just imagine this road network that the minister highlighted being utilized to support community connectivity.

Will the minister commit to working with Yukon First Nations, municipalities, and local businesses to implement an inter-community transit plan that exists outside of the existing routes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is work that we have been undertaking. In the last session of the Legislative Assembly, the Department of Economic Development worked very closely with Liard First Nation on an initiative to ensure that they have the right infrastructure, which was the funding of a van that they were using to move their citizens in and out of Watson Lake to Whitehorse. We have continued, when possible, to support the private sector in these endeavours. As many folks know, there are a lot of First Nations that have invested in these types of infrastructure.

I haven't seen the report. I haven't had the opportunity to work with Economic Development on that, but I think that it is a very valid concern and idea to take a look at what is being proposed — working with Community Services and the Department of Economic Development through our community development fund when we have that opportunity to support either self-governing First Nations or other First Nations or community groups. These are great solutions.

Of course, we have heard in Faro as well from the mayor about a week ago speaking publicly about how citizens are supporting each other in ensuring — especially with seniors on a fixed income who don't have access to vehicles — that they are coming together. These are all valid things that we should be looking into.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate highlighting the work done by First Kaska and the Husky Bus, I am talking about other rural communities. In what may be the least shocking news you will hear today, we are living in a climate emergency. We are facing unprecedented levels of change in our climate, and action needs to be taken now, not later.

The government's own *Our Clean Future* report states — and I quote: “... will make it easier for Yukoners to use clean forms of transportation, reducing fuel costs for individuals, families and businesses as well as greenhouse gas emissions.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, electric cars are great, but they are not an option for everyone. One of the fastest, most effective ways to make a difference would be reducing the need for individual folks to drive.

When will the government implement a territory-wide community transportation plan?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think it is important to note, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Environment noted just moments ago, that we are working to support the electrification of our transportation for vehicles across the territory. A fast-charging station has gone in at Watson Lake. We have ones going in all along the Alaska Highway, the north and south Klondike, and the Mayo Road and to Ross River as well on the Robert Campbell Highway. Of course, that will work for vans and buses just as well so we can have electric buses and electric vans in the future. That is coming.

Of course, we encourage at all times carpooling and riding together. We're investing in the City of Whitehorse public transit system. We're investing in active transportation. We are giving rebates for electric vehicles, including e-bikes. That won't get you from one community to another, but it will help you get around in your community.

There are all sorts of ways in which we are investing in a transportation system of the future that uses renewables. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to answer further questions as they come.

Question re: Rural solid-waste transfer stations

Mr. Istchenko: So, rural Yukoners have noticed a trend under this government. They are ignored and disrespected by the Liberals who are more and more focused on the city. Take transfer stations, for example. Without consultation and without concern for the opinions of rural Yukoners, this Liberal government has decided to close several rural transfer stations. This will force Yukoners outside of Whitehorse to drive further to dispose of their waste.

Will the minister do the right thing and reverse his decision to close transfer stations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am really grateful for the question this afternoon because I haven't had many conversations about waste management recently, and it's an important issue for the territory; there's no doubt about it. Waste management is a critical piece of environmental stewardship. It's a critical piece toward our fight against global climate change, and it's also a critical piece to our municipalities starting to manage the waste problem that is throughout the territory and throughout North America. It is one of the largest issues that we are facing.

People are throwing out a lot of stuff. When we came into office — my colleague has talked about this before — municipalities came to this government and said, "You have to do something, please." So, we came up with the plan that we are currently enacting. Phase 1 is done, and phase 2 is in process. What that essentially says is that we are going to manage our waste facilities in a way that most jurisdictions in the country already do, but we don't. So, we are taking that approach. We are going to have people at the gates of the municipal landfills who will manage them. We will make sure that we know what is going into them, and we are going to close those waste facilities that are like holes in the bucket where people can throw their waste without any oversight, without any due diligence. That is the plan, and we are going to continue with it.

Mr. Istchenko: This government's disrespect for rural Yukoners has gotten so bad that even the Yukon's Ombudsman has weighed in and found that this government has created processes that make decisions impacting communities without representation from those who are actually impacted. The Ombudsman has even made it clear that this poor approach to governance by the Minister of Community Services, in their words, is unfair.

So, will the minister stop showing contempt for rural Yukoners and actually start consulting and listening to them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really have to reject the underlying heart of the message that we just got from the Member for Kluane. This government has been listening to Yukoners since we were elected to office and we are continuing to do this. I know that my colleague, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, did extensive community tours — in some cases, with the Premier — to all of these communities and talked to them about the issues that matter to them, and I know that I have followed in his footsteps to do exactly the same thing. I am going across the territory and listening to the communities from Mayo to Burwash and Destruction Bay, to Kluane, and to Watson Lake. I have been to virtually every community and I am hearing what people had to say. I have heard the concerns about the closure of these very small landfills, these sorts of sites on the side of the highway. But in order to make sure that our environment is taken care of in the future and in order to make sure that everybody is treated fairly and equally, we are going to close those municipal landfills.

Now, I know that the Yukon's solid-waste management was not sustainable under previous governments, and I am happy to talk about this more in the future, but we are listening to Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: It's becoming more and more clear that the communities and the municipalities are rejecting the combative and hostile approach of the Community Services minister. His aggressive and confrontational style ends up burning bridges and pushing people away. We saw it in the fall when the minister had to make the unprecedented move to pause his better building legislation because he forgot to consult with the municipalities. We are seeing it now as the territory's Ombudsman has had to come out and slap the minister on the wrist for not actually consulting with rural Yukoners.

Can the minister tell us how he is going to change his approach so that he can start working and listening constructively to rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have to say right off the hop that, once again, I really have to vehemently disagree with the perspective of the Member for Kluane. We are listening to Yukoners. I have listened to rural Yukon. I have listened to the municipalities. I heard from them on our community tours. I have taken their information back, and we are working to make sure that their concerns are addressed even as we act to make sure that we are managing waste facilities across the territory in a manner that reflects what happens in most of the rest of the country — if not all of the rest of the country — and actually modernizes and helps municipalities. As I said, they came to us

when we first came to office and said, “Please, please, can you bring some order to this chaos?” We have done a lot of work to do that.

I will say that this is part of a broader plan to improve solid-waste management in the territory. We are implementing the recommendations from a report developed with the Yukon government, the Association of Yukon Communities, and the City of Whitehorse. I hear again and again the Member for Kluane saying that we are not listening, but the Yukon Party is proving not to be a reliable source of information. They simply are not. I think that it’s time that we start to get the message out that, yes, we are going to modernize our facilities and, yes, we are listening.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. 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)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 3, standing in the name of the Hon. Richard Mostyn.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Things are moving so quickly this afternoon. I move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

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 third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So many binders, so little time. I would like to begin by thanking each of the honourable members who have risen to speak on Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*. As stated before, the time to act on climate change is now. We have had an awful lot of discussion about climate change in this House over the last several years — certainly even quite a bit this afternoon.

The very purpose of this bill is to make changes to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and the *Municipal Act*, and that sounds really kind of dry. But what the changes to those two pieces of legislation will do is allow the creation of an energy-efficient retrofit program through which Yukoners have access to funding repayable through an annual local improvement tax.

That is, Yukoners will get a very good rate of interest, and the loans will be assessed against their properties, managed by municipalities that elect to sign on — or, in some cases, in unincorporated communities, the Yukon government — and will allow them to make improvements to their homes that will reduce their reliance on high-priced fossil fuels. It will make them cheaper to run. It will create employment throughout our rural Yukon communities and Whitehorse. It will lessen some of the load on the grid, and it will lower our greenhouse gas

emissions, which is something that we have been talking about all afternoon. It has been a focus of ours. We have declared a state of emergency.

So, this program to get the retrofit program going has been an absolute priority for my predecessor in this role and for me as well.

I’m very happy to have brought this piece of legislation before the House and to have it now in third reading. Again, I’m very grateful for both opposition parties for their support of this bill at second reading.

I’m also thankful that municipalities worked with the territorial government on how to administer the program and make it available to as many Yukoners as possible. Municipal partnership will be key to the program’s success.

I worked very hard, as did my predecessor in this role, to work with municipalities to identify — and we heard about the administrative burden that this program might place on municipalities. We talked about it. I wanted to understand what that administrative burden is. So, after the last session of this Legislature, we went out and worked with the municipalities on this. We actually came to a very good understanding from the municipalities — almost a forensic analysis of what some of the administrative pitfalls of such a program might be — and we worked with them to address those concerns.

Now, why are we doing all this? Well, as outlined in *Our Clean Future* — that’s a nation-leading climate change plan that this government drafted a few years ago to deal with our climate change problem — 2,000 residential, commercial, and institutional buildings will be retrofitted by 2030. Now, these retrofits will reduce energy, as I have said earlier, and greenhouse gas emissions while saving Yukoners money on utility bills. We’re actually doing our part to lessen our reliance on fossil fuels.

Smart electric heating systems will be installed in 1,300 homes that previously relied on fossil-fuel heating. Biomass heating systems will be installed in an additional 20 commercial and institutional buildings. This is work that my current colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, is undertaking, and we’re working with Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services to make sure that this is a reality.

So, we’re working on many fronts to reduce our carbon footprint and change the way that this territory operates in terms of heating its buildings and houses. An important part of reaching the targets laid out in this nation-leading climate change action plan that we drafted is to provide funds to approximately 1,000 residential and commercial property owners to begin retrofits that will actually reduce their reliance on fossil fuels, reduce the draw on the grid, and put more money in their pockets — insulate them a little bit from the inflationary pressures that we’re seeing in the fuel industry today.

So, the creation of the better building program will be enabled by these act amendments, which will allow us to put these loans against the property taxes, have them administered through municipalities, and actually, through that process, offer Yukoners a very, very good interest rate on these

improvements, which will help save them a little bit more money and actually facilitate the creation of more retrofits.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be debated in the House for a third time. I will cede the floor to my colleagues.

Ms. White: Today I am speaking to Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*. There are two things. I recognize that this legislation is enabling legislation to allow municipalities to be able to collect money for what will be a program that is hopefully being created as we speak and available to Yukoners in the future.

Some of the conversations that we had in Committee of the Whole debate were actually issues that had been highlighted by the communities themselves, the municipalities themselves, on whether or not that program will actually reach the full potential. I am hopeful, based on the debate that we were able to have in this Chamber, that some of those points have been made to those folks who are behind the scenes and creating this upcoming program.

In just discussing events of last fall, the one thing, again, that I will say is that I thank my colleagues from the government for recognizing the importance of putting a pause on a program that has so much potential to do good, as opposed to plowing ahead at that point. I am eternally grateful to municipal leaders who did go back to that drawing board with government officials to work on how this program could be rolled out and how municipalities and non-incorporated communities could participate without being adversely affected.

Again, I just want to thank the president of AYC, Gord Curran, for his willingness to have those conversations with me last fall. I would like to thank every mayor of every municipality who spoke with me honestly about their concerns and their hopes for the future last fall, and I would really like to acknowledge and thank Mayor Cabott, Mayor Irvin, and Mayor Kendrick, who sat on the government table to get us to this point. They worked with the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to get us to “yes”.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is real potential here. Again, I support climate action, and this is a path toward that. I am happy to be here today in celebration and in support of this bill because, in the fall, it was touch and go for a while. I thank the Minister of Community Services for trusting me and for taking it back and doing that work. I’m supportive and look forward to when the program is finally rolled out.

Mr. Hassard: I’m pleased to rise today to speak about Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, which, of course, is known as the “better building program”.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this legislation comes from a good place and has a good goal. Of course, providing assistance with the provision of energy retrofits to reduce our greenhouse gases is a cause that we do support.

That being said, despite the good goal of this legislation, its legacy and storyline have been tarnished by the poor leadership by the Minister of Community Services.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that this piece of legislation was first tabled in the fall by this minister. However, the minister completely dropped the ball on the drafting of that legislation. He was drafting legislation on the fly, and he forgot to consult with those actually impacted by this legislation — writing it on the back of a napkin, making it up as he goes.

Really, this is a trend of this minister — careless, doesn’t pay attention to detail. He isn’t concerned with coming up with good policy. As a result, he completely dropped the ball on this legislation initially and tabled a flawed, incomplete, and, to be honest, defective piece of legislation. It’s really too bad because, as a result of the minister’s carelessness and inattention, the legislation almost died on the floor of this Legislature.

Municipalities that are impacted by this legislation came out in the fall to let their Legislature know that the minister had not consulted them, to let us know that the minister had ignored them, and to let us know that the minister had overlooked a bunch of very legitimate concerns.

Because the minister failed so badly with this piece of legislation, it was delayed by half a year. Instead of passing in the Fall Sitting, it has been sitting in limbo while the minister finally does the consultation that he should have done months ago. It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that this is completely unheard of — a government tabling their marquee piece of legislation and then failing to get it passed. This Legislature even had some very undemocratic principles built into the Standing Orders known as the “guillotine clause”, which this government frequently uses to ram their agenda down the throats of Yukoners.

But the minister failed so badly at this that he embarrassed his party, his government, and Yukoners so that, for the first time in a very, very long time, a government bill failed to pass this House. Mr. Speaker, I think the last time this happened was when the Liberals voted against their own bill to change the electoral boundaries, in effect killing their own bill, which was a first in our Westminster system of parliament.

What is notable here is that, whereas when the Liberals killed the electoral boundaries bill because they knew that the redistribution of boundaries would have cost them the government, in this case, the Liberals had to throw this bill into limbo because —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think that we are on the third reading of Bill No. 3. The member opposite is talking about other legislation on the floor, which I don’t think has anything to do with Bill No. 3, so I just think that it’s not the topic that we’re on.

Speaker: On the point of order, Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: First of all, the Government House Leader failed to cite a Standing Order, which he should know better. Secondly, I would point out that my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, was talking about the government's failures in consultation in the process regarding this piece of legislation and then, as a comparison, drawing an analogy to their failures on other pieces of legislation. I don't believe that there is a point of order; I think that it is a dispute between members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: It is not a point of order. It is a dispute among members.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, whereas when the Liberals killed the electoral boundaries bill because they knew the redistribution of boundaries would have cost them the government, in this case, the Liberals had to throw this bill into limbo because of the lack of attention to detail by this minister.

The minister's inattention and carelessness has unfortunately had negative impacts on Yukoners and the climate. The better building program, which should have been going by now, has been sitting on the shelf while the minister tries to clean up the mess and actually finish his homework.

Let's walk through a few of the failures of the Minister of Community Services on this file. There is currently a legal requirement for the minister to consult with municipalities prior to proposing amendments to the *Municipal Act*. Just to quote from section 11 of the *Municipal Act*: "The Government of the Yukon must consult with the Association of Yukon Communities on any direct amendments that a Minister proposes to this Act." Yet despite this legal requirement to consult communities, the AYC confirmed that they did not occur when this piece of legislation was brought forward last fall.

Now, we're not shocked to hear that this minister didn't consult on this piece of legislation. This is the MO from this particular minister. He plays fast and loose with important pieces of legislation, and Yukoners are negatively impacted as a result. So, you will remember, Mr. Speaker, that this minister thought he could bully his way through this problem initially, even though he ignored communities and did not consult with them and really just flat out failed at his job. He started playing brinkmanship with municipalities. Several times, he announced that he was going to bring this bill forward for debate and vote in the fall, but, each time, he blinked and backed down as he realized that this piece of legislation was going to die — again, something unheard of from a government.

Then the minister started to frantically call and apply pressure to other municipal representatives — in effect, Mr. Speaker, trying to bully them into agreeing with him. Now 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 wanted the government to actually consult with them on the design of the program before getting rammed through.

We've seen the Association of Yukon Communities, Teslin, Watson Lake, and Mayo all send letters last fall raising a number of concerns and asking for this to be deferred. We've seen a strongly worded letter from the previous Mayor of Whitehorse — who, as happenstance, also ran for the Liberals in the last spring election — outlining the City of Whitehorse's concerns with the Liberal government's approach and lack of consultation.

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.

Mr. Speaker, a strong partnership does not start with one level of government refusing to consult with the other 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 the Legislature in October that he was later forced to apologize for. This is entirely the approach — and failures — of this minister that has led this legislation, which should otherwise have been a slam dunk, to teetering on the brink of failure last fall.

The only thing saving this bill is that the minister finally was shamed into admitting that he messed up and into going back to the drawing board to fix this flawed work. The minister's willy-nilly approach to this — all was evident this spring when he was forced to start rewriting the legislation on the fly here in the Legislature. While we are glad to see some of these mistakes rectified, rewriting the bill on the floor and making it up as you go isn't the way toward good policy.

The fact of the matter is that the minister tried to ram through a piece of legislation in the fall that even he now admits was poorly designed. Imagine if his bullying tactics had worked in the fall; Yukoners would now be stuck with a patchwork of legislation that was incomplete. Of course, this is something that could have been completely avoided had the minister done his job in the first place.

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 last fall represented 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 —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I am listening to the member opposite give his presentation at third reading, and he is referring to my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, as "vindictive" and "combative", and I think that these are insulting terms. So, to make sure, I quote — I am referring to Standing Order 19(i). I don't think that we need terms like that in referring to people. I think that it is fine to present the facts as the member opposite

sees them, but he is characterizing the minister, which I think is not appropriate here today.

Speaker: On the point of order, Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: I don't believe that there is a point of order. In fact, the language that my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, is using is actually milder than some of the language and insults that have come from the Minister of Community Services in the past, so it is a bit rich to hear the Government House Leader call a point of order on this.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I would caution members to stick to the topic and to temper their remarks when speaking about other members.

Mr. Hassard: So, as I was saying, the most unfortunate part of this, as I've stated, is that all municipalities and the opposition parties agree with the concept of the better building program. If the minister had done the proper consultation last year to address the outstanding concerns of the municipalities, then he would have had them all onside.

Now, we are glad to hear the minister admit that he was careless and that he bungled this file and that he was willing to go back to the drawing board and do his homework. This is what municipalities have asked for because they had concerns. These were legitimate concerns and should not be so easily dismissed by the Minister of Community Services since this is the minister responsible for fostering good relationships with the communities.

This should have been an easy win for the minister. Instead, through his actions, the minister caused a delay of many months related to this legislation while straining relationships with our municipalities. That being said, in the fall, we indicated that we would oppose this bill until such time as the minister did his job and actually listened to communities. He has reluctantly done that.

Despite this reluctance to consult and play well with others, we are happy to support the bill now that the communities are on board. Perhaps there is a silver lining to the minister's initial failures here. The minister and his Liberal colleagues take this whole debacle as an important lesson. They can no longer bully Yukoners into just agreeing with him —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Minister of Highways and Public Works, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Referring to Standing Order 19(i), which is the use of abusive or insulting language, including sexist or violent language, in a context likely to create disorder.

At some point, Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully request that we have a look at whether "bullying" itself ought to be language that is commonly used in the Assembly. It certainly has a — well, it's an insult. Of course, that's not the end of the analysis, with respect, but perhaps it is engaging in

dishonourable behaviour so as to bring the conduct of MLAs into some disrepute.

MLAs are deemed to be honourable. Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is a close call, but in my view, I would ask you to consider this use of "bullying" in our Chamber.

Speaker: On the point of order, the Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: I don't believe that there is a point of order. In fact, it's odd that the Minister of Highways and Public Works rose on a point of order under 19(i) to complain about insulting language and then actually may have broken that order himself in the comments that he directed back toward my colleague.

To me, I think that this is just a dispute among members. From my perspective, the language being used by my colleague is not actually any stronger or more insulting than that which we have listened to on many, many occasions from the Minister of Community Services and a number of his colleagues.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The temperature of the debate is rising with members using language that is likely to cause disorder. I caution all members to temper their remarks. Members should not break Standing Orders when calling a point of order.

Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had almost wrapped up when the minister called that point of order. I will hopefully get through my last 15 seconds without any more.

As I was saying, the government needs to rethink their approach of ignoring rural Yukon and municipalities and start working with, and listening to, Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm going to rise. I wasn't planning to rise to talk at third reading, but I'm happy to rise and to correct the record on a few issues.

The first one is how often we as ministers in this government have travelled to and spoken with and talked with communities. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin will know that there are a couple of times that I've been to the community of Johnsons Crossing where I alerted him when I was going to be there and let him know I was going to be there, as a minister, and set up meetings to talk with his community and to hear from them and to consider their perspectives and to try to work with them on this issue — on this bill that we have in front of us — Bill No. 3. When I was in the role of Minister of Community Services, I travelled extensively to communities to talk to them. In fact, in about the year before the last territorial election, I think I ended up in weekly meetings with the president of the Association of Yukon Communities — albeit phone meetings, because we're in COVID — and in virtually every one of those meetings, we discussed better buildings. The suggestion that we did not engage with the Association of Yukon Communities is incorrect.

I know, as well, that the Minister of Community Services continued with that. When he gets to his feet in closing debate today, he can talk about how often, but I suspect it was at the

same frequency of weekly meetings with the president of the Association of Yukon Communities.

We've always made it a goal to be at the Association of Yukon Communities' quarterly meetings. We have always made it a goal to travel to municipalities and talk with folks directly. There has been a long engagement on this very bill, and from the start, municipalities here in the Yukon were worried about how they would be able to carry out the local improvement charge collection. Now, when you look at this bill and it talks about this program that we're planning to bring in, everywhere else across the country, it is handled by municipalities altogether. Here, it will not be.

Here, it will be the Energy Solutions Centre and the Energy branch of Energy, Mines and Resources that will do the work of doing an audit on a home to see whether there is the opportunity for improvement, making recommendations about how to improve that house, assessing the types of savings that the homeowner would receive, if they had a suite of choices, working with them to select that suite of choices, and following up with them to make sure that there is an audit afterward.

The part where the municipalities come in — not everywhere — in unincorporated Yukon, it will be the territorial government again — is in collecting the local improvement charge. The worry that our municipalities had was because of a program that the folks from the Yukon Party brought in, which was the rural well program. They asked municipalities to take it on, and municipalities said yes. Did they go through and do this level of engagement and change? Not that I'm aware of, but I don't know; maybe they will let us know.

When the Yukon Party brought in that change, we talked with municipalities and they told us that they were concerned about the burden that it would place on them. Please, let's get it right, that when we're talking about better buildings, most of the work will be happening at the Energy Solutions Centre.

Another thing that the member opposite talked about was how this bill failed, but it actually didn't. The Minister of Community Services chose not to bring it forward to Committee of the Whole, in respect of trying to allay the concerns of the municipalities. That concern was around support on collecting the local improvement charge. Having done that work and getting here, did that result in a change to the legislation? No, it did not.

There was a request from municipalities to change the timeline by which dollars were remitted, but it was not around support or dealing with the burden that was going to come to municipalities through that engagement. The Minister of Community Services — and I was asked to be part of it, because now I'm responsible for the Energy Solutions Centre — we did sit down with municipalities and work through it, and we got to a solution.

Again, that's all policy work. That's not change to the legislation. In other words, what we were saying in the fall was that here's an act that is enabling, that doesn't force a municipality to come on board, and we will work with them. It was the members opposite who decided and stated that they would not vote for the legislation, and they clearly

demonstrated that at second reading. That is why we decided to pause.

I think it's for the better, but if people are going to say that there was a season missed — come on. On our side, we were saying that we can go ahead; we can do that negotiation with municipalities in the meantime, which was what we had always said when we met with the Association of Yukon Communities' president weekly. We said, "Hey, let's sit down and do this work."

I agree with the member opposite when he states that this is a good program and when he states that municipalities believe this is a good program. They do think it is a good program.

Municipalities, early on, asked us to consider something other than local improvement charges, and we did. We went and spoke to the Yukon Housing Corporation. We saw whether we would be able to do it through a corporation of the government. What we found was that we would not be able to get the same really low interest rates for Yukoners. We believed that was important.

There were a couple of other reasons that we felt that it wasn't as strong, but that was the main one — that we could get better rates for Yukoners if we went through the local improvement charges. The challenge, of course, was that local improvement charges sometimes lead, in other instances, to people concerned with paying back their loan. The beauty of the better building program is that Yukoners are choosing it because they are going to get a break on heating bills, because that's the whole point. That will allow us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through insulating a building.

I am glad that we are here today. From the perspective that I have, we have always been working with municipalities on this. I am glad that we have a policy agreement in place with municipalities now. I'm glad that it will be reviewed after the first couple of years so that we can refine it.

No side in this — and I thank the mayors who were there at the table, and I thank the Association of Yukon Communities — no one is trying to make this a way in which to do anything but cover the costs that are there for municipalities or the Government of Yukon in unincorporated areas. It's really about making sure that this is the best program that it can be for Yukoners, and it is a good program. I'm looking forward to it.

I thank the members opposite for supporting the bill now. I appreciate the work that has been done with the Association of Yukon Communities, and I look forward to getting this program up and running, including through the Energy Solutions Centre.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is my honour to close debate on Bill No. 3 this afternoon. It is a very, very positive step for the territory. It is a very, very good day for Yukoners. In the run-up to last fall, I had lots of talks, as my good colleague has spoken about this afternoon, with municipalities and municipal

leaders from across the territory, both in my community tours and on the phone beyond that. I have also had conversations with the chambers of commerce, which were very supportive of this program. I have had conversations with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Yukon Conservation Society, and the Yukon Federation of Labour. There has been lots of support for this program because they understand how important it is for the territory, and they were supportive of it.

We did hear, of course, some of the trepidation on behalf of municipal leaders to the program — much of it generated, as my colleague has said this afternoon, because of lingering problems from the rural well and electrification program, which is a program that was brought to municipalities by the former government. So, they said: “We are just not getting compensated for the hassle of this program, and we really want you to do better.” From my very, very beginning conversations with municipalities across the territory as I toured the territory, I heard about the capacity issue within municipalities and how they were being pushed to the max. The world is getting a little bit more complicated, for sure — not only because of COVID, but just because of the growth in the territory. A lot of that pressure falls on municipal governments, the very first level of government to interact with the public, and they are feeling the strain. I heard that in all my conversations, and I reassured them. I said: “I really do want to make sure that you are made whole, that you are not left holding a bag that you cannot carry, as may have been done in the past. I want to make sure that I work with you.” This is an important program and Yukoners are looking for ways to make their houses more affordable to run.

We’re looking for ways to power the territory more efficiently. We’re looking primarily because we’ve declared a climate emergency to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Declaring an emergency means taking action. I mean, we’ve heard again and again at climate change summits — we’ve held many of them over the years, and young people around the world are saying, “Enough talk; it’s time for action.” So, yes, I push hard because I think it’s time to have action. I think we have to work through some of the work to make sure that we actually get to action on climate change. I’ve said that to the municipalities, and I’ve said that to my colleagues in the House and here as well — that we really have to move. We are moving. I think that’s a really good message for the territory.

That’s the positive, and it is very positive. We’re going to build a program that will allow Yukoners to access money at a very affordable rate so that they can improve their houses and hopefully, in practice, reduce their dependency on fossil fuels, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and maybe save a couple of bucks over time that they can put to other things. That’s all good.

We’re doing it efficiently through municipalities and local improvement charges, which, as my colleague has said, is a practice that’s seen across the country, but it’s better here in the territory because it’s going to be run through the territorial government and municipalities understanding that there are capacity issues in the territory. The territory is going to do some of the heavy lifting on behalf of the municipalities, and we’re

going to fund them for it, which is what we talked about for several months earlier this year. The work, of course, of Mayor Kendrick, Mayor Cabott, and Mayor Irvin on this file with my colleague and me has been really, really exemplary — and the working group, all the staff, and the administration and the CAOs of municipalities across the territory. They actually did an amazing job compiling, I believe, a document in excess of 76 pages that laid out some of the administrative concerns. It was really helpful, and they actually put on paper and gave life to some of the concerns that I was hearing in the abstract. That was very helpful.

So, I heard that it was an administrative burden. I asked what it looked like, and people got down to work and actually identified what some of those concerns were. That allowed us to come to an agreement. That was work that I had always committed to right from my very first days in this job.

I am going to get to the Leader of the Third Party in a minute. I really do appreciate her diligence on this file and her commitment to changing the way we work in the territory to improve the territory so that we’re not as dependent on fossil fuels and we are actually reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. She has been very clear on that. My colleagues in the Official Opposition — not so much.

It’s actually hard to pin down where the opposition sits. I mean opposition with a capital “O” — the Official Opposition, Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition. It’s hard to pin them down because, on paper in the last election, they said that they support carbon pricing — today, not so much. I can’t figure it out. Before the election — not so much. You can’t pin them down. It is not reliable. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, my good colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, was wrong — wrong in so many ways. That’s okay. You get used to it after a while.

The information flow out of the opposition is not reliable. I will say that it is great to have him in this House today. We have sparred for several years, and he is a great opposition politician, I have to say. I always enjoy it when he takes to his feet, but I wasn’t sure if he was still going to be with us. Almost a year ago today, there were 100 people standing outside of the Legislative Assembly calling for action and calling for them to recall a couple of members from the Yukon Party, including the leader. I hope —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 19(b), the member is speaking to matters other than what is under discussion. I would also note that this is particularly rich considering two of his colleagues called a point of order under Standing Order 19(i) regarding insulting language. The language coming from the Minister of Community Services just now is far stronger, far more insulting, and far less in keeping with the decorum of this Assembly than anything that came from anyone on this side earlier on.

I would suggest that he be asked to rein in his comments and to speak about the matter that’s actually under discussion.

Speaker: On the point of order, Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, earlier today, we allowed comments from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin talking about the minister and characterizing him. I think that this then opens it up to allow us to characterize the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. I have not heard any insulting language. In fact, I heard him say that it was —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard my colleague say that he respects his role and he talked about him. He's now presenting facts that occurred here a year ago and has not used insulting language.

Speaker's ruling

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

I would caution members to temper their remarks. I would also remind members to stick to the topic.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, as I was saying, I'm glad to be speaking with the opposition on this matter this afternoon. I'm trying to ascertain where they sit on this. I think that today they support it, and I'm very glad. I think that's a great thing. They didn't support it last year; they do this year. They didn't support carbon pricing before the election; they did during the election, and they don't now. I'm trying to ascertain where this all is.

I don't know. It's difficult for anybody — it's unreliable. You just don't know where the opposition sits from one day to the next.

I will say, though, that there were a lot of words from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. Some of them were familiar. I guess they say that "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery", and I take that in the spirit in which it was intended.

But, as I said, they were wrong. I want to just bring that home. I think my good colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, lit on this, but I'm going to put a hard line underneath it.

This legislation that is before us today, Bill No. 3, is the same legislation that was before us in the fall, with one notable exception. There is an amendment that we passed through this House during Committee that was put forward by municipalities and that I committed to and that I wanted to make sure that we could get it done, and actually, the good folks in Justice and the good folks in Community Services worked very, very hard to make that amendment happen. It took an awful lot of work, but we knew how important it was for municipalities, and it is important that we listen to our municipalities and hear what they have to say. And it is important that we honour them by making this very subtle, fairly small change that took a lot of work so that they feel some comfort with this piece of legislation, and it actually makes it easier for them, in the wake of the rural well and electrification program, that they have a little bit more time to pay the bills. I appreciated that, and I asked the departmental officials to do it. They weren't sure if they could get it done, but they did, and I am very, very happy for that, because it took a lot of work on

behalf of the civil service to make that amendment, and that is the only change in this legislation. It has not been tweaked. It wasn't a failure at the beginning — quite the opposite, actually.

This bill gets the changes done that will make it easier for the territory to administer — it allows the territory to administer these types of programs in unincorporated communities, and it will allow municipalities to opt into the program, which has always been a centrepiece of my approach to municipalities, both when I was Highways and Public Works minister and when I am Community Services minister. They represent their constituents. They are elected representatives in another order of government, and they have every right to make the choices they need. Far be it from me to impose on them an action that they don't want to take. So, it is an opt-in, just like the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* was an opt-in.

Over the last little while, I have had regular communication with the mayors of rural Yukon. I am going to continue that practice. I value their input as much as I do the First Nations' in the territory. I have said many times that you cannot do this job if you're not in touch with the First Nation leaders, the municipal leaders, and the business leaders. You need to be in touch all of the time so that you have the best information to make the decisions. That doesn't mean to say that we are always going to agree, but we are always going to have the context in which our decisions are made, and that is very, very important to me. It's very, very important. It is why we are here representing our constituents. It is why the opposition provides such a valuable service, because they, too, are presumably bringing the views of their constituencies to the floor of the House.

We got into a bit of negativity there, and I didn't want to do that this afternoon. I really didn't, because this is an important bill for the territory. I had hoped that we wouldn't have to have all this rigmarole, but we are here, and I think we have touched on that and dealt with it. I will say that the Leader of the Third Party — I do appreciate her support for this initiative. She has brought her concerns to the table, as I've said. She worked with me on this and worked with the municipal leaders as well. I think that this is important. I think that what we have now is a bill that is going to serve the territory for many, many years to come. It will improve 1,000 homes in the most affordable way we could find.

My good colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, worked very hard and came up with a plan to deliver a program that was done as efficiently and as cost-effectively as possible for Yukoners. I think that is vitally important, as we take action on climate change and the state of emergency in which we live.

So, here we are. I think that it is a great day for the territory. I think that it is a great day for Yukoners. It's a good day for municipalities. It is certainly a good day for me and, I hope, for my caucus colleagues. I think that it is a good day for the Third Party. I sort of gleaned that it might even be a good day for the opposition itself, despite the tirade we heard earlier.

I actually am looking forward to having the vote. I look forward to hearing how it goes this afternoon on Bill No. 3, *Act*

Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021). With that, I will take my seat.

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. 3 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 3 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

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Economic Development — continued

Ms. White: I welcome the officials back to the Chamber today. I am hoping, based on the minister's assertions that there is a superstar in our midst in pulling these numbers together, that we will have that chance.

I was just mentioning to the minister how grateful I am for Hansard because being able to seeing the numbers written down, as opposed to the ones that I had written myself — I had mentioned the other day that the average wage in the territory was just under \$24, but I saw that he said it was \$24.67, which is much closer to \$25 than below that.

So, where we left off on Thursday last week, the minister had just told us that the hourly wage in the Yukon is just under \$25 an hour, and I have to say that, even at that point on the 17th, it was enough to knock me over. One of the questions that I had left off with — so I will just go back to that — is: When the minister says that the average wage is just under \$25 an hour, but 2,000 individual employees applied and were accepted for the wage top-up program, can the minister start by telling me how many employees there are in the territory? One of the reasons why I am asking is, knowing that Yukon government is the single largest employer — and then we have other big employers as well. We have the City of Whitehorse, organizations like Air North or Northwestel.

When we talk about an average wage of being just under \$25, I am just trying to get an idea of the number of people who earn less than that.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I don't have it at my fingertips — the numbers from the private sector — but I think that it is important to say that the number that we have provided at the average rate is just from the private sector. That is not considering First Nation governments, municipal governments, or the Government of Yukon. We do have a good sense of what the total of working Yukoners is, and we know how many folks are actively out there looking. We can come back and get you that number, but this is specifically from the private sector.

I would just ask the member opposite as well — the other question that we still had pending was: What was the percentage or what was the number of folks? We have it in actually hard numbers and percentage of individuals when they had the top-up — how many people were trying to get the top-up — essentially, I think the question was focused on that total

top-up. The max top-up was \$4 an hour — and how many people completely maxed that out? I can touch on that now. We have it here. The officials were on it.

I will start with the top-up question. I think it was a great question because, out of the 100 percent of the people who actually received that top-up, 59 percent of the individuals used the whole \$4. The number is actually 1,678 people. Then, if you look at the \$3 per hour, you're now at about 20 percent of the folks, at 569 individuals. I'll just do the last two categories: At \$2 per hour up to \$2.99, in that range, 331 is the number for employees at about 11.6 percent; and then \$1 per hour up to \$2 is 211, or 7.4 percent; and then less than \$1 was 56 employees, or two percent. The total number of people was 2,845.

I dug in a little bit this morning once I got the numbers. What's interesting is that, if you take into consideration the 59 percent and you cross-reference that against the occupations, what you will find, without having to dig too much, is that most of those individuals are in the type of employment where there are gratuities pretty consistently provided.

So, when you go back and take a look, you will see that it's mostly accommodation and food services at about 19.8 percent, and then the next one was food and beverage stores at about 15.6 percent. The one number, I guess, that jumped out and had a pretty strong percentage was for general merchandise stores. That would be a place where I think you normally would not see a gratuity provided, but there were about 307 people total who worked there and 105 of them were using that whole \$4. About 99 of them were using the \$3 to \$4. If you want to take a look, I think that would probably read into your question.

Then I will go back to answer that last question.

So, the number of payroll employees in the Yukon in the third quarter of 2021 was 18,495 — which is the highest it has been in the previous four quarters, and that was an increase of about 1,200. That's our total amount. We would have to go back and extract that.

Our numbers have gone back up. If you look at our latest numbers, even in the last month, we added another 200 individuals to the labour market.

Hopefully, that answers the question. If there is a bit more data that you want us to extract, we can go back. We might not have it today, but we certainly can bring it back to you at another time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister and his officials for that.

What I can do is that I will send a letter to the department so we don't have to lob these numbers back and forth, but I do appreciate it.

The other one — well, actually, just before I go on, I think there is going to be a broader conversation in Canada if we think that people accessing services should be responsible for paying wages.

The minister talked about gratuities. I lived in Australia, and in 2006, I worked as a bartender for \$19 an hour. There are no gratuities in Australia; it's all included.

We've seen really great examples of restaurants in North America that have changed to a model where they have increased their prices by 20 percent. They removed any

obligation of gratuities, and it has gone well. So, there is the possibility, but I think that, as a society, we have to make a decision as to whether or not we think that people should be paid the lowest amount and it should be people accessing that service who pay higher.

I guess I would point out that not everyone has worked in the service industry. Not everyone tips very well. If you're surviving based on the generosity of the people you serve, then you hope that they have worked in the service industry, in my experience.

One of the other questions that I just wanted to follow up with was about the sick days. How many folks accessed the paid sick leave program? Can we break that down a little bit?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, approximately 1,400 employees have accessed the program. The average number of days paid per employee is 5.04 days — so just over five days.

I will go through some numbers based on some of the different phases that we're in.

As of February 28, 2022, a total of just over 1,400 people — 1,407 people — have received \$1,656,339 in paid sick leave through the rebate created in March 2020 in response to COVID. We don't have to break down each quarter; that is the total. The health care and social services sector, which includes daycares, is the largest user of the program. I think that we can all make those connections. It is at 24.9 percent of the funding to date. The retail trade has been about 23.2 percent of funding to date, and the construction sector is 13.4 percent of funding to date. They are also significant users of the program.

I want to be respectful to the team that pulled these numbers together. To give you a bit of a breakdown, which I find interesting, just in the communities — without getting into the numbers, I will just give you the percentages: 0.4 percent went to Carmacks; 1.1 percent went to Dawson City; 0.8 percent went to Haines Junction; 0.1 percent went to Keno City; 0.5 percent went to Ross River; 1.1 percent went to Watson Lake; and 96.1 percent was used in Whitehorse. Again, that is from that total, which is a total allocated of \$1,656,339.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. I will just repeat one part that I think was important, especially for anyone who is concerned about what paid sick leave might look like. Knowing that there is a maximum amount of 10 days that an employee could access and understanding that the average was 5.04 days — so that's an indication that, although people could have accessed more, they were taking what they needed. That has been my experience. I owned a coffee shop. I had people who were off sick when they were sick, but they were there the rest of the time.

With that, I look forward to general debate in Committee of the Whole on the 2022-23 budget. I thank the officials for the help in deciphering these programs. They can look forward to a letter coming through the minister just so I can see those in writing. I thank the officials for their time today.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you to the members opposite. I just want to again take an opportunity to truly thank the folks who are with me today, our Deputy Minister, Mr. Ferbey, our director of Finance, Ms. Fricke, and all the individuals who have been supporting both of them. We have asked a

tremendous amount from individuals. I think you can see by the detail today that they have done an exceptional job from start to finish, as we went through the last two years. I truly feel what an opportunity and honour it is to be able to work with a group of people who did the work that they undertook.

I just want to touch on one point to the House. What becomes difficult when you're building public policy is that there is not a lot of room for error. When it does occur, because of the arena that we work in, it tends to be highlighted immensely. It becomes something that is political. All of us do it.

The reason that we were successful was because we took risk, and that's where we were out in front of the rest of the provinces and territories — by taking that risk.

I have to say that I think that the House has been very — opposition parties have been very respectful and have given some space on this, because they know that it moves quickly. I think, just to the overall public service, when we can give that room, it really does lead to creativity and innovation, and you can move more quickly than governments normally do. I think it has showed, having the public servants who have had that strength to go for it, and also the confidence in their own colleagues has led to some very good work and programs that were rolled out.

It's not always the case, and so it's really — as much as it was difficult for all Yukoners, one of the bright spots was to watch people be able to work so quickly and so effectively and in turn really support an economy and keep us in a very strong position moving forward.

Again, thank you so much to both of you and to the rest of your team for doing incredible work.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development?

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 of Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member of 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 7, Department of Economic Development, 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 \$4,477,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$4,477,000 agreed to
Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Executive Council Office

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to introduce the supplementary budget for the Executive Council Office for the fiscal year 2021-22. Today I am joined by my Deputy Minister of the Executive Council Office, Stephen Mills, and by Assistant Deputy Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, Kate Durrand. Thank you both for being here.

The Executive Council Office, as you know, is a central agency within the government. It is responsible for providing leadership and guidance to the other departments and other agencies as well. The department shares expertise and information — helping to build capacity — and also to ensure coordination right across the organization to support effective public governance. The department also leads the government's efforts toward reconciliation and is at the forefront of our government's commitment to improve the relationship with Yukon First Nations.

As well as this work, the Executive Council Office has been working very closely with the Department of Health and Social Services, since the COVID-19 pandemic started, to provide Yukoners with the most up-to-date public health information as quickly as possible.

I will provide folks with an overview of two items in our supplementary budget estimates for 2021-22. First in the department, our commitment to strong relationships with the First Nations, and this is in ECO under Aboriginal Relations. We are working with First Nations to address the harms caused by a long history of inequality and discrimination and to achieve meaningful changes and tangible benefits for all Yukoners through a range of environmental, economic, and social projects.

The ongoing level of collaboration that goes on between the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments, through initiatives like the Yukon Forum, is unprecedented. The 2021-22 supplementary budget includes an increase of \$1,145,000 for the Aboriginal Relations division. This funding is to support consultation and engagement,

bilateral negotiations, and also the implementation of final self-government agreements.

On June 30, 2021, our government joined the Daylu Dena Council and the Liard First Nation for the demolition of the Lower Post residential school. The ceremonial demolition was a very important step on our path forward for reconciliation. This marked the beginning of our investigations of all former residential school grounds in the Yukon. This increased budget will help Daylu Dena Council to provide a portion of the demolition ceremony costs for the former residential school of Lower Post.

The additional budget will also support a Yukon Forum commitment to fund a committee to identify and locate burial sites associated with residential schools. This transfer to the Carcross/Tagish First Nation is to set up the committee that will focus on the Carcross residential school site. The transfer is part of a multi-year agreement of \$5.6 million cost-shared between the Government of Canada and Government of Yukon. We want to continue to learn from the past to build a stronger and healthier future on a government-to-government level, as well as for every Yukon resident.

Throughout the pandemic, I, along with the Yukon chief medical officer of health and the Minister of Health and Social Services, have been regularly updating Yukoners via Facebook livestreams on the public health situation, so additional funding here will help to support the costs of these public briefings, news conferences, and additional COVID-19 services.

Recently, we announced the plan to lift all remaining COVID-19 health measures in the territory if health indicators continue to trend in the right direction, so a little bit of history and forward-looking thinking there.

On March 4, 2022, there were no longer limits on the size of gatherings, events, or capacity at venues. Bars and restaurants were able to return to normal operations. As of March 18, the Government of Yukon removed the requirement to wear masks and the requirement to show proof of vaccination to access designated sites. On April 4, our government will be lifting the vaccine requirements for most employees.

We are moving safely in a promising direction. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over. We still need to be prepared and budget accordingly for COVID-19 situations if they worsen or if we're faced with another public health crisis, for that matter. Throughout the pandemic, we've taken a lot of measures and a measured approach to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners. This funding will support the territory's continuing recovery and associated expenses for research and supports to address the widespread impacts of COVID-19 in the territory.

We want to evaluate Yukon's COVID-19 pandemic response and continue to help keep Yukoners safe and ultimately thriving.

With that, I look forward to answering any questions that the members opposite have about the 2021-22 supplementary budget for the Executive Council Office.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the Premier's opening remarks there. I won't have many questions in the supplementary and

will instead reserve the bulk of my questions and comments with regard to the Executive Council Office to the mains.

Today, though, I would very briefly like to ask the Premier one question, just because it came up to me recently. I would like the Premier to explain what the government's current position is with regard to the duty to consult unsettled First Nations in regard to asserted rights that exist within the traditional territory of a First Nation with a final agreement and self-government agreement.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I just want to clarify. Was he talking about First Nations with self-government agreements or the ones without? As we know, there is a different federal act that would pertain — but just clarifying that. My official and I had two different opinions on what he was asking about.

Mr. Dixon: What I'm seeking is the government's position with regard to the duty to consult unsettled First Nations with asserted aboriginal rights that exist within the traditional territory of a settled First Nation.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, again, it does get a little bit more complicated when we're talking about First Nations that are either transboundary or ones that have not signed on to the *Umbrella Final Agreement* when it comes to consultation. A good example would be the Liard First Nation. We've been working together to identify and to advance shared interests and priorities, including capacity development, consultation, hunting — also a renewed government-to-government relationship. Interestingly enough, conversations with Kaska about self-determination have been advancing as well.

So, when it comes to lands that are important, with overlap with First Nations that are drawing down on self-government agreements through that process, we absolutely have a duty to consult with the First Nations that are in an overlap. We will continue to go down that path.

There are also issues with the British Columbia-based Kaska initiatives and issues. There will be a little different lens there, more so based upon some of the jurisdictional problems or issues that would be coming from them living in a line that we, the colonial government, see in British Columbia compared to Yukon. But we are absolutely committed to advancing the reconciliation of all Kaska-based bearing groups, and we will continue to engage directly with each of these First Nations on a case-by-case basis, whether it be the Dease River First Nation — it would be an example of a rights-bearing group from BC — or when it came to Liard First Nation, Ross River Dena Council, or even White River, for example.

Again, this question could go into a whole bunch of different areas. Maybe I'll ask the member opposite for something more specific as far as a particular thing that we're negotiating on.

We could talk about the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, as well, which is a conversation that is happening right across the country for First Nations that are still on the *Indian Act*. Knowing that we are continuing to support Canada's commitments to that declaration — the final and self-government agreements of Yukon and 11 First Nations there — there are a lot of obligations that the federal government needs to communicate, let's say, when it comes to

ensuring that the sanctity of the Canadian, constitutionally protected UFA and how that exists in the context of this international group's commitments and also the federal government's commitments there.

I am not sure what particular example the member opposite would be wanting more information on, but if he could ask about a specific example, I could talk about what we have done to date with consultation.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office?

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order No. 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, 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 2, Executive Council Office, 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 \$1,182,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,182,000 agreed to

Executive Council Office agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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: 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. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Education

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill No. 203, Vote 3, in Committee of the Whole. I am very pleased to rise in the House to talk about the supplementary budget and the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

In 2021, we continued to face unexpected challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, but we're fortunate to live in such a

resilient and diverse community. Despite these ongoing challenges, much important work has been completed over the last year. This supplementary budget reflects how the department is working to achieve many of its key priorities, including continuing to support learners through the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding universal childcare, and responding to the review of inclusive and special education. The budget also notes our continued work to support reconciliation and signifies our commitment to investments and capital infrastructure. These investments are needed to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing student enrolment needs, and create modern learning environments and community spaces.

In this supplementary budget request, the Department of Education is requesting an increase of \$3.163 million in operation and maintenance expenditures and a decrease of \$301,000 in capital expenditures. Thank you very much for the opportunity, of course, to rise and speak about the important work of this department and the resources that are needed to support learners at all ages.

I will first start by speaking a little bit about the capital budget — a total budget decrease of \$301,000 is noted under the capital expenditures, reflecting revised capital project timelines resulting from COVID-19 and additional time required for key project planning activities.

In respect of these capital projects, I will provide a bit more detail. The Government of Yukon and the Kluane First Nation are taking next steps toward reconciliation by working together to build a new school in Burwash Landing. Moving the current Kluane Lake School from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing has been a long-standing request of Kluane First Nation. Due to delays from COVID-19, there is a budget surplus this period of \$85,000. Design work is definitely well underway, and we're engaging with the community on design options, and these are expected to be finalized this spring.

We're pleased, of course, that Kluane First Nation has now identified a preferred site for the school and that our officials continue to work together to move this project forward. There is a budget decrease of \$920,000 in the Selkirk parking lot project, primarily due to project delays. This surplus has been transferred internally to support other capital projects, including \$504,000 for a modular classroom project at Hidden Valley and Selkirk elementary schools and \$200,000 for stamped concrete at the Lewes Boulevard bus drop-off at CSSC Mercier. The net impact on these internal transfers on the overall budget is zero.

Operation and maintenance in terms of just general — there is a total increase of \$3.163 million in operation and maintenance. The primary driver of the increase in O&M is the collective agreement increases. On January 26, members of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals voted to ratify a new three-year collective agreement with the Government of Yukon. Among other items, the agreement brings forward meaningful changes, including yearly salary increases totalling 5.35 percent over three years for teachers, a 7.5-percent increase in pay for teachers on call — effective now — and additional levels of pay based on qualifications for Yukon First Nation language teachers and educational assistants.

Teachers and all school staff play such a key role in supporting students to be successful at school. They have done an incredible job adapting and being flexible during the pandemic. I certainly hold my hands up to all of the educators and definitely take the opportunity every chance I have to tell them this and to express that on behalf of Yukoners — the incredible job that they have done. The collective agreement increases in this budget cover July 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022.

The Yukon Association of Education Professionals is an important partner in education. This has been a positive and respectful round of bargaining together, with a view of supporting Yukon educators and students. These increases amount to \$1.56 million for Schools and Student Services and \$44,000 for First Nation Initiatives. We are glad to have finalized this agreement to continue to support school staff in the essential work they are doing to continue learning and keeping school environments open and available for students and families through the pandemic.

Other increases in Schools and Student Services include an increase of \$213,000 in funding for CFS due to increased enrolment and school operational costs.

Another major driver in the O&M budget increase that we're asking for is a universal childcare program. The new universal childcare program focuses on key areas of affordability, accessibility, and quality. Yukon's universal early learning and childcare program is designed to provide rich early learning experiences and environments and views children as capable and competent learners who are full of potential.

This program ensures that licensed early learning and childcare programs can be accessible to all Yukoners, as costs to families have been significantly reduced. Due to higher than expected program uptake, for the program costs, we are seeking an increase of \$1.3 million. Investing in early childhood relationships, environments, and experiences supports the development of Yukon children and the future of a happier and healthier society. This program has been a tremendous success over the last year. We are inching up on the one-year anniversary, and we are really proud of the work that has been done. The Yukon early learning and childcare funding program focuses on quality, inclusivity, affordability, and accessibility. The program consists of two parts: funding for licensed childcare, which reduces parent fees, reduces operational and administrative expenses, and supports program needs; and childcare operational funding — formerly the direct operating grant — which supports high-quality learning environments, increases wages of early childhood educators, and supports operational costs.

Starting on April 1, 2021, Yukon families began automatically saving up to \$700 per month per child who are registered full time in participating licensed childcare programs. These savings are also provided on a pro-rated basis for children attending programs that are part time. The Yukon early learning childcare funding program helps to support the reduction of parent fees to remain, on average, less than \$10 a day.

As of January 1, 2022, 100 percent of licensed early learning and childcare programs in the Yukon had transitioned to universal childcare, providing a total of 1,979 spaces for children. This investment in high-quality early learning and childcare is paying off, of course. We are very proud of this work, and this increase in budget is due to more parents choosing to access this program. That is good news for families and for young Yukoners who have access to quality learning environments for critical early years.

I would like to close by acknowledging the tremendous work that the Department of Education and our partners have done to support all Yukoners and Yukon communities this fiscal year, despite the continuous challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The department has been steadfast in its work to make meaningful changes for learners and families across the learning continuum. This will improve outcomes and help us all to not only recover from the pandemic, but thrive in doing so.

I would like to thank the staff of the Early Learning and Child Care unit and all of the operators of the early learning and daycare programs in Yukon for your combined effort to ensure that quality, affordable early learning environments remain open and available in Yukon to Yukon families and to Yukon communities; also, the staff of the Schools and Student Services branch, whether they are based in K to 12 schools or in the central administration building, for your commitment to the calls for action stemming from the review of inclusive and special education, while continuing to keep the schools open and available to students across the territory; also, the staff of the First Nation Initiatives branch for their work to renew and enhance partnerships through education agreements with Yukon First Nation governments that solidify our joint commitments to support the educational success of Yukon First Nation learners of all ages; and also, the staff of the Policy and Partnerships branch, who collaborated with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the First Nation Education Directorate to establish the Yukon First Nation School Board. This is a significant milestone that will address long-standing barriers and create new opportunities to realize success for Yukon First Nation students and all Yukon students.

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation for the work and dedication of our many partners in education and gratitude to the acting chief medical officer of health and her staff for their tireless efforts to help us keep Yukon learning environments safe for staff and students. As the world around us continues to be in flux, each and every one of you is helping to provide stability, security, and optimism for Yukon learners of all ages.

I would like to welcome Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan and director of Finance, Andrea McIntyre, to the Legislature today to assist in this debate. I will now end my opening comments and look forward to the discussion today. Thank you.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for her opening remarks and join her in welcoming her officials to the Legislature here today. Like many of my colleagues, the majority of my questions will be during the debate on the 2022-23 mains.

However, I do have a handful of questions for the minister with respect to the supplementary estimates that are before us here.

I would like to thank the officials as well for the briefing documents that they provided to us with respect to this. They were very easy to read, go through, and use to help to develop some questions.

I want the minister to take a look at the COVID-19 response that's in the supplementary estimates here. Obviously, voted to date was \$3.617 million and then the addition of \$250,000 in this budget — I understand that's for enhanced cleaning in daycares. I'm just hoping that the minister can give us a bit of an update.

When you look at the vote by allotment for the COVID-19 response, there is \$1.407 million for personnel. I'm wondering if the minister can provide us with a breakdown of that line item — if the personnel were teachers, paraprofessionals, or centralized at the department — and if she could provide some sort of a breakdown of that.

Then I'm also curious if the federal support dollars that were announced, I think, in the fall of 2020 — if that money has run out and if this is the last budget year that we will see that support from the federal government.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to rise to speak about the funding that's in the supplementary budget around the enhancements and the additional resources that were needed for our COVID-19 response. Again, I will just start by saying a thank you to the chief medical officer of health for working so closely with us during the pandemic — and continues to work with us on an ongoing basis as we move into this next stage.

In terms of the breakdown of the additional resources, there were an extra 23 teachers and there are an extra eight custodians who make up part of that additional amount that the member is asking about.

Mr. Kent: The other part of that question was if the federal dollars have run out — those federal support dollars that were announced, I believe, going back to the fall of 2020 — and if those have been expended.

Then, with the numbers that the minister gave — 23 teachers and eight custodians — is she able to provide a breakdown of which schools they were deployed to? Is there a Whitehorse breakdown as opposed to how many were sent to community schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the previous question around the federal dollars, yes, those dollars have now run out. We actually had approximately \$4.2 million for the safe return to school fund, and we have spent \$4,497,000, which makes up our additional request here today.

In terms of a breakdown of the additional resources, we will bring a return back with the breakdown. I do not have all of those details with me right now, but I will bring those back to the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that commitment. I will look forward to getting that breakdown. Of course, the minister knows that today was — for many if not all Yukon students — the first day back after the March break. I believe that on Tuesday of last week, there was a letter sent to parents, guardians, and staff with respect to continued mask use.

I'll just quote briefly from that letter. It says — and I'll quote: “For the time being, mask use requirements will remain in place. Students and staff must continue to wear masks in all indoor school settings, including classrooms, hallways and on school buses. Maintaining mask use requirements in schools will allow the Chief Medical Officer of Health to monitor the impact of returning to school on COVID-19 cases in the territory before considering easing this measure.”

So, as the minister knows and as the Premier, I believe, said during ECO debate today, the mandated mask usage came off on Friday of this week for designated spaces, I think it's called, or public areas — with some exceptions, of course, and hospitals and continuing care facilities being some.

What parents who have reached out to me over the past week or so have been wondering is — we recognize that the government says that they are making the decisions based on science. What is the chief medical officer of health looking for in order to consider easing this measure in the classrooms?

We have heard a number of concerns from parents about other health impacts from wearing masks for their kids and developmental impacts. So, again, that's the question for the minister.

What exactly are she and her cabinet colleagues looking for from the chief medical officer of health to ease this measure? Does she have any idea of a timeline for reviewing it or perhaps coming forward with an announcement about it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think I will start by just talking about our commitment to ensuring students are successful at school during the pandemic, while also ensuring that the health and safety of students and families — ensuring their health and safety have been considered as one of our top priorities.

In terms of a little bit of background, folks know that, on March 2, our government announced the path to ease COVID-19 restrictions over the next coming weeks from there, and that is where we are today. As we anticipated back on March 2 or thought toward this time that we're in now, we talked about watching the trend and ensuring that it's going in the right direction, which it is, which is why we did lift the restrictions and the state of emergency.

We have always been working closely, since the beginning, with the chief medical officer of health to always reassess and update the health and safety in our schools and to reflect them in our guidelines. When we went into a state of emergency — back into the state of emergency in November, we added additional guidelines for all schools. It included masking; it included halting all interschool sports and gatherings.

In terms of the mask use requirements, based on the recommendation from the chief medical officer of health — has asked us to keep these requirements in place and have students continue to wear masks in indoor settings, including classrooms, hallways, and school buses. Maintaining this is a precautionary measure that the chief medical officer has recommended to us.

We will continue to monitor children as they return to school from a two-week period of being away and not necessarily in a controlled setting, as we have for our schools.

While mask use remains in place for the time being, we are encouraged that we will be able to ease public health measures in our schools soon. This week, as you have indicated, schools returned, and we continued on with the mask use. We have lifted the guidelines and changed them to allow for a return to interschool activities so that students can participate in sports and recreation events — including arts, drama, and other activities — with students from other schools.

We will continue working with the chief medical officer around the mask-use aspect of this. If the COVID-19 situation continues where we are currently, starting on April 19, after the Easter weekend, schools will be able to return to out-of-territory field trips. I think that, in my answer to you today — I mean, I can bring back more detailed information from the chief medical officer of health if you wish, but I believe — we have been working with the chief medical officer and YCDC all through the pandemic and continue to monitor with our system of surveillance, which is a public health way of monitoring schools, to see if there are any indications of higher percentages of students being away due to sickness. These are all measures that we have had in place. Folks are well-practised in it, and we will continue monitoring that on a daily basis, which is what is happening now, to determine impacts and patterns of student absenteeism.

If the member wishes, I can bring back more detailed information from the chief medical officer of health, but I think that, given my answer today, it is very much precautionary at this point.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. I think that would be helpful if she was able to bring back some additional information from the chief medical officer of health, because this letter that went out last week left a lot of parents sort of wondering what the metrics are when it comes to monitoring the impact of returning to school on COVID-19 cases. What exactly are the chief medical officer of health and the Cabinet looking for when it comes to active cases or new cases or the test positivity rates? I think that the individuals who have reached out to me who have these concerns would appreciate that from the chief medical officer of health. Then, if there are any dates or timelines that she could give with respect — because, again, in that letter, it says — and I quote: “While mask use remains in place for the time being...”, and I will close the quote there. It is part of the broader letter, but I think that people are trying to get a sense for what “the time being” is and how long this may be in place and what metrics the CMOH is looking for when considering easing this measure.

Just a couple more questions, Madam Chair, for the minister before I turn it over to my colleague. It was earlier this calendar year that the minister announced that the 10 teaching positions at the Department of Education — I think they are itinerant teachers — who are deployed to schools that have additional needs would now be deployed to schools with primarily First Nation students. Has that work started, or are we expecting that this fall? And if so, have those 10 teaching positions been deployed to those schools or those First Nation programs that require them?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I’ll just go back a little bit on this — not too far back. I just wanted to indicate that this certainly has — this recommendation came to me from some of the work that’s happening around inclusive and special education. This new 2022-23 reconciliation staffing, from the staffing allocation, is from the *Staffing Allocation Handbook*. For the 2022-23 school year, achievement equity has been placed by reconciliation staffing, as recommended by the community of inquiry, stemming from the review of inclusive and special education.

Reconciliation staffing is a small step to recognize the systemic inequities and colonialist practices that have negatively impacted Yukon First Nation and other indigenous students. It reallocates the 10 FTEs of achievement equity staffing to recognize schools based on two factors: those that have significantly above average populations of Yukon First Nation or other indigenous students and those schools where multiple First Nations are represented.

This was, again, an early recommendation from one of the communities of inquiry. This indicates our commitment to this process. It will be in place for the 2022-23 year.

Mr. Kent: I will perhaps have some more questions for the minister when we get into the main estimates for 2022-23.

Just a couple more questions here. With respect to the First Nation School Board and the funding, obviously the referendums happened at the end of January, and there were a number of schools that have decided to join the governance model of the First Nation School Board. I’m curious if the minister is able to share the status of negotiations around funding.

Is it going to be a similar funding model to what CSFY currently has in place? Is it a per capita student funding arrangement? Is there anything that the minister can share?

I’m sure negotiations are probably ongoing at this point, but anything the minister can share would be helpful.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I believe this is the first time that I’m able to rise to really speak about the First Nation School Board in a debate this Sitting. I want to just hold my hands up to all of the work that has been done. I think it definitely started a long time ago — almost 50 years ago. Our government — when we came into governance, the previous Minister of Education worked closely with Yukon First Nations to look at a number of options. Ultimately, it was decided to build a framework for the First Nation School Board, which is all found within the act. Yes, it is the way that the francophone school board is structured under the act. We have not changed anything within the *Education Act* to accommodate this framework agreement. On January 27, seven school communities, including eight schools, voted in favour of being governed by the First Nation School Board starting in the 2022-23 school year.

Moving forward with the school board is a historic step where Yukon First Nations and their citizens reclaim greater responsibility for the administration and management of education programs for students and their communities.

I was very honoured to stand with chiefs on February 14 to celebrate this milestone on the 49th anniversary of *Together*

Today for Our Children Tomorrow. As the Minister of Education, I am continuing to collaborate with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the First Nation School Board Interim Governance Committee in the exercise of my oversight authorities as we go forward.

I will also, of course, continue to work on a government-to-government basis with individual First Nations on their educational priorities for their citizens. The Department of Education will continue to work collaboratively with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the technicians around the establishment of the First Nation School Board. I have agreed to establish the Interim Governance Committee to move forward with governance and funding arrangements. The committee includes the following members, who bring a wide variety of experiences and perspectives on Yukon education: Dr. Alyce Johnson, Erin Pauls, Jocelyn Joe-Strack, Mark Wedge, and Melanie Bennett.

Again, the First Nation School Board trustee elections will happen in November 2022 — I'm really looking forward to that — but in the interim, it was necessary to put an interim body in place to do a tremendous amount of work in a very short period of time to be ready by August 2022 to have the schools that have ratified to be under the First Nation School Board ready to do just that. We have a team of technicians working very closely with the interim governance. Funding is, of course, a high priority.

One of the things that I will say, of course, is that, like the francophone school board, the staff in all First Nation School Board schools will remain Yukon government employees and remain under the collective agreement. School infrastructure will remain under the responsibility of Yukon government and the responsibility specifically of Highways and Public Works to maintain, as we do now with all schools.

I will perhaps stop there. There are a lot of details and a very aggressive action plan that is underway right now, which is why it was necessary to put in place an interim governance body to be able to bring the work up sooner, rather than waiting into several months after the ratification. So, we're very happy to be working collaboratively and pretty much in lockstep with the Chiefs Committee on Education on how to make this First Nation School Board a reality.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response. As I said, I will have more questions when we get into the main estimates. I thank the officials for attending here today, and I will turn it over to my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: Thank you, Chair, and I just have very few questions in the supplementary budget because I have lots of questions when we reach the mains.

One of the things that was included in some of the changes was a decrease of \$920,000 to the Selkirk parking lot. There was lots of discussion — including motions by me ahead of the last territorial election about postponing any decision around the Selkirk Street parking lot — around real concerns that families actually had highlighted. If the minister can let me know the status of that engagement or consultation process, I would appreciate it.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank you for the question regarding the Selkirk parking lot. As I had stated in my opening remarks, the \$920,000 in the Selkirk parking lot project — there are a number of reasons for the delay and I will get into that. But the money has been re-profiled, which is a common type of practice, because we do have a number of needs with infrastructure throughout all of our school communities.

So, \$504,000 was re-profiled from this to the Hidden Valley modular classroom and Selkirk Elementary School and \$200,000 to another project at CSSC Mercier on the concrete bus drop-off.

In terms of the project itself, a design for the parking lot reallocation was shared with the school community. However, after considerable — and not all positive — feedback, the department decided to re-engage with the community on the overall scope and design of the project. Education staff continue to engage with the school administration and with the school council to understand their needs. I have met with the school once already and will be meeting with them tonight to have further discussion about this and other areas of interest.

This is definitely a priority project for the Selkirk school council and the school community. It is one that I have heard about since taking on the position, and it is really a high priority for us to get the project done. I know that Highways and Public Works is the lead on this in terms of our government. However, we are also working with the City of Whitehorse as a partner in completing this project.

When you talk about complexities, our Highways and Public Works department is also working on different projects within that area, and there are a lot of complicated types of issues there — one of them being the storm sewer and connection with the Gadzoosdaa parking lot. There are a number of factors within that educational area, and we are working closely with the school community to ensure that we are getting it right and that we are investing in a project that will meet the needs of that community.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. I appreciate the comment that some people were unhappy with it, but it came straight from the school council at the time — their concerns. So, I look forward to hearing how that develops. I will put in a pitch that, based on our climate emergency, it is important to consider active transportation and the ability for students to safely reach their school, and I look forward to hearing more about that.

Madam Chair, we know that we have the main votes coming forward, and I have no additional questions for right now and look forward to further debate under the mains. I thank the officials for being here today.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education?

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 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, 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 3, Department of Education, 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 \$3,063,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$301,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,762,000 agreed to

Department of Education agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to rise this afternoon to discuss the 2021-22 supplementary budget for the Department of Health and Social Services.

The first thing I would like to do is to welcome Deputy Minister Michael Hale, who has joined me here today, and thank him for his attendance and support during this process.

I would also like to note thanks to the department staff and officials who worked diligently to ensure that we have a budget that supports all Yukoners.

We have an opportunity here today to note that the supplemental budget with respect to Health and Social Services relates almost entirely, or entirely, to COVID-19 and our response. The COVID-19 response O&M budget second supplementary for 2021 would total, and does total, \$29,973,000. This is an increase of \$5 million over the 2021-22 main estimates that have been voted to date for the COVID-19 response.

The recoveries, which are critically important to Yukoners, related to the COVID-19 total and bring a total budget of

\$16,208,000 in total recoveries. We fully expect that the COVID-19-related costs will decrease in 2022-23, and let's hope that is sooner than later.

The \$29,973,000 for the COVID-19 response for 2021-22 is aligned with and guided by the document *Forging Ahead: The Yukon's Continuing Response to COVID-19*. The *Forging Ahead* goals are to protect vulnerable populations and to enhance the well-being of Yukoners.

In addition, I would like to note that vaccinations have been, and continue to be, our best defence during this pandemic. Vaccines are safe and effective. The opportunity to reinforce that for Yukoners is critical.

While the demand for vaccines is now slowing, our territory-wide vaccination efforts do continue, and we continue providing booster vaccinations to those Yukoners who received their second doses six months ago or longer. We will continue to provide first and second dose vaccines to all Yukoners ages five and above.

Deputy Chair, seeing the time, 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

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, 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. 203, entitled *Third 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 5:27 p.m.

The following document was filed March 18, 2022:

35-1-52

Recommendations on climate action, letter re (dated March 8, 2022) from Sandy Silver, Premier, to Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change panelists (Tredger)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 53

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, March 22, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 22, 2022 — 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

Speaker: Members, please join me in welcoming the grade 10 ACES class from the Wood Street School and their teacher, Colin Abbott.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In attendance here for World Water Day and Canada Water Week, we have, from the Department of Environment — please welcome to the House Brendan Mulligan, senior scientist, groundwater; Cole Fischer, groundwater technologist; Ella Parker, program advisor; Nicole Novodvorsky, operations manager; Heather Jirousek, director of Water Services branch; and Christine Cleghorn, who is the ADM of Environmental Sustainability.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to acknowledge each of the students who are here today with the Wood Street School. Thank you very much for coming today. I also acknowledge Colin Abbott, a teacher at the school, and I would like to welcome Anneke Aasman, Jesse Amos, Jebz Argao, Calvin Cibart, Beatrix Duncan, Teagan Ewing, Hope Goury, Zyanya Hoffmann, Alex Kiriak, Doon McDowell, Rowan Nehring, Chase O'Brien, Ryan O'Farrell, Benjamin Perrault, Kaidence Reynolds-Fraser, Luke Roberts, and William Van den Hoorn. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of World Water Day and Canada Water Week

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise to pay tribute to World Water Day and Canada Water Week. Canada Water Week is a national celebration that is held annually in March to coincide with World Water Day globally on March 22. As part of promoting Canada Water Week in the Yukon, Yukon schools will receive presentations that encourage youth to think about how water affects our daily lives and to consider potential water-related careers.

Each year, World Water Day raises awareness of the approximately two billion people living without access to safe

water. In the Yukon, we are, of course, privileged and must not take our water security for granted.

For 2022, the theme of World Water Day is “Groundwater — making the invisible visible”. Groundwater is our most abundant form of water in the Yukon, yet it is poorly understood and often ignored. Ninety-seven percent of Yukon’s drinking water is sourced from groundwater. Aquatic and terrestrial life rely on groundwater to replenish surface water and keep ecosystems healthy. Groundwater stabilizes temperatures and provides nutrients to rivers, lakes, and ponds.

Groundwater is critical to our economy, and yet groundwater is vulnerable to contamination from a variety of human activities. It is expensive and complicated to clean up contaminated ground water, so it is critical that we protect it. Groundwater is contained in layers of sand, gravel, and fractured rocks called “aquifers”.

I want to commend the First Nation and municipal governments that have source-water protection plans or aquifer and wellhead protection plans to ensure sustainable and responsible stewardship of our groundwater. In partnership with First Nations, municipalities, the federal government, academics, and environmental consultants, Government of Yukon is working to map the aquifers underlying our communities. So far, aquifer maps have been completed for Carmacks, and we are now working on aquifer maps for Watson Lake and Teslin.

Government of Yukon is working to understand where and how groundwater is vulnerable so that we can continue to protect this vital resource. In February 2022, we installed new monitoring wells at Army Beach to improve our understanding of how groundwater levels are affected by high water events at Marsh Lake. In 2020, we launched the Yukon water well registry, an interactive online map where people can find well records, see mapped aquifers, and download reports about our large public water systems. The registry has been warmly received by the public, drillers, environmental consultants, researchers, and others who are seeking information about groundwater. In particular, a homeowner seeking to have a well drilled in their property can use the registry to help forecast how much the well is likely to cost based on other wells in their area.

The Kluane sound project — a partnership between Kluane First Nation, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the Government of Yukon — is using traditional knowledge and novel scientific approaches to understand how groundwater conditions are changing around Kluane Lake after a dramatic drop in water levels due to the retreat of the Kaskawulsh glacier.

Earlier today, I had the honour of being part of the World Water Day celebration. This morning, the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre hosted an online talk about the world of groundwater featuring Government of Yukon staff, researchers, and a graphic illustrator who brought groundwater concepts to life, making the invisible —

Speaker: Order.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 21 to 22 as Canada Water Week. This national event is a celebration of water. Here in the Yukon, we have some pretty spectacular bodies of water, like Kluane Lake in my beautiful riding of Kluane, our largest body of water — over 409 square kilometres — and arguably one of the most beautiful places on the planet, and the Yukon River, which stretches 3,190 kilometres throughout the territory. Our water resources are integral to our health, livelihoods, activities, and experiences across the territory.

Canada Water Week is held during the third full week of March each year by design to coincide with World Water Day on March 22. World Water Day serves as a yearly reminder of the importance of water to life around the globe and to bring awareness to the fact that there are two billion people living without access to safe drinking water. Achieving clean drinking water throughout Canada is an important goal.

Today, Mr. Speaker, there are 36 drinking water advisories in place between Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. Every one of these advisories is located on a First Nation reserve. Slowly, these advisories are being addressed, but not nearly fast enough.

So, we are so fortunate here in the Yukon. Our water is clean and crisp, and we live in one of the most beautiful places in the country. There is a reason that the population growth for the Yukon surpasses the other Canadian provinces and territories; it's to enjoy our wilderness and enjoy our water.

So, be good stewards of the land for our future generations, and our beautiful territory will come to thrive and give back to the people who call it home.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to World Water Day and Canada Water Week.

When we talk about water, there are so many things we can talk about. We can talk about clean drinking water, about where it comes from, about who can access it and who can't. We can talk about rivers, lakes, and wetlands and how we live in relation to them. We can talk about the fish and the animals that make their homes in water. We can talk about industry and the water we need for agriculture and mining. We can talk about everything from environmental stewardship to municipal infrastructure to energy production.

Water and access to it — it's a compelling example of how our world is interconnected. We need to shift our thinking of water just as a resource that we can exploit and start asking: What does a healthy relationship with water look like? How do the choices we make about water today shape the future of our society?

I think about the communities across Canada without access to safe drinking water. How many years do communities have to be under boil water orders before access to clean water is the norm? It's unacceptable that any community suffers from the health impacts of contaminated water. It's especially disturbing that a country as rich as Canada has allowed it to happen.

I think about our Yukon wetlands policy that is being created right now. Will we make sure that our wetlands are protected for future generations? I think about climate change and the consequences of droughts and flooding on our environment. We have many challenges ahead as we work to develop a sustainable relationship with water, but there is also great opportunity.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres spoke about World Water Day this year and said — and I quote: “Water can be a source of conflict but also of cooperation.” Water is life-giving, and we need to protect it.

Applause

In recognition of staff commitment and resiliency throughout COVID-19 pandemic

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise in the House today to mark the two-year anniversary of COVID-19 in the Yukon. Two years ago today, we received the news that our first COVID-19 cases had arrived here. I offer this tribute to recognize the sacrifices that Yukoners have made over the last two years and to pay tribute to the incredibly hard-working staff that have shown commitment and resiliency throughout the pandemic. Together, we have been able to navigate our way through COVID-19.

Thank you to the Community Nursing staff and the vaccination teams for helping to educate and serve Yukoners and deliver COVID-19 vaccinations to our friends, our family, our children, and our elders. Their efforts are something to be celebrated, with over 85 percent of Yukoners aged five and older having had their second dose. To the many health care workers who have devoted long hours and demonstrated incredible dedication — nurses, doctors, paramedics, pharmacists, and lab technicians — we thank you.

Thank you to the Yukon Communicable Disease Control staff who were there to help Yukoners who tested positive and were a contact with a positive case, walking them through the steps to keep themselves and those around them safe. Also, to the staff at the COVID-19 testing centres and at-home rapid test distribution sites, testing helped to limit the spread of infection and played a major role in the success of where we are today.

Thank you to the essential workers who have helped to keep our economies going, kept us fed, and cared for our children. Thank you to teachers, truck drivers, and staff at restaurants, grocery stores, and public transportation. The working people at our airports and borders who provided information about public health measures, declarations, and how to travel safely must be recognized.

Thank you to all Yukon government staff and our partners across the territory who worked tirelessly to ensure that Yukoners were informed and had the most up-to-date information. It has been a roller-coaster ride, with many twists and turns that none of us bargained for. I would like to honour everyone who has played a role in keeping the Yukon safe during this pandemic. We pulled together. We avoided outcomes that could have been far worse.

Now the Yukon is in a position to end our public health measures and we are moving toward a new kind of normal, but

we must continue to be diligent. We must be respectful of one another and our choices to keep ourselves safe.

Thank you to each and every Yukoner who has diligently followed the public health measures and has been vaccinated to protect our friends, our family, our elders, and our little ones. We have come so far, but we must ensure that we continue to use our COVID-19 sense and be safe and kind.

Mr. Cathers: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize this two-year anniversary. The pandemic has created challenges for everyone, but it's important to recognize that its impacts have been harder on some people and some families.

I want to begin by thanking all of the health care professionals and others who have been part of the vaccination rollout in the Yukon. While others may try to take credit for your work, we remember that it was your efforts that have been instrumental in achieving high vaccination rates earlier here than in many jurisdictions. I want to also thank those who have been involved in the testing part of the system.

I want to thank Yukoners working in our hospitals, medical clinics, EMS, nursing stations, continuing care facilities, home care, and allied health services for your efforts in providing health care services during this difficult and often stressful time. Your work has made a difference and is appreciated.

Thank you as well to businesses, sports organizations, churches, NGOs, and the list goes on, for your efforts in dealing with the pandemic and the challenge of offering services and supports during this difficult time. Thank you indeed to all the Yukoners who have made an effort.

This has been a time of neighbours helping neighbours as they isolated, dropping off supplies, checking in on friends and family through windows, distant porch visits, over-the-phone or Zoom visits, and people rallying to support businesses in danger of closing.

Businesses and organizations have been forced to adapt the way in which they did business or served people. Working from home and meeting distantly has become commonplace.

People have been resilient and many have adapted, but there have also been serious impacts. There have been mental health impacts, an increase in drug overdoses, and Yukoners who have passed away from COVID and others who have been sick with it. There are also businesses that have been hit hard by the pandemic.

As we mark two years since the impact of the pandemic reached the Yukon, we must recognize lessons we've learned, the resiliency we have seen, and also struggles faced by many people — two years of uncertainty and ever-changing restrictions. Restrictions and a decrease in tourism have led to once-thriving businesses, in some cases, struggling to keep afloat.

Government restrictions and mandates have led to job losses for some, in an already difficult time. Yukoners have been through a lot. During the last several months, we've seen some people growing increasingly frustrated with autocratic decision-making by Cabinet without public consultation on rules that were impacting their lives.

Two years ago, in March 2020, we called for public consultation to guide the response and proposed an all-party committee to deal with pandemic response. Since then, we have repeatedly called for more public consultation, especially on regulations and ministerial orders.

Like rules for occupational health and safety or highway safety, that rules may be needed does not mean that government ought to make those decisions autocratically. Unfortunately, the government continues to reject our constructive proposals for improved democratic oversight and public involvement, including voting against changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* that would have provided for that public consultation and democratic oversight.

While this does not take away from the efforts of Yukoners, especially those working in the front lines, it is unfortunate that the elected level of government has been unwilling to share more information, to work more cooperatively with all MLAs, and to seek feedback from people while the rules were in place.

Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that things will return to normal, but as we face the prospect of living with COVID, going forward, government should recognize that things can be done better —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. White: Today, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to offer my thanks and gratitude to all Yukoners. We echo the thanks of our colleagues for all of those who worked on the front lines.

These last two years of the COVID pandemic have felt more like 20. There isn't a single aspect of the pandemic that has been easy for anyone. These last years have skyrocketed issues into the forefront of our collective knowing: a decline in mental health for so many, including children; an increase in drug use and deaths from drug poisoning; and lesser known issues, like the consumption of hand sanitizer — a cheap replacement for alcohol, which was never intended for human consumption. As we continue to go forward, these issues and others will need to be addressed with humanity and compassion.

The Yukon family has been deeply affected by COVID. We honour your losses and we share your sadness.

Everyone's experience is unique and everyone's story is their own.

I have always loved the Yukon, but that love deepened as I watched our community join together in kindness and rise together to face the unknown. Thank you for your strength, your adaptability, your patience, but especially for the kindness that you directed toward others.

We'll need to harness the best of what we've learned over the past two years to forge a path forward where no one is left behind. Years from now, when we look back on this pandemic, I hope that we can see the lessons we learned as a starting point for a kinder, more gentle and inclusive Yukon.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a document that shows that, unlike the Conservative leader Candice Bergen, the Yukon Party leader favours cooperative deals with the New Democratic Party.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 10 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 10 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre on March 21, 2022.

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. 10 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. 10 shall be provided on or before April 4, 2022.

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. McLean: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the Yukon First Nation School Board.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop legislation that grants rights to water.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that all Yukoners have access to year-round recreational opportunities.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide at-home rapid COVID-19 test kits to the Old Crow Health Centre for distribution to Old Crow citizens.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Solar energy installations at highway camps

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Our government is continuing to make strides on the commitments laid out in *Our Clean Future*. *Our Clean Future* is a Yukon-wide strategy to tackle climate change that involves all levels of government, businesses, organizations, and individuals. Our government is leading by example, and we continue to support efforts that empower Yukoners and Yukon businesses to advance the territory's climate change goals.

Climate change is a very real issue, particularly here in the north. The Yukon green infrastructure program at Highways and Public Works focuses on meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets for public infrastructure owned by the Government of Yukon. Located throughout the territory, highway maintenance camps are critically important to keeping people and goods moving to and through our communities. However, due to the often remote locations of these camps, many of these facilities are off-grid and serviced exclusively by diesel-generated electricity. Investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar energy, is key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and dependency on fossil fuels.

Feasibility assessment work has identified four such highway maintenance camps at which we will install solar energy systems. These are the Klondike and Ogilvie maintenance camps on the Dempster Highway, the Tuchtita camp on the Robert Campbell Highway between Watson Lake and Ross River, and the Blanchard camp on the Haines Road. These four projects have been reviewed by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board and have received a recommendation to proceed.

These systems will include the construction of a solar array and a battery storage building within the existing maintenance compound at each location. The first two projects, which will be tendered this spring, will be design/build contracts, tendered individually. The following two projects will be tendered in the fall. The first two are planned for construction this summer, with the following two planned for construction in the summer of 2023. Adding a renewable solar energy system at these four camps will help us to achieve a significant reduction in fossil fuel consumption, up to 200,000 litres of diesel per year.

These four projects will also help to reduce the government's greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 530 tonnes per year. To give you an idea of the impact of this reduction, it is roughly equivalent to 2,500 round trips from Whitehorse to Dawson City by car.

The department is continuing to invest in renewable energy projects such as these through the green infrastructure program.

Mr. Speaker, this is another great example of our government investing in a better and cleaner future for Yukoners. I look forward to sharing future progress on these exciting projects and continuing to make strides toward meeting our commitments within *Our Clean Future*.

Mr. Hassard: First off, it's important to note that we are strongly in favour of actions to reduce our emissions and to tackle climate change, and anytime we can save diesel

electricity generation is a good thing, but I do have some questions for the minister about today's announcement. These questions are based off those submitted by First Nation governments during the YESAA commenting process, and I hope that the minister is able to respond to these questions today.

With respect to all of the highway camps that will see this work, the YESAB submissions indicate that a significant amount of heavy equipment will be required to install these solar systems. Each site is expected to require an excavator, a dump truck, a pile rig, three pickups, and other fossil-fuel-powered equipment.

Several years ago in this House, the Liberals committed to looking at all decisions through a climate lens so that we can understand the impacts on the climate from decisions that they make. However, none of these projects have had an analysis done on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions created due to construction. This is an issue raised by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government, which asked the Government of Yukon to consider, document, and report all GHG emissions created through construction of this project. So, I'm hoping that the minister can confirm for the House today if he will live up to this request.

Another question specific to the Klondike camp that was submitted by TH was with respect to the location of the solar panels. The government is planning on repurposing the existing junkyard at the grader station to be used for the location for the solar panels. What will be done with the items currently in the junkyard? Will they be moved off-site or disposed of? I'm hoping that the minister can provide an answer for that.

These projects are also bringing battery storage to the sites. The YESAB submission indicates — and I quote: "... removal of lithium-ion batteries from the site to an appropriate off-site disposal facility." A question submitted by one of the First Nation governments asked the government where the closest appropriate off-site disposal facility is and what the associated greenhouse gases created to transport the battery there are. Another question is about the true life-cycle cost of the renewable energy system proposed for these highway camps.

As noted in one submission to YESAB, if components are manufactured using methods that create substantial GHGs and if other project components are transported internationally, these GHGs should be considered and calculated as a factor in the overall GHG reduction potential for the project.

Can the minister confirm if the manufacturing of components such as batteries and solar panels and the transportation of components and equipment from source to site has been factored into the GHG reduction calculation?

While the minister is up, I would also like to raise some concerns with the state of the highways. Over the past few years, we have seen cuts to the highway maintenance budget. Maybe the minister could explain these cuts, as people rely on our roads and highways to travel from community to community for such things as to attend medical appointments. This, of course, is why road maintenance is so important. I am hoping that the minister will also announce that he will be reversing these cuts while he is on his feet next.

Ms. Tredger: Every time we move from diesel to renewable energy, we are taking an important step toward reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. For people and places in the Yukon who are not connected to the grid, moving off of diesel generators is not easy, but we've seen such innovation and leadership as people find ways to make it happen. There are many examples to point to. In 2013, Northwestel started a pilot project to use solar to power its most remote sites and has been investing and expanding its solar projects ever since.

Projects are underway across the Yukon to reduce rural communities' dependence on diesel. Some are already in operation, such as solar projects in Old Crow and Dawson City. We are grateful to these forward-thinking communities for leading the way, and it's good to see Yukon government learning from them to reduce its own dependence on diesel. We look forward to the projects coming online and hope that future initiatives will incorporate renewable energy from day one.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Since 1948, temperatures in the Yukon have increased by 2.3 degrees Celsius, which is close to three times at which global temperatures are rising. Climate change, even in the face of the pandemic, remains the biggest challenge of our generation, and we must do everything we can to protect our territory and the world for future generations.

Our Clean Future lays out a road map for the Yukon to reduce our emissions as a territory and better protect our environment. A significant piece of the work is transitioning the Yukon to renewable energy sources and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. One of the actions in *Our Clean Future* is to conduct retrofits to Yukon government buildings to reduce energy use and to contribute to a 30-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 — actually, 45 percent.

These four projects alone would get us approximately five percent closer to meeting our goal by 2030. In addition, these projects will help meet our commitment to install renewable electricity systems in five Yukon government buildings in off-grid locations by 2025. We are now on track to meeting that call to action in *Our Clean Future* one year earlier than committed.

Mr. Speaker, our focus is to continue to make investments in renewable energy projects that will help the Yukon meet its emission reduction targets and ensure that energy rates remain low across the territory.

The Yukon Party's plan, by contrast, is to go backwards. They want to invest in more fossil-fuel-produced energy, creating the need for more diesel generators in the territory at a time when gas and diesel prices are rising. This will not only hurt our environment but also the pockets of Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to work to meet our targets in *Our Clean Future* and build a stronger, more resilient territory.

I was happy to see yesterday that all MLAs in this Assembly supported the creation of the better building program — but, of course, the Yukon Party voted against the bill last fall. This is the type of innovative action that we need to continue to take to help Yukoners reduce their emissions. We

know that decisions we make today will affect Yukoners for generations to come, and it is incumbent on leaders in the territory and around the world to make bold, progressive action to fight climate change.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Dawson City recreation centre

Mr. Hassard: So, yesterday, we asked the Minister of Community Services about the budget for the new recreation centre in Dawson City. In response, the minister stated that they had submitted a request for federal funding based on a budget estimate of \$21 million. However, we have obtained a letter dated February 22, signed by the minister himself, indicating that the new rec centre in Dawson could cost as much as \$81.2 million. Now, that's a \$60-million difference from the number that the minister gave the House yesterday.

So, can the minister explain this discrepancy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to talk about the Dawson rec centre this afternoon.

We are investing in all of our communities' recreation centres and we are happy to do so. We think that recreation in rural Yukon is important, and we will continue to make investments where necessary.

This is a project that has been going on for several years. We've been working very closely with the City of Dawson on this proposal. We did submit an application to the federal government. That's what we had to do. We had to do it in a timely manner when we put the program in.

Since that time, there has been a lot of things happening in the world. There is a war in Europe. There are trade disputes with China. Prices of commodities, COVID itself, supply chains — we've seen an increase in expenses across the board in many, many places.

So, yes, the application was made several years ago. In the time between this application that was made until now, we've absolutely seen the world change, so we are now in a new world.

We're working with the City of Dawson to build a rec centre for that community. We're working very closely. They have identified their needs, and we will work to get that centre built so that the citizens at Dawson can have a rec centre that they can be proud of, like every other community in the territory.

Mr. Hassard: I would just remind the minister that those changes didn't all happen since he gave us that information yesterday here in the Legislature.

Now, we've also obtained the leaked functional plan and concept designs for the proposed Dawson rec centre, and the plan lists a range of options. One of those options is called "Dome Road option 1". The estimated cost for this option is \$54 million. On July 2021, the project team, which includes members from the Government of Yukon, wrote a letter to the City of Dawson recommending this option. On August 31, 2021, the City of Dawson unanimously voted in favour of this option.

But then yesterday, the minister told us that he was budgeting just \$21 million for it. So, that's \$33 million less than the option actually chosen by the City of Dawson. Can the minister explain this discrepancy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, what we're seeing is that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is just not a reliable source of information. I'm shocked, actually.

So, what we heard is the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin talking about \$80 million, now it's \$21 million, then it's \$50 million. It's just agents of chaos. That's what they're trying to do here, Mr. Speaker. They are trying to sow chaos and discord in communities where there really isn't any.

I honestly wish that they would be a little more responsible in this House with their information flow, because they are really just trying to sow discord. I really think that does Yukoners a disservice.

We are working very closely with the City of Dawson to identify a rec centre — and the Dome Road is the recommended option — and to create a recreation facility that serves the needs of the citizens of Dawson for the most reasonable cost that we can. We're in a process of doing that right now.

We have already said publicly that we have applied to Ottawa for support for a \$21-million facility. Yes, the facility has come up in value. That happens in this thing. We're working with the City of Dawson to come up with a plan that will actually give those citizens the recreation facility that they deserve, and I know they appreciate that.

Mr. Hassard: What we are trying to get is accurate information from this government, but it appears to be a serious challenge most days. So, we know that a project team that includes members for the Government of Yukon recommended last year that the government go ahead with a new Dawson rec centre that costs \$54 million. We know that the Dawson City council voted in favour of that option last fall, but now the minister has only budgeted \$21 million for this project. As I said, that is a \$33-million shortfall from the recommended option that has been chosen by Dawson, so that leaves two options, Mr. Speaker: Either the minister thinks that he is getting \$33 million from somewhere else or he is going to make cuts to the project to make it smaller to reduce that cost. Can the minister let us know how he is making up that \$33-million shortfall?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I can understand why the member opposite is confused as to this process of consultation, or confused on the process of getting the dollar value in a supply chain management issue of a year, or even taking a look at inflation. On this side of the House, we are doing the consultation that we necessarily need to do with the City of Dawson. We are working hand in glove with them. There is money in this budget, and there are also pressures from inflation and pressures from supply chain management.

Now, the members opposite, of course, don't understand this part of it. They stopped short of all those things. I sat there, as the Member for Klondike, for years. I watched the photo op from the members opposite. They dug down into the ground and said, "This is where we are going to build a rec centre", and for five years, I sat in opposition and asked questions about it,

and they kept saying to me, “In due time, in due time” and never got it done.

We are committed to working with the City of Dawson, and we will commit to making sure that this rec centre gets completed.

Question re: Watson Lake continuing care

Ms. McLeod: Last weekend, Watson Lake residents came together to discuss the need for a continuing care facility in their community. People in the area no longer want to send their loved ones to Whitehorse for that level of care. In the past, I have asked the minister to engage the community on this topic, and we even saw a petition tabled last year with over 500 signatures.

Is the minister now ready to reconsider her position on this and begin working to establish a continuing care facility in Watson Lake?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to rise today to speak about this important health issue. I am also very pleased to see that the member opposite is working with her community on the planning exercise. That is how these kinds of things get done. Communities come together, we meet with them on a regular basis, and they talk about their priorities.

The work that was done by the former Yukon Party government with respect to long-term care facilities is an important factor in relation to the work that we are — in contrast to the work that we are currently now doing.

Of course, their planning process included Whistle Bend here in Whitehorse, with a total of 300 beds, which would mean that everyone needed to leave their communities to come here for either end-of-life or particular medical treatment. That is not our plan. We are working with a process where individuals can age at home and be there, hopefully, as long as possible — also working with communities across the territory for the purposes of dealing with how they would like — usually just their elders, although other people with particular medical situations — to be cared for close to home.

Ms. McLeod: Given the minister’s lack of willingness to listen to rural Yukoners, we launched our own consultation and will compile the results in a “what we heard” document.

Will the minister agree to review the input from the community of Watson Lake on the need for a continuing care facility, and will she agree to come to the community herself and host a public meeting to discuss how to move this project forward?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I had a wonderful visit to Watson Lake in the fall of last year. I spoke with many individuals from the community, as well as individuals who work for and with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice in that community, and I spoke with them about their needs and their priorities. It was an excellent opportunity; I would be happy to go back again.

I think what the member opposite is failing to realize is that our priorities with respect to Yukoners — and we’ve heard from Yukoners on this — is the aging-in-place action plan. It was released back in September 2020, and this plan was based

on extensive public engagement with more than 1,200 people from across the territory.

Its vision is to ensure that all Yukoners — regardless of age, income, or ability — have access to the supports that they need to live safe, independent, and comfortable lives in their own home or community for as long as possible. The first aging-in-place annual report will be publicly released very soon, and I look forward to that. The report summarizes the progress that has been made to date, and I am happy to stand again on this question.

Ms. McLeod: Even if the minister was willing to listen to rural Yukoners and agreed to proceed with this project, we know that it is going to take several years to complete. In the meantime, the people of Watson Lake still need improved services.

What steps will the minister take immediately to help people in Watson Lake live independently and stay in their homes longer?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The minister has answered the question and talked about the extensive study and research that we’ve done to make evidence-based decisions in all communities, including all the rural communities. This does represent a complete 180 from the member opposite. Her government was designing and planning a 300-bed facility in Whitehorse for all of our elders in all of the rural communities who needed that level of care. That would have meant us apologizing years later for that particular institution.

What we did from the first time that we came into government here is that we designed and built the 150, with operation and maintenance — which was not contemplated by the members opposite either for that facility — knowing full well that we wanted to make sure that we kept our elders in the rural communities forever. For five years now, that’s what we’ve been doing.

The minister has been to her feet to talk about the studies, the consultation, and the work that we’ve done in these rural communities. We will continue to do so.

I’m glad to hear that the member opposite now believes in having aging in place in the communities. I hope they change their mind on acute care as well, because *Putting People First* has said that the best way to move forward in Yukon is a people-centred approach and a collaborative approach to health care. Maybe they will flip-flop on that one as well.

Question re: Long COVID support

Ms. White: After two full years of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more long-term effects of the virus are coming to light. Last year, the World Health Organization defined the post-COVID condition now known as “long COVID”. The Public Health Agency of Canada also recognized the existence of long COVID, along with a long list of symptoms. But here in the Yukon, the Department of Health and Social Services says that the definition of “long COVID” is still up for debate.

That begs the question: What science is being followed now in this situation? Does the government acknowledge that long COVID does indeed exist and affects many Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think there is much debate about the fact that there are individuals across the world suffering from what has been termed "long COVID". I don't think there is much debate about the fact that health professionals and experts across the world are determining, studying, and researching what is known as "long COVID" to determine its ultimate effects, ultimate treatment, presumably, as well as perhaps medication and/or vaccinations going forward.

That work is being done across this country. It is being done by the medical officers of health across the country — the chief medical officers of health. It is being led in Canada by Dr. Theresa Tam's office, and the experts will certainly be providing guidance, as they have with respect to COVID-19 throughout the last two years, for how medical individuals and professionals can treat their own patients and how individuals who might suffer from long COVID will be able to address this situation in their lives.

Ms. White: I appreciate that acknowledgement of long COVID across the world, but it does exist here in the Yukon. So, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, about 60 percent of adults who have recovered from COVID reported experiencing symptoms more than 12 weeks after the initial infection, which can then be classified as "long COVID". Some of those symptoms include fatigue, memory problems, shortness of breath, general pain, and difficulty thinking, and 10 percent of adults with long COVID said that they were unable to return to work in the long term. Yukoners affected by long COVID are sharing their stories and asking for support, only to be told by this government that there is no such thing as long COVID.

What is the government doing to support Yukoners suffering from long COVID?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Well, I can tell you that the first thing that this government is doing with respect to Yukoners who might suffer from long COVID is acknowledging them — acknowledging their situation, acknowledging the difficulties that they are having, and certainly recommending that they are working with their own health professionals.

We are all learning about this. The medical professionals are learning about the effects of long COVID and, ultimately, individuals will be working with their own medical professionals to do that.

I can also indicate that some of my colleagues have been working with a group of individuals here in the territory who have indicated that they do have long COVID. They are seeking meetings — one of the meetings I think is set for this weekend — as a way to start the dialogue and to determine the priorities of this particular group of individuals and what they would like to see as a response from their government. We will be listening very well to the group and understanding what we can do and determining what role we can play to support them through this difficulty. They will be supported. We have supported Yukoners throughout the last two years, both financially and otherwise, and we will work to support Yukoners with long COVID.

Ms. White: Unfortunately, the minister's assertion isn't the experience of Yukoners with long COVID, and that meeting is on Thursday at 11:00 a.m. Many provinces in Canada have started long COVID clinics where a team of doctors and health professionals can support and offer advice. In the Yukon, not only are people being denied help, they are also being told that if they didn't get a positive PCR test, they can't have long COVID. The thing is that most people who got COVID were not eligible to get a PCR test in the first place, and that doesn't even include that the government stopped administering PCR tests in January. This leaves folks struggling to access treatment, often telling them that they have no choice but to pay out of pocket for whatever treatment they can find that makes them feel a little less helpless.

Will the minister work with existing long COVID programs in other jurisdictions so that Yukoners can get the help that they need?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't really know where to start. The correction about the meeting — the member opposite might be going to a meeting on Thursday at 11:00 a.m., but ministers on this side of the House have a meeting on Saturday. I think that maybe they can take me at my word on that. It's not about people's schedules; it's about connecting universally with people who identify as having long COVID here in the territory.

With respect to testing, it is also not correct that the government stopped PCR testing here in the territory in January. Testing at the testing centre in downtown Whitehorse continues to be available to individuals who qualify for those tests. I can also indicate that, of course, we will absolutely be supporting individuals who have come forward and identified that they have symptoms, effects, and impacts on their lives from long COVID. We will support them if they need particular testing for that indication.

I am not sure exactly what the member opposite is referring to, but let's get the message straight: We will absolutely support individuals who are suffering or have impacts from what they term as "long COVID". We will be meeting with that group this week. We will identify their priorities. We will listen to them and we will work with that group.

Question re: Electrical rebate

Mr. Cathers: Last week, the Premier made a speech about his budget to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. Unfortunately, it was poorly attended and only a handful of people showed up to listen to the Premier, so most Yukoners weren't aware of the announcement he made. Realizing that his budget was already out of date and completely forgot about tackling inflation and the rising cost of living, the Premier announced a new measure not contemplated in the budget — an electrical rebate to residential and commercial customers of \$150 for the year.

Can the Premier tell us how much this new program will cost, when it will roll out, and why the measure wasn't budgeted for at all?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I happened to also attend the Premier's meeting with the business community hosted by the

chamber. The chamber did a wonderful job, by the way, of organizing that. There were 40 or 50 people there, but it was also online. There were people who brought questions from across the territory, so I think it was rather well-attended.

The Premier did make an announcement. We put out a press release on it today. If the members would like, I am happy to come back with a ministerial statement. If they would prefer that, I'm happy to do it.

What we announced was \$50 a month for three months for a total of \$150. This is to help Yukoners because we know that there are prices rising. We know that the war in Ukraine has pushed the price of fuel up and also the price of food. This is us responding to that situation. I appreciate working with the chamber — with the Minister of Justice earlier — when they came to us and talked about potential ways we could be supportive. I'm happy to get this measure out the door.

We did put out a press release on it today. The total dollar value, I believe, is \$3 million. I'm happy to answer further questions about how we're supporting Yukoners in a time that is very difficult for everyone.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister may need to get his eyes checked because there were closer to 30 people there, not counting ministers and staff.

The Yukon Party Official Opposition has been pushing the Liberal government to do more to help Yukoners with the rising cost of living. We have proposed waiving the fuel tax, reversing the Liberals' multi-million-dollar tax hike on insurance, and pushing the federal government to cancel the carbon tax increase during this inflation crisis, but the Liberals have dismissed all of these suggestions. The Minister of Economic Development even dismissed waiving the fuel tax as nothing more than a boutique policy that he said was plagiarized from Alberta.

It's not lost on Yukoners that the \$150 rebate is a policy directly copied from the same Alberta government whose policy the Liberals criticized as being "boutique".

Will the Premier admit that his last-minute effort to copy Alberta is further proof that his budget is already stale-dated and out of touch with the challenges facing Yukoners with the rising cost of living?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, again, the member opposite is incorrect. When we take a look at what they suggested as far as getting rid of the six-cent fuel tax here in Yukon, we made it known that it's the lowest fuel tax in Canada.

Now with this rebate that we are giving out to people — \$50 per month — think about how many times you would have to fill up your gas tank to equal that type of support with the Yukon Party-led response.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: I guess they're not interested in the answer, as they heckle off-mic.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is important information for Yukoners. It's another method that we're doing to make sure that lives are affordable for Yukoners.

The member opposite also brings up the tax premiums issue. We've established many times over the last year and a half that what he's trying to connect is absolutely not correct, and it is not connectable. Yet, the member opposite still brings that to the floor as if it is fact.

On this side of the House, we will use evidence-based decision-making. We will do long-term, medium-term, and short-term budgeting to make sure that we are accomplishing the needs of Yukoners and making lives more affordable, whether that's for inflationary reasons, world conflicts, or just the regular modus operandi of this Yukon Liberal government.

Mr. Cathers: I have to remind the Premier that the fuel tax is about \$9 million, and it's only the Premier who thinks that insurance companies hit with a multi-million-dollar bill won't pass that bill on to their customers.

We're just weeks into this Sitting, and the Liberal's budget is out of touch with the reality faced by many Yukoners — so out of touch that they're making up policy on the fly and introducing new programs not contemplated by the budget. The Premier raved that his budget is not stale and they don't need to do anything to help Yukoners with the cost of living. His Minister of Economic Development dismissed the idea of waiving a fuel tax as boutique, even though provincial governments are doing that to help people struggling with the climbing prices.

Now the Premier's throwing a Hail Mary with a new program that wasn't even included in the budget. Will he admit now that his "back of the napkin" plan for a \$150 rebate is more proof that his budget is stale-dated and completely out of touch with the challenges Yukoners face?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First and foremost, I think that the budget that was tabled by the Premier has the flexibility and the ability to monitor and adapt, and that's what we've been doing.

Second, I believe we spoke about the boutique approach by Alberta. Certainly, some feel that's in place because the current leader of the Conservatives in Alberta is under fire and going into a very significant leadership review in the short term. Economists are touching on that.

But moreover —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

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

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Must be touching a nerve. Again, why we call it a "boutique approach" to policy is because, in this case, we think that a large majority of people would be touched by it and could see a benefit. Making sure that we reduce the electrical bills of Yukoners is the best way for the biggest impact.

All I can say is, listening to the mayor of Faro just a couple of weeks ago, on CBC, when he talked about the many Yukoners in the Pelly-Nisutlin riding who — many of them don't drive vehicles, but they all have electricity bills to pay. So, we think that this is the best way to have the largest impact across the Yukon. We didn't build a program — it is a program — the interim electrical rebate program is in place. It is something that we can scale up or pull back. It is something that I think is the biggest positive impact to Yukoners, and that is what we did.

Again, a budget that is ready to go — we can deal with any existing push on our economy, and again, we can deal with inflation.

Question re: Canada Winter Games infrastructure

Ms. Clarke: On March 11, the Canada Winter Games Bid Committee submitted their technical review package for the games. The technical review identifies that Whitehorse will need significant new infrastructure to support the hosting of the games. The Liberals' five-year capital concept contains no reference or budgeting for any of these items.

Can the minister tell us why there is no Canada Winter Games infrastructure included in the five-year capital concept?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am going to begin my exchange with the good member opposite this afternoon by correcting the record once again. This is not a five-year capital concept; it is a five-year capital plan — although I understand the opposition not understanding this, because they never did it. They never did it. There was no capital plan, no five-year forecast — nothing — and you know what we heard? We heard from the contracting community and from Yukoners, who we spoke to on a regular basis, that they wanted something that they could help plan. They also wanted just-in-time tendering, which we also brought into being.

We have done enormous amounts of work to try to increase the information that we are providing to the public so that they can better plan their projects and do work better. I am sure that my good colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, can go into this in a little bit more detail.

The Government of Yukon is excited to once again have the opportunity to host the Canada Winter Games with the City of Whitehorse. I have been working with the City of Whitehorse, with the games committee, and with Piers McDonald for a very long time now, for months, and we are working closely in the lead-up to the official launch of the bid, which took place — we had the official launch in September of 2021 — and we are going to work very, very closely to put on the best games that Canada has ever seen in 2027.

Ms. Clarke: One major piece of infrastructure that Whitehorse will need in order to host the games is a new arena. As indicated, there is no reference to a new Whitehorse arena in the budget that was tabled just a couple of weeks ago.

Can the minister tell us what the initial cost estimates are for a new arena in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am really glad to talk about our legacy of creating more recreational opportunities and more recreational facilities for people across the territory. I am working very closely with my colleagues at the City of Whitehorse to make sure that the City of Whitehorse, which is a growing community, actually has a new facility. We know that we lost one of the ice sheets at the Stan McCowan arena. The City of Whitehorse has identified this as something that they would like to see as part of a legacy of the games. We are working very closely with the City of Whitehorse and with other partners to make sure that we have the facilities in town to meet this growing community.

We are growing at 12 percent. It's unbelievable, the growth we are seeing in our territory. Trying to juggle that is, of course, a job in and of itself. It's a good problem to have, because this territory is proving that, under our strong leadership, people are migrating here to get a piece of the Yukon. I think we should celebrate that, and we are going to celebrate it in 2027 with an absolutely exceptional games, provided our bid is accepted.

Ms. Clarke: Another major piece of infrastructure that Whitehorse will need in order to host the games is an athletes' village capable of housing 2,000 athletes. Again, there is no reference in the budget to the construction of an athletes' village for the Canada Winter Games.

Can the minister tell us what the initial cost estimates are for a new athletes' village? What is the proposed solution for this infrastructure need?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am so glad that the opposition has finally cottoned on to how important these games are in 2027. It's great to hear their support and that they actually have a little bit of information. Some of it is even accurate, because honestly, a lot of the time, we're getting unreliable information from the opposition, but yes, the member opposite is correct that we do need an athletes' village, as does any games.

We are working very closely with the bid committee and the City of Whitehorse to make sure that we have a proper facility where the athletes can come north and actually participate in these games. We have done this before. We did this in the last Canada Winter Games in 2007 that we hosted. We did a great job. We are looking this time to learn from what we learned in 2007 and actually apply those lessons to these games and actually come up with an athletes' village that will service the City of Whitehorse, which is having — we're working on our housing as well. This is another piece that will feed into our housing strategy. So, it's all good, Mr. Speaker.

What we're going to do is have one of the best games in Canada in 2027. It's the 60th anniversary of the Canada Games and it's actually north of 60. It's a great confluence of events, and I'm looking forward to it.

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 item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. It is Motion No. 288, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North.

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. They are Bill No. 304, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and Motion No. 168, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Speaker: 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): 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. 203, entitled *Third 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): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 203: *Third 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. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services — *continued*

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to welcome the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Michael Hale, to the Committee of the Whole discussion this afternoon. As he gets settled, I will indicate that I will be resuming the comments I was making last evening near the end of the day with respect to the supplementary budget before the Committee regarding Health and Social Services.

I was, last night, speaking about vaccinations and indicating that our government and the Department of Health and Social Services is continuing to provide booster vaccinations to those Yukoners who have received their second doses, six months ago or longer, and that we continue to provide first and second dose vaccines to all Yukoners aged five and above. I continue to urge all eligible Yukoners to get vaccinated. We do not know what the next variant of concern will be, whether it will be milder or more severe, but we do know that getting vaccinated is our best defence.

World health experts are discussing more or future vaccination combinations, and we will need to continue to be

at the ready — ready to protect Yukoners. It is the responsibility of the department and that work will continue.

Turning to testing for a moment, all types of testing have been used here in the territory and will continue to be used as we manage this pandemic. Our testing strategy will continue to evolve, based on evidence and the guidance of the office of the chief medical officer of health, who, of course, works with the Canadian chief medical officers of health across the country as well as Dr. Theresa Tam in her office, and we will continue to do that work.

With the arrival of new rapid-testing resources and an increase in cases related to Omicron since January, our lab-based PCR testing resources have been focused on populations with the highest risk of negative impacts from COVID-19. In conjunction with that and to complement that process — at-home self-tests are recommended to be used for lower risk individuals and when a person is showing symptoms.

We have just expanded the distribution availability here in Whitehorse and in Haines Junction. Rapid at-home tests are available in every community in the territory. I know that there has been some concern expressed about Old Crow. I can indicate that those kinds of tests are available for distribution currently in Old Crow at the administration offices and that they will be available very soon at the health centre as well in Old Crow, because it is incredibly important that people have access to these kinds of tests.

They are available in most every other community at health centres. The self-tests have now been distributed widely throughout the Yukon and they are available, in addition to the specifics that I just mentioned. They are available at schools and childcare centres and to the general public throughout the Yukon. Pickup locations are listed on yukon.ca. We have a main pickup location here in Whitehorse. It's just next door to the building often referred to as the "tourism building" and the tourism centre in downtown Whitehorse.

As of early March, we have distributed more than 100,000 rapid antigen self-tests. I think I've noted before in this Legislative Assembly — and it's important to note — that those come in large batches and have to be repackaged for distribution, so we have had lots of people working on that. I thank all of those individuals who have come forward to do that kind of work and helped us be able to send that many rapid-antigen self-tests out to the communities.

Funds have been made available and continue to be used to support the acting chief medical officer of health in monitoring the environment, including assessing epidemiological models and providing recommendations to Yukoners, which all have been vital resources and vital activities to combat the virus.

I can also indicate that some funds in this supplementary budget have been identified for use at a number of 24/7 facilities that the department manages. Some of the additional funding continues to be spent on cleaning and screening to ensure that we comply with best practices. It will be a good reminder to Yukoners that the Department of Health and Social Services — and Continuing Care alone — has approximately 300 long-term care beds and more than 700 home care clients.

We continue to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation's COVID-19-related financial needs within the total COVID-19 allocation in this supplementary budget — the allocation of \$29,973,000. The hospital allocation is \$5,862,750, and that is being used for logistics, policy work, infection control, screeners, emergency department, lab supports, and other efforts.

Everything that we do in the Department of Health and Social Services is done to maintain and improve the well-being of Yukoners. I am proud to work with the individuals who are so dedicated to helping Yukoners in the helping profession and in helping the department.

I am very pleased to be here today to continue the debate with respect to the supplementary budget regarding the requirements for the Department of Health and Social Services in 2021-22.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to the Health portion of the supplementary budget, I will note that I am planning to save most of the questions that I have for the department for later during debate on the main estimates for Health and Social Services. I would like to start with a few areas that are important ones.

Last fall, as the minister will recall, we had a fair bit of discussion in this Assembly about the fact that over one-fifth of Yukoners, according to the Yukon government's own numbers, do not have a family doctor. We had expressed concern about the government not reinstating the physician recruitment position that had previously existed. What I am asking the minister is: In the time since the Fall Sitting, can the minister please tell us what work she and the department have done on the issue of physician recruitment and the family doctor shortage?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't see this as related specifically to the supplementary budget, but I'm happy to respond with information that I do have at my fingertips today. The *Putting People First* report did indicate that far too many Yukoners do not have access to a regular health care provider and, as we implement the recommendations from that report, we do remain committed to expanding access to primary health care services.

We are currently working toward opening a new walk-in clinic in Whitehorse. This initiative is just one piece of the work that we are doing to expand access to primary health care. The member opposite wants to characterize this as happening since last fall, and that is fine. We are continuing to do that work.

We don't expect that the provision of physicians in the territory, expanding nursing resources, and expanding the ability for individuals to have mental wellness workers and counsellors will be something — it will be an ongoing project; let me say it that way — because we continue to have need and expanded need. We continue to have a focus on the opportunities to make sure that Yukoners do have access to acute and primary care. *Putting People First* is focused entirely on that goal.

We do expect to — working with the medical community in the territory, we hope, in the very near future, to be able to

speak about a walk-in clinic that will be — have the opportunity to have that service available to Yukoners here in Whitehorse.

I can also indicate that we have made concerted efforts with respect to focusing on hiring nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians with respect to providing additional services, recognizing, as the member has noted, the issues that we have with health care here in the territory — and, I think it's fair to say, across Canada. Our government is aware of the situation, and we have spoken to many Yukoners who have been impacted both in a positive way through the COVID process and also those who are ultimately concerned about having a family doctor assigned to them.

I can indicate that it is definitely an unfortunate impact of the pandemic that recruitment efforts have resulted in pressures here in the territory. This is an example: Between 2017 and early 2020, there was a five-percent vacancy rate among primary health care nurses within the Community Nursing branch. Certainly, we have a number that shifts from time to time but is higher than that.

We continue to explore options to connect Yukoners to primary health care services. That's the focus of this particular question.

We have the "find a family doctor" program that continues to work. In the last couple of years, we have matched more than 1,100 Yukoners with primary health care through that program. We're working to expand access to virtual care alternatives across the territory for individuals who will be able to have virtual access to physicians who will help them through their process and indicate that they will be able to provide prescriptions and other services that can be accessed by individuals who are here in the territory. We're working to expand that in the very near future. We've been working on that since the fall — that's the question.

As we continue, we are working to hire additional nurse practitioners. The money is in the budget for additional nurse practitioners to work in communities and in integrated primary health care clinics. We continue to meet with the Yukon Medical Association to address physician recruitment and retention. The Yukon Medical Association is given particular funding in relation to recruitment for physicians here in the territory. I know that they have contracted with a particular recruiter. We are supporting that process, not only financially, but through our work with the Yukon Medical Association, having the opportunity to work with them closely so that, ideally, issues of retention and recruitment will be something that we work on together.

I can also indicate that this is, if not the most serious priority, one of the top three. With the Canadian Medical Association — I have spoken and met with Dr. Katharine Smart, who Yukoners should know is the current president of the Canadian Medical Association from here in the territory. She and I have spoken about the priorities, not only here in the territory, but how those match with the Canadian priorities. Physician recruitment and retention is one of those top priorities, and we continue to do the work with that organization as well.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, in that narrative, I didn't hear much in the way of specific actions, which is concerning because, as the minister noted, she referred to it as being a top priority for the Canadian Medical Association. This is also a top priority for Yukoners, especially the one-fifth of Yukoners who do not have a family doctor.

I would note, as well, that she indicated that the Yukon Medical Association has a recruitment position that government is providing them funding for. Our understanding, from talking to the YMA, is that they are funding that themselves through their own resources with no direct contribution from government. I would ask the minister if she could check on that. If the government is now taking credit for funding it without actually providing YMA funding, perhaps they would consider providing them funding so that they can continue the position beyond the limited term that it's in place for. Our understanding is that the Yukon Medical Association took that effort themselves with their own resources and that it is time-limited at the moment, due to the limitation of their resources. Perhaps the minister would like to check on that and update me, as well as the Yukon Medical Association.

Another specific area related to family physicians that I would ask — that I would note for the minister — is that, among the examples that we've heard from people — I will give one example of someone who contacted me about her father, a long-time Yukoner, who has been on the doctors list ever since it came out for the "find a doctor" program and has yet to have any success through it. The existence of that resource is of little comfort to somebody who has been on the waiting list for years and never actually getting a doctor through that program.

I want to ask specifically about the issue of Haines Junction. My colleague, the Member for Kluane, has raised this issue on behalf of constituents and about the interest, of course, of people in one of the communities he represents — Haines Junction — and seeing a doctor who could provide services there, as well as to the surrounding area.

Can the minister indicate whether the government has done anything specific related to the gap in Haines Junction?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can indicate that we are having ongoing discussions with the Yukon Medical Association about funding, and we will continue to do that important work with them. Building relationships and building partnerships is how we will be able to proceed with the important work of implementing *Putting People First* — of providing widespread and high-quality patient-centred health care for Yukoners.

With respect to the Haines Junction situation, I can indicate — and I will update this information if need be, but since being informed that the previous resident physician serving Haines Junction and the communities along the north highway would not be renewing their contract beyond April 12, 2021 — which was their choice to do so — the Department of Health and Social Services has been exploring options to ensure that residents have continued access to primary health care services there in that area. Government is committed to working with our partners to expand access to primary health care services so that Yukoners can access supports that they need near their

communities and in their communities to lead healthy and happy lives.

The department has been working with the Yukon Medical Association on this issue to identify a new resident physician, and an active recruitment process is underway. This includes a search both locally and nationally, as we do with all physician searches, with a position that is posted to a number of national recruitment forums.

We recognize that recruiting a resident physician in rural communities does sometimes take time. Individuals have to choose to move their lives to a smaller community, and a right fit, an important fit, in that community is what we are seeking. That is why we have worked to put interim supports in place while this search continues. Two Whitehorse-based physicians have been contracted to deliver virtual-care services to residents at least twice per week and have been providing supplemental in-person visits to the communities so that residents have continuity of care, having the same two physicians providing that interim service.

Mr. Cathers: So, with the shortage of physicians, one-fifth of Yukoners being without a family doctor is top of mind for many, many people right now. What I would ask is: With this area of physician recruitment and the doctor shortage, has the minister met with the Yukon Medical Association to discuss this topic, and if so, how many times has she met with them to discuss this topic since being sworn into her position?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that this topic is top of mind for the member opposite and for Yukoners. I know that it is top of mind for all Yukoners. It is certainly a priority for our government, and that translates into it being top of mind for us as well.

I can indicate that, yes, I have met with the YMA president and the new executive director on a couple of occasions. I can also indicate that the department's senior officials have monthly meetings with the YMA executive director and have just met recently with the entire executive.

But I can also indicate that those meetings have slowed at the moment because we are currently in negotiations with the Yukon Medical Association with respect to their ongoing contracts, and it is not appropriate for us to be meeting on all of those topics at the same time as those negotiations continue, but we continue to build our relations with the YMA and look forward to really fruitful results of the negotiations as well as all the projects that we are working on together.

Mr. Cathers: Another issue that is of great importance to people and has been made worse in fact by the pandemic is the issue of wait times for surgeries and specialist appointments. Some of the measures put in place here as well as in other jurisdictions upon which the Yukon depends have exacerbated this problem. We know — and have heard directly from officials, including from the Yukon Hospital Corporation last fall — that the wait times for many surgical and specialist procedures, as well as diagnostic procedures such as MRI, are longer than they believe is appropriate and longer than the Canadian standard.

I would ask the minister: Especially since the Fall Sitting, what action has she taken on this area, if any, since last fall?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Our government continues to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association to address timely and appropriate access to specialty services, which the member is asking about with respect to surgeries. We are keen to have those services closer to home and, whenever possible, to reduce the need for Yukoners to have to travel out of territory for that service.

Yukoners can access specialty services in a number of ways. There are resident practitioners — so people who live here and provide that service — and there are visiting specialists. There are virtual visits and then, of course, there is medical travel. To date, our investments have resulted in improved wait times for multiple specialist services, including ophthalmology, pediatrics, psychiatry, and orthopaedics, including orthopaedic surgery. We implemented a plan that successfully reduced ophthalmology wait times in the Yukon, bringing down wait times for cataract assessments from 37 months to less than four months.

We have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to build on the success of our resident orthopaedic program. The resident orthopaedic program has helped to further reduce wait times for orthopaedic consults and total knee replacements. In the fall of 2021, the resident orthopaedic program completed the territory's very first total hip replacement. Those surgeries have been continuing on a regular basis since that time.

Non-urgent services have been impacted by COVID-19, but we are hoping to see the end of that issue, and there will be some periods of time to catch up. The summer of 2021 outbreak impacted some specialty visits of medical practitioners that were going to take place in July. The need to reduce patient volumes and non-urgent surgical services were addressed then, but since that time, the Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to work with specialists to increase the number of visits and to use virtual care in the 2021-22 fiscal year to reduce wait times.

As noted, in dermatology, nephrology, internal medicine, rheumatology, and cardiology, services are provided for Yukoners here in the territory at a much more available rate than has been in the past. We are collaborating with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association to explore ways and to continue to improve the effectiveness in visiting specialty services by establishing wait-time benchmarks and developing strategies to reduce wait times. That work happening since last fall seems to be the focus of the questions — but ongoing work. This includes increasing the frequency of specialty visits, repatriating services to the Yukon when we can do so — as with the orthopaedic surgeons and the great team of orthopaedic surgeons who operate here in the territory — and by expanding the use of virtual technologies.

I will certainly, as a former patient of the orthopaedic team here in the territory, express my clean bias with respect to the amazing services provided by our surgeons here in the territory.

I can also note that this work is incredibly important and is supported, in addition to what I have described, to the increases that we have made with respect to medical travel. The amount that individuals are allowed with respect to reimbursement for people who need to travel for medical services out of the

territory has been doubled. Previously, it was \$75 per day but began on the second day. It has been doubled to \$150 per day and now people have access to that on the first day.

A person who needed to travel, in the past, for a two-day trip with respect to getting medical services outside the territory would have received \$75 with a two-day trip, and now they receive \$300. That is an incredible impact on Yukoners who are travelling for an often very stressful situation to obtain medical service outside of the territory and maybe very far away from their home community. The financial ability to support them does not reduce that stress, but in some cases, it will because individuals would not have had a proper place to stay or been able to afford that and may not have taken the trip based on the fact that the financial hardship would have been a concern for them.

I can also indicate that, with respect to medical travel, we have increased through our collaboration with partners outside the territory the places that an individual might go to have medical treatment. It has been primarily Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver, but there are additional places now where someone might receive medical services, and that also has a positive impact on Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Another issue that we've heard about in a number of areas is the impact that the amount of resources the public health campaign is directing toward the COVID-19 vaccination has had on other vaccines being available. There has also been a disconnect when, at times, the minister has indicated in this House that certain services were being provided by Public Health or by pharmacies when in fact that has not been the case. Tetanus, for example, was one that I had raised in a question and was told by the minister that it was being offered, yet, in talking to a constituent who had attempted to go where the minister indicated they could, they received a different answer and were unable to get the vaccination.

I would ask a several-part question in that area. The first is with regard to infants and children who had vaccinations delayed as a result of the focus on COVID-19. What is the status of those children? Are they now back on track for their vaccinations that were delayed? Secondly, could the minister please indicate what they're doing with regard to pharmacists and offering vaccinations at pharmacies there?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will leave the immunizations of children for a second and indicate that the work of the staff has been tireless with respect to redeploying to areas of urgent need in the response to COVID-19 and the pressures that it brought or brings. This includes COVID-19 testing, case and contact management, and confirmed cases as well as the delivery of an unprecedented, multi-stage vaccination campaign. The acting chief medical officer of health and the Yukon immunization program have provided guidance on how to prioritize the COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 vaccines while taking into consideration operational constraints and staffing ability. Based on that guidance, infant series and primary vaccinations had been identified as a high non-COVID vaccination priority, while travel vaccines, as an example, have been identified previously as a low vaccination priority.

Throughout our response to COVID-19, access to core pediatric vaccines has been maintained with infant series and primary vaccinations remaining available through the Whitehorse Health Centre. In some cases, infant series and primary vaccinations had experienced some delay, while still being administered as close to the recommended period as possible. So, there were some recognized delays. Although there have been some delays with the delivery of those publicly funded, non-COVID vaccinations throughout the pandemic, the Community Nursing branch has continued to deliver routine, publicly funded vaccines for children under five.

As an example, in December 2021, which is one of the biggest pressure months for vaccines — as we could all recall, as our teams were delivering both adult boosters and first doses to children aged five to 11 — the Whitehorse Health Centre maintained an average vaccination rate of 95 percent for children aged three months to 18 months. I think that this is incredibly important for Yukoners to know, not only because the service provided responded to the needs of children and families here in the territory, but because of the undying dedication of the men and women who work at that location and the work that they did to maintain the average vaccination rate of 95 percent for children aged three months to 18 months. This is a testament to the dedication and the hard work of the Whitehorse Health Centre team to infant care here in the territory.

We also appreciate the support of local pharmacists who have been delivering the seasonal influenza vaccine to individuals over the age of five. That occurred mostly in the fall, but there is still an opportunity for individuals to receive that vaccination at local pharmacies — and the shingles vaccine, also known as Shingrix, and the HPV vaccine.

It is certainly recognized by our government at the Department of Health and Social Services that the importance of continuing these vaccination opportunities is critical, even though it seems like our world, in the last two years, has been taken over by the concept of COVID vaccinations — and in many ways, it has.

Some school-aged immunization programs have been deferred or delayed to accommodate the redeployment of staff and the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines to children aged five to 11, which was determined to be the priority by the acting chief medical officer of health, in conjunction with the work she does with other doctors across the country. As the demand for COVID-19 vaccines has temporarily slowed, the department has had the opportunity to increase access to some non-COVID-19 vaccines. It is incredibly important that we get back on track with that.

Between March 28 and April 13, 2022, the Community Nursing branch will be offering school-based vaccine clinics to catch up on delayed school-aged immunization programs, including tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis for grades 9 and 10 students, as well as HPV immunizations for grades 6 and 7 students.

Yukoners who require access to a vaccine, such as a tetanus shot on an emergent basis, should continue to access that vaccine through the emergency department. The call

should be made initially to the Whitehorse Health Centre to determine if that is available there as well. The travel vaccine program through Community Nursing is not currently available while staff are supporting other areas of our COVID-19 response. We're also working to deliver regular, publicly funded health programming. Travel vaccines are not publicly funded here in the Yukon, so they became the priority last on the list. Travel vaccines at the Whitehorse Health Centre are currently only offered to humanitarian workers and to international health care workers who are travelling to high-risk areas.

During the 2021-22 flu campaign, seasonal influenza vaccines were administered at the central vaccine clinic, at community health centres, and at pharmacies — as a reminder. Between October 2021 and January 8, 2022, there were approximately 12,346 flu vaccines administered here in the Yukon Territory. I hope that responds to the question.

Mr. Cathers: Another issue that we're aware of and the minister is as well — she will recall that there is an outstanding issue regarding pharmacies and certain medications that the government structure was covering, less than the cost of certain medications, that officials had committed to fixing and making good on those costs retroactively, as it was going to take some time for government to adjust their billing system. The last that we heard from pharmacists about this — this issue has been going on for a number of months and has resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars that are at issue here.

Can the minister please update us on what steps are being taken to correct this and to ensure that businesses that undertook, in good faith, to provide certain medications, based on the request from government, are not left arguing with them over the cost of that or, in fact, carrying a balance that government has promised to pay them but not yet made good on?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. The member opposite is making reference to a situation with respect to an issue between the Department of Health and Social Services and local pharmacists with respect to dispensing a certain class of medication. We worked with the pharmacists to implement a short-term solution back in August 2021, while longer term solutions were identified.

Initially, we addressed the issue quickly with pharmacists on an interim basis. Then, throughout the fall of 2021, we continued to meet with pharmacists to be updated on the progress and the challenges that were related to the implementation of long-term solutions, and we are actively continuing to work to review the necessary system-level changes that will help us not have this issue again — the system-level changes that are required to resolve the issue, moving forward.

Until these changes can be introduced, an interim solution will remain in place. The process has been developed together to pay outstanding claim amounts to pharmacies, and as of March 7, 2022, the vast majority of these outstanding payments have been provided. I understand there may be one or two that are still in question, and we're working with the pharmacists to sort that out, awaiting some information from them to respond.

I just want to note that, while the Yukon was in a state of emergency, which we are no longer in, and for 30 days afterward — so, I guess we're still in that grace period — we have provided pharmacists with additional prescribing abilities so that they could extend many prescriptions to serve Yukoners and make that option available for them. We continue to work with pharmacists to explore options for that process beyond the state of emergency. It is not something that is easily done, but we're committed to that to make sure that the scope of practice for physicians — for pharmacists, sorry, and for physicians — here in the territory is the best it can be to serve Yukoners.

The issue specifically being asked about here is resolved, or it will be resolved in the interim, and a long-term solution is being worked on with the pharmacists. I am happy to report that that's the case.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer provided and the information. I would just encourage the minister and deputy minister to double-check the status of this. As of a recent conversation with one of the pharmacists, my understanding was that it, in fact, was not as resolved as the minister's note indicated that it is — that in some cases, there still are significant outstanding amounts that are being carried by businesses — well into the six figures, I should note, is my understanding — and that the process for dealing with some of this was quite paperwork-intensive.

I will just leave it there. I'm sure I'm not going to get additional information from the minister, at this point. I am just asking her, the deputy minister, and other officials to look closely at the status of this and ensure that anything that was provided in good faith by pharmacists, based on their understanding with the Yukon government, is, in fact, made good by government.

Moving on to another area related to the pandemic, I would just ask if the minister could provide us with clarity on — there were additional amounts in COVID spending that we saw included within this budget and an additional request in the supplementary — if the minister could just provide more of a breakdown on that.

The second question that I will ask, while I am on the floor — if I had understood correctly from the information provided by officials, there were some amounts that were expected to be spent under the territorial health investment fund that were not expended in this fiscal year and are being carried forward to next year.

Could the minister just clarify if that is indeed correct and, if so, what the dollar amounts were and the reason for that being the case?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'll address first the question regarding the supplementary estimates that are before the Committee at this time. The increase requested by the Department of Health and Social Services is — I think, as noted in my comments earlier — \$5 million. I can provide the following breakdown. Of course, these are approximates, not to the dollar and cent. They have been allocated in the following way: \$1.5 million to the Yukon Hospital Corporation; \$1.5 million to the requirements for the cost of self-isolation in the territory; \$600,000 to the rapid-test implementation in

communities and Whitehorse; \$200,000 to communication supports; \$400,000 to the vaccination rollout, which is all kinds of responses to the vaccinations, not only here in Whitehorse, but elsewhere in the territory; \$300,000 for testing; \$500,000 as a contingency; for a total of \$5 million.

I'm also happy to turn to — to be clear, the proposed budget increase — and that's what is before the Committee today — and the additional \$5 million, should it pass, means that there is approximately \$30 million for the COVID-19 response in total for the 2021-22 budget. It is \$29,973,000.

I can also indicate, turning to the question regarding the territorial health investment fund, sometimes known as "THIF", that the Government of Canada budgets approximately \$6.4 million annually to be provided to the territory. They have permitted a \$4.3-million carry forward here in the territory from the 2021-22 budget into our current budget year for the purposes of responding to COVID and other health issues. Obviously, a very fluid time, and the THIF agreement with the Government of Canada has permitted this particular fund carry-over here in this year.

I should also indicate that, from that total number, which comes to \$10.7 million, historically, \$2.1 million of that is automatically allocated to offset the costs associated with medical travel.

I hope that helps the member opposite and responds to the question.

Mr. Cathers: Moving on to continuing care and particularly as it pertains to care of residents in continuing care facilities and family involvement, as well as the process for ensuring that, if there are concerns from family members about the care for parents or other family members, that there is the ability for this to be dealt with respectfully and appropriately and followed up on — I'm not going to get into too many details regarding an individual situation. I don't want to compromise anyone's health privacy, but as the minister will be aware, both she and I have been copied on correspondence from a constituent of mine regarding his father in continuing care.

There has been frustration regarding gaps in some personal care issues, such as hearing aids being dealt with in a manner that the son feels is appropriate and also frustration on his part with the response. Again, respecting the personal health privacy issues, I just want to describe enough that the minister is aware of what I am talking about, and I know she isn't going to be able to provide information about that particular case here, but my question is one generally.

I do want to note, as well, and recognize that, for staff in continuing care facilities, this has been a difficult time for them, as well, and there have been some gaps related to vacancies, the vaccination mandate, et cetera, but elements like that related to personal care can be quite important to the quality of life of seniors in a facility. It's important that, even if the reason that mistakes are being made is an understandable one, appropriate steps be taken to ensure that any quality-of-life issues are heard respectfully, dealt with promptly and appropriately, and that there is a resolution that ensures, ultimately, that seniors and others in continuing care facilities are receiving high-quality care and having their own unique personal needs met.

So, my question for the minister would be if she could just talk about what steps are currently in place to provide for family involvement in care, as well as dealing with family concerns about care and, secondly and most importantly, if the government is looking at additional measures to try to better ensure that these types of gaps in personal care don't happen on an ongoing basis.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I should say that I appreciate this question. It reminded me of something that I wanted to say in relation to two questions ago, when the member opposite noted some issue with a particular pharmacist. We will certainly look into that, but I am hoping that the member opposite could send me a note or provide me with the business owner or pharmacist's name so that we can follow up directly, if they are able to do that. Also, the reference here to a separate individual's situation — again, I understand that officials in the department, if I have this right, are working with this individual family.

We prioritize family opportunities and family participation in care. It is so critical — something that I know of personally — but, certainly, so critical that the support from family, and even friends, is something that is a positive contributing factor to the mental wellness of our patients and clients in long-term care, or in hospital care of any kind, and that it certainly supports the medical professionals — the nurses, the doctors, the LPNs, and other care professionals who are providing service to individuals — that the family becomes a whole part of that process, and that becomes absolutely critical in the health and safety of individual elders, if that is the circumstance, and also in the ability for those folks to participate in the care of a loved one.

We are committed to ensuring that our residents and our staff in Yukon's long-term care homes are safe and well cared for. Nothing is done perfectly, but I think it's absolutely critical to thank and recognize our long-term care facilities. During COVID, we have not experienced the tragic circumstances that other places have had across Canada with respect to outbreaks in long-term care facilities. I think that not only do we need to be thankful for that, but we need to recognize the individuals who work so hard to help us make that a community reality. We are fortunate to have a high quality of care in our long-term care homes. Definitely, a thank you to the staff for their ongoing dedication and hard work.

I know that we have had lots of thank yous, whether they be during the media events with respect to reporting on COVID-19 and telling Yukoners what is happening or whether we have had tributes in this House — this very day — that say a thank you to the staff, but I think I can say from all members of this House a heartfelt, honest thanks for the dedication and hard work of these individuals, particularly for keeping our elders safe.

Our guidelines for long-term care continue to evolve, as the situation in the territory changes. We have population changes, we have a focus on *Putting People First* changes that will come in the future, and we are working to communicate with our partners, staff, families, and residents throughout this process.

Back in November 2021, more than 94 percent of long-term care residents had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and 79 percent of the residents had received their booster. I am sure those numbers can be updated now, and I will endeavour to have those numbers updated. Vaccination was determined to be a vital step in protecting Yukoners, inside or outside of long-term care facilities, and represents a huge accomplishment with respect to the Yukon's long-term care homes.

As of January 30, 2022, our government requires all government employees, including those who work in long-term care, to have two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. This measure will continue as we go forward, the long-term care facilities being identified as places where vulnerable Yukoners reside, and as a result, the vaccinations will continue to be required.

We definitely took steps early on to protect the residents and the staff at the early stage of the pandemic, and that included limiting movement of care staff between different homes. We restricted visitors to only those providing essential care or essential end-of-life visits, and there was enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces, mandatory masking of all persons in the care homes and continuing care offices, mandatory screening of all persons entering the care homes, and screening of staff for COVID-19 symptoms.

We have resumed some programming and services now, when and where possible, in line with COVID-19 guidelines. Outside health care providers, such as private foot-care providers and physiotherapists, may enter long-term care homes with approved COVID safety plans.

I can indicate that caring for our elders is an absolute priority. Making sure that their families are connected to this process and included in decision-making going forward as well as the care plans for individuals is incredibly important.

I urge the individual's situation, which I won't speak about but I think that the member opposite is referring to — we welcome contact with the ADM of community care, and if that information needs to be provided to the member opposite, I am happy to do that to connect these individuals.

What I want to say, as well, is that cases are dealt with — because there always need to be policies and process, but cases, especially in health care, must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis because we must take into account all of the factors that are impacting an individual and their care. That opportunity for us to work with the family and to resolve issues that they have identified is an incredibly important way of managing files, people, and medical situations, but it's really about the care that the individual is receiving and the opportunity to work with their family to address issues that are identified. I welcome that. I know that the Department of Health and Social Services welcomes that approach.

If that is not what is happening in the situation noted by the member opposite, then I urge him to contact me for more information and we can make sure that this situation is being addressed properly.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that answer and information. I would just note as well that — while I

highlighted one example that I thought the minister would know what I was talking about without me talking about individual details — it's not the only issue that we have heard with concern from someone about a family member in a care facility. Another individual has been in contact with both the Member for Watson Lake and me. I also just want to note that, in dealing with this, for staff in continuing care, we realize that it has been difficult and stressful for them. There have at times been gaps in staffing that may have impacted things, including that some of these mistakes may have been mistakes that no one there wanted to see being made either. I don't want to, in any way, assume bad intentions on anyone's part. I just am raising it as a matter — I think the minister seems to agree as well — that, when we're dealing with the care of seniors, if there are gaps in the care, including personal care, even if it is just a simple error of omission, it is important that government figure out how to respond to those concerns appropriately and ensure that the quality of care that is provided is there for the person who is depending on the system so that both their urgent needs and quality of life are served well in the facility.

I'm going to move on to another area related to government services and the other crisis or emergency that has been in play throughout the last number of months, and that is the substance use health emergency declared in the Yukon. Government has made some commitments around additional things under the substance use health emergency. A press release was issued at the end of January. But my first questions are: What is the current addiction treatment capacity here in the territory in the Sarah Steele Building and government programs? How many people are using that right now? Is there a wait-list for those programs? If so, what is that wait-list?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I understand the member opposite to be asking about the withdrawal management services that are provided, as well as treatment — longer term treatment — that is provided at the Sarah Steele facility here in downtown Whitehorse. The withdrawal management is one aspect of the spectrum of supports and services that are available to individuals dealing with substance use. It is important to note — and I hope that every Yukoner who has a friend who is struggling, who has a family member who can help them or individuals who are struggling, hears this because it is so important to know that withdrawal management services is a 24/7 medically supported program that provides a safe place for people in withdrawal from substance use. Individuals can access withdrawal management services by calling Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services or by attending at the Sarah Steele location on Steele Street here in Whitehorse.

Services include medical assistance with withdrawal from substances, psychoeducational programming, and a referral to ongoing treatment, counselling, social work supports, or self-help groups and other support services, if any of those are appropriate for an individual. Withdrawal management staff help facilitate connections to additional supports, including counselling services and inpatient treatment, where appropriate. Withdrawal management services staff can also refer clients to the referred care clinic, if they might be interested in opioid treatment services that take place at the

referred care clinic. There is no wait-list for withdrawal management services, as it operates on a "first come, first served" basis due to the urgent nature of the care that is required.

If an individual is planning to leave their community for this service, they may call ahead and staff will reserve a bed for that client or provide them with an estimate of bed availability, if that is an issue. In the event that all spaces are occupied, staff will work with clients to build a safety plan. Clients are referred to other appropriate supports, which might include the hospital, if necessary, the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, or client-generated support networks. The key here is attempting wraparound services to support the person who is in crisis.

Within the withdrawal management services, there are currently — this information I have would be from about a week ago — 12 out of 14 beds in use for adults and four beds are in use for youth. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services opened the interim support program, which is provided at the Sarah Steele Building, which provides 10 post-withdrawal treatment beds as well. The program is running again due to the current situation with respect to public health, as well as the current substance use health crisis and emergency. That program provides stabilization and programming for clients who face homelessness or other socially marginalizing challenges.

I have to say that I am so proud of the services that are provided. I know how hard the members of the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services unit at the Department of Health and Social Services, and the individuals who provide the withdrawal management services, are working to address and to support individuals who find themselves in this situation and in need of these services.

I thank them, and I encourage individual Yukoners who might be needing such service to go to the Sarah Steele Building, call, go to your health clinic, if you're in a community, ask for help in getting connected to these services. They are there to support Yukoners, as just one piece of the response to the substance use health emergency here in the territory.

I'll leave it there but hope to be able to speak more about the services available in response to the substance use health emergency.

Mr. Cathers: Just returning briefly to the topic of continuing care, can the minister indicate what the current occupancy is at Whistle Bend Place, as well as just generally within the Yukon government's continuing care facilities? How many beds are made available or, if there is a waiting list, what is that current status right now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that is a really important question for Yukoners. I know that the demographic trends show that, across the Yukon and Canada, the population is aging, and we certainly know that the population in the Yukon is increasing. In the coming years, we anticipate that more Yukoners will begin to seek access to long-term care services, and the aging-in-place action plan does guide our planning as we work with the seniors community and elders to ensure that Yukoners can access the supports that they need to live safe,

independent, and comfortable lives in their homes or home communities for as long as possible.

We do also recognize Yukon's aging population. It is important that we work collaboratively with our partners — including municipal, federal, and First Nation governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and community groups — to implement the aging-in-place action plan to ensure that seniors' needs are met. At this time, there is no ongoing or permanent wait-list for long-term care. As of March 10, which was about 12 days ago, there are 253 permanent long-term care rooms in the Yukon and 24 respite rooms. On average, there is a total of five and a half admissions to long-term care each month, and there is no wait-list. There is a total of 121 beds at Whistle Bend, because one of the parts of Whistle Bend has not been fully utilized yet; there has not been the need to do so.

Yukon's long-term care homes, of course, offer various levels of support to residents as part of the territory's continuum of care. Our ongoing investments into home and community care also positively impact the lives of Yukoners by increasing supports so that more Yukoners can stay in their homes and their home communities. I am very pleased with the work that has been done, and I know that we can reinvigorate that, if COVID stays at bay. We will continue to collaborate with individuals and their families, and their community partners, to ensure that Yukoners receive the right care and the care that aligns with their own philosophies, with their own care plans, and with our home first philosophy.

We have to, of course, look forward, taking into account the increase in the size of Yukon's aging population, and we must continue to plan to meet those needs. As I noted, one house at Whistle Bend is not yet open, and once that house is opened, there will be an additional 12 rooms expected to become available, but as of March 25, as I said, there is no wait-list, and there are 25 unoccupied, permanent long-term care rooms.

This number represents just a snapshot in time; it changes all the time based on new admissions or discharges or individuals who are changing their care plans, but that's the information that I have in relation to Whistle Bend.

Mr. Cathers: Just moving on to the area of the medevac program, could the minister please provide the numbers for the number of medevac flights, both in and out of territory? And specifically, as she will likely know, at the briefing, I asked if we could get a breakdown indicating the number of flights within the territory that have been required to dispatch EMS personnel from Whitehorse to rural communities that had gaps in their coverage, especially those where gaps in coverage were the result of the vaccination mandate causing some EMS volunteers, who weren't comfortable getting vaccinated, to be in a situation where they chose not to provide service instead, when faced with the choice, of getting the shot that they weren't comfortable taking and needing to do that to comply with the government's vaccination mandate.

So, the questions again: the number of medevacs in total, both in and out of territory, as well as a breakdown on the flights to dispatch EMS personnel from Whitehorse to rural

communities, particularly those that were the direct result of the vaccination mandate.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I know that the member opposite asked this question at a briefing with respect to this budget, and I appreciate that.

I'm still gathering information with respect to total medevac flights. I can provide the figure of — the one that I have been provided with right now is 367 medevacs inside the Yukon Territory between April 1, 2021 and last Friday, which was March 18, 2022. That number could well change before the end of the fiscal year, which is March 31.

I can also indicate that work is ongoing to respond to the question about whether or not there has been any occasion where individuals in communities needed to be supported by EMS workers through Community Services. That's a job that we are doing as the Department of Health and Social Services with the Department of Community Services to determine that figure.

Of course, there are ongoing conversations as well with how we have been supporting our communities throughout the territory and how that has provided service to Yukoners throughout the pandemic.

I hope that figure — the one I do have — is of assistance to the member opposite. The other information that I am seeking in response to that — let me just see if I do have a bit more information.

By comparison — this might be helpful — in fiscal year 2020-21, there were 1,931 out-of-territory medical travel cases and 3,379 in-territory cases. That's medical travel, not necessarily medevacs, but it might give some scope to the member opposite.

Due to COVID-19, there was a drop in medical travel cases for non-urgent care. We will continue to ascertain the numbers, not only of medical travel cases here in the territory and outside the territory, but those that are assisted by medical evacuation.

Mr. Cathers: I would just appreciate some additional information. For the medical travel numbers that the minister cited, I appreciate her providing those, but there is a significant difference in the program — whether it's non-urgent travel via a carrier such as Air North and Air Canada or whether it is urgent medevac care provided by Alkan Air. Those two numbers are both fairly important to understanding this issue. How many people are being urgently sent out of territory on a medevac flight versus how many are being sent out for non-urgent medical travel? I look forward to her providing the other information when she is able to.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, these are figures that we will ascertain and I can provide them to the member opposite. Thank you.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that commitment from the minister.

I would just note — again in the area of the vaccination mandate — one number that I don't believe we have heard yet in any government figures is the number of staff at continuing care and long-term care who are placed on leave without pay. Can the minister please indicate what that number is — of staff

there who were placed on leave without pay due to the vaccination mandate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I cannot provide the exact figure with respect to individuals on leave without pay who otherwise work at continuing care. Of course, at this point when individuals will soon be welcomed back to their employment in certain areas across the territory, we must be careful not to break that number down too closely, but I do have some information that may be of assistance to the member opposite. As of March 7, approximately 93 percent of all department staff — so just Department of Health and Social Services — completed their attestations for the COVID-19 vaccine.

So far, seven percent did not complete their attestation, which represents approximately between 115 and 117 employees throughout the department who have not done the attestation. The vast majority of those are auxiliary-on-call or casual employees.

Beginning on April 4, 2022, the vaccine attestation requirement will remain in place for employees, contractors, or volunteers who work in residential high-risk settings and designated Government of Yukon-operated settings.

We're working to ensure that the department's essential work continues. Throughout our response to COVID-19, Health and Social Services has redeployed staff to support the COVID-19 response and to ensure the delivery of essential services while mitigating the risks of disease.

Government of Yukon employees have previously had the opportunity to complete a skills inventory survey. As needed, we can explore options using the survey results to redeploy resources that are available government-wide. The individuals who have been placed on leave without pay as a result of the vaccine mandate — as members know and as Yukoners hopefully know — will be welcomed back to work as of April 4, 2022. The government will be working with individuals who are not vaccinated or have not completed the attestation that they are vaccinated in relation to where they are employed. We do not expect that to be an excessively large number of people.

In the Department of Health and Social Services, we have the largest number of employees in the department. We will work with each and every one of them, hopefully, to make sure that they are welcomed back to work in a safe environment.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the information the minister provided.

The minister also indicated that employees would be welcomed back to work on April 4, but we had understood from the comments made by the Premier previously that there are exceptions to those who would be welcomed back. The minister may correct me if I'm wrong, but I had understood that the exception included employees in long-term care.

I would just ask the minister to provide a further breakdown of how many employees — and which areas the government does not expect to be allowing employees to return to on April 4 if they have not completed the vaccine attestation.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the questions. I think that all of those things, as noted by the member opposite, are in

fact the case. Let me just say it this way: I cannot provide you with the number of individuals who are employed by the Department of Health and Social Services and who work in long-term care and are currently on leave without pay, but I can assure the member opposite that these individuals will have already received letters through the Public Service Commission to indicate — if they are working in a particular high-risk location, which long-term care facilities are — if their skills can be redeployed elsewhere. That is the work that is currently ongoing. That is what I can say about that.

What I can say is that, as of April 4 — and I think that this is clearly what the member is asking about — COVID-19 vaccination will continue to be required for employees, contractors, and volunteers who work in high-risk settings in the Yukon Territory. High-risk settings include long-term care homes, residential substance use programs, hospitals, shelters, residential care for children and adults, correctional centres, Yukon government-operated community health centres, and Yukon government-operated public health clinics, including the Referred Care Clinic. This requirement will apply to current workers, as well as new workers, in these settings.

In non-governmental high-risk settings, employers will continue to be required to implement policies for employees, for contractors, and for volunteers to be vaccinated, as appropriate, for their settings. An example might be someone who, through their work in this situation of non-governmental, high-risk settings, is in contact with individuals who are at high risk; then they would need to be vaccinated.

If their work at that same organization does not involve contact with those individuals, then they would not need to be vaccinated if that's what the policy determined at each of those places.

The clear purpose and focus of this is that individuals who are at high risk or reside in high-risk settings or are getting services in high-risk settings will be protected to the very best that we can. The vaccination requirement in these settings remains in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the most vulnerable Yukoners who are at risk of severe health outcomes if they were infected with COVID-19. Vaccine appointments can still be made online at yukon.ca/this-is-our-shot. Whitehorse residents can also call 1-877-374-0425 to arrange a vaccination appointment. Residents in rural communities can call their local health centre to book an appointment or find clinic dates and times online at yukon.ca.

I think that is what I can say with respect to responding to this particular question.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Acting Chair (Mr. Hassard): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Mr. Cathers, please continue.

Mr. Cathers: The next question that I have for the Minister of Health and Social Services is regarding the government's plans to develop a health authority. As the minister probably knows, I had raised this with the Premier and he had indicated that it would be better raised with the minister.

So, I would ask the minister, particularly with regard to the role of health professionals and their representatives in the development of this: First of all, what efforts have been made by the government — by either the minister or the Premier — to reach out to the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and other health professionals about their involvement in this process? Secondly, what role or what structure will there be for oversight of this? I understood from officials that there would be an oversight body. Can the minister clarify whether health professionals will be part of that body? If so, what will that structure be?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government is committed to establishing a health authority as outlined in the *Putting People First* report. I should also note that the Yukon Territory is the only jurisdiction, with the exception of Nunavut, that does not have a health authority, so health authorities are a common practice here in Canada.

We have now an additional deputy minister in place within the Department of Health and Social Services to oversee the creation of the health authority and the transfer of the territory's health services to a health authority. This is an extremely long-term project; let's make that particularly clear.

The other thing I want to make absolutely clear is that yes is the answer to the question asked by the member opposite, which is: Will health professionals be involved in the creation and the work that goes into designing, building, and implementing a health authority? Yes is the answer to that.

In the *Putting People First* report, the independent expert panel recommended establishing "Wellness Yukon" — that is what they called it — a new arm's-length statutory agency that would deliver a range of health and social services. This is in *Putting People First*. This is one of the recommendations in *Putting People First*. We have accepted all of the recommendations of *Putting People First*. Work is beginning on this initiative.

The health authority may also contract with NGOs or other providers to deliver some services. This is the future of health care here in the territory. In response to the *Putting People First* report's specific recommendation 1.2, as part of our commitment under the 2021 confidence and supply agreement to implement *Putting People First*, which was happening in any event, we are working on policy options to establish a health authority in the Yukon Territory.

A health authority will take significant time to develop. Preparatory work on developing a legislative plan, which is the first step in creating a health authority — a statutory body, a legislative plan, identification of the policy issues — is required and is beginning. Development of legislation to support the creation of a health authority in the Yukon is a priority for our government and the first step in this process.

Government-to-government work with Yukon First Nations is an essential element of system transformation, and

the Government of Yukon is committed to working in partnership with Yukon First Nations. We have initiated discussions with Yukon First Nation governments to design a structure that will support the development of a shared set of principles to guide the system change forward as well as collaborative planning, priorities setting, and decision-making. We have initiated these conversations, including through discussion at the recent Yukon Forum — I think a couple of weeks ago. I made a presentation at that forum and great conversations were had with Yukon First Nation leaders. Further discussions await the finalization of the partnership structure with Yukon First Nations.

The first step is to concentrate on a statutory instrument that will give life to a Yukon health authority. In order to do that, first discussions are happening in order to finalize the partnership structure with Yukon First Nations. That is the next step. Through that work, we will ensure that we work closely with all affected partners in health care, including the Yukon Medical Association, unions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, health care providers, and Yukoners who access health services. Their contribution will be built into this process that I have just described.

All jurisdictions across Canada, as I have noted, except Nunavut and Yukon, have some form of a health authority. We will be working to see what they have that responds to their communities and how that might be of assistance here in the territory. The establishment of a health authority is foundational to many of the recommendations that are in *Putting People First*. We have accepted that report and all of its recommendations.

Moving the service delivery outside of government, which is anticipated to be the function and purpose of a health authority, will allow for increased agility and accountability in service delivery and for the government to focus on its oversight function. We are considering a number of legislative options that will support the comprehensive health authority for the Yukon Territory, and that work is just, as I have said, beginning.

It is incredibly important to note — and I have said it earlier — that the preparatory work on developing a legislative plan, which is the first pillar in producing, developing, and implementing a health authority, is underway, but the legislative plan and the identification of policy issues is just beginning. That work must be done in order to determine what the piece of legislation will look like, what authority it will have, and how it will create a health authority here in the Yukon Territory. This is extremely exciting work. It is ultimately designed to provide better care, to provide wraparound, people-centred services, and to provide individual Yukoners with medical care and medical services going forward that will respond, in their entirety, to the services that Yukoners need.

We have had the independent panel tell us what that looks like. We have had amazing input and engagement with Yukoners and ultimately wonderful research and determination as to how we can build a path forward. *Putting People First* is that path forward. A major part of that is the health authority. I am pleased to have been able to provide this information today.

Mr. Cathers: The minister said yes in answer to my question but then talked about something different from what I had actually asked. So, just to clarify, my question was: We understood that there was going to be an oversight committee for the development of the health authority; will health professionals be part of that oversight committee?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that I have answered, but I am happy to clarify. I think the words “oversight committee” is something that has been used by the member opposite in the question. What I have described is a collaboration between Yukon government and Yukon First Nations to determine what the process will be and what the structure will look like. Ultimately, it could be called an “oversight committee”, but I don’t think that it will. I think that we are working to finalize the partnership structure with Yukon First Nations, and as I have said, through this work, we will ensure that partners in health care, including the Yukon Medical Association, unions, the Hospital Corporation, health care providers, and Yukoners who access health services, will all be involved at every stage of the discussions to determine how the legislation will work and ultimately how we will implement this.

So, I don’t think that we have named, yet, an oversight committee, because I can assure you that the structure is not yet built. So, my answer is yes — health care professionals, the Yukon Medical Association, and other stakeholders who will be affected and involved, with respect to building a Yukon health authority, will be at the table — absolutely. That is my answer — yes.

Will they be part of an oversight committee? We don’t yet know that we’re having an oversight committee. Those are words that have come from the member opposite. I’m just not able to agree that this is the name of a committee or the name of any organization that will be involved in this, and I don’t think that’s fair.

So, yes, health care professionals will be involved in the development and implementation of a Yukon health authority.

Mr. Cathers: If I was using the wrong terminology, I apologize, but I would note for the minister that, when we’re only provided verbal information and are not given information on what the government is currently sharing with First Nations or working on internally, we are left with limited information and have to try to reflect that in the best way that we can, based on the government keeping its cards held rather close to their chest — to use the analogy.

It is unfortunate that, with something like this, they haven’t simply chosen to be more forthcoming. I would ask the minister if she would agree to share the text or PowerPoint presentation that she made at the Yukon Forum — whatever format that was in. I don’t know whether it was a PowerPoint presentation, text, or some other format, but if she would agree to share that with us, that would be helpful.

In the interest of allowing the Third Party time to ask questions, as per a conversation, at this point, I will turn the floor over to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for that last comment. I think that’s why I’ve made so many references to *Putting People First*. The recommendations in *Putting People First* are

what are being complied with by government as we work through this process.

I will consider the question about the presentation or providing more information. I think it’s certainly available, and I don’t have any trouble with that, so I’ll just look into that request.

Ms. Blake: The first question that I had was in response to the COVID testing, or rapid testing, available for my riding of Old Crow. I’ve heard from citizens in the last week or so that there have been challenges in accessing rapid tests in the community, not knowing where to pick up the test in the community or who to call. Also, I was wondering, with Old Crow being a smaller community, if there is consideration of sending PCR testing up there as well.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much for the question. My ministerial advisor, I note, has responded, but I’m sure that the member opposite has not yet had an opportunity to see it by e-mail.

I’m happy to confirm that, when this came to our attention, we looked into it right away this morning. We understand that rapid tests are to be available at the Vuntut Gwitchin health centre, not the YG health centre, but we can confirm that 872 tests were sent to the Vuntut Gwitchin government. Our team at Health and Social Services has now confirmed that the shipment was delivered to the Vuntut Gwitchin government and will be distributed as they see fit and will direct. They are currently being prepared for distribution. An additional 250 tests were provided to the school, and they are also being distributed through the school.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response to my question. Just to clarify, we don’t have a Vuntut Gwitchin health centre in the community, so I’m wondering if you were referring to the Vuntut Gwitchin government health and social department.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am sorry; that was probably my misstep. I understand that they will be distributed through the Vuntut Gwitchin government at the main administration building.

Ms. Blake: I thank my colleague for the questions that he brought forward. He echoed many of the questions I had noted down. One of the follow-up questions that I had was with regard to the health authority and with the presentation that was done at the Yukon Forum to the chiefs. I am wondering if there are any plans in the near future for the minister to connect with the First Nations directly to see if there are any chiefs who would like to have a direct conversation regarding a health authority and any concerns that they might have.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I can indicate that, at the Yukon Forum, the presentation was well-received, I will say. I am never interested in speaking on anyone else’s behalf, but it was a positive conversation. We followed up. I think that a letter might have gone out to each chief and council before the Yukon Forum, and then we followed up with one following the Yukon Forum to obtain their response on how we want to work together going forward to determine this process. I understand that they have committed to getting back to us in the near future. We will proceed with this work.

I can also indicate that one of the requests — and we are happy to comply — is that we will visit each First Nation in the territory with respect to the specific issue and work with them on how they can best be engaged throughout the process.

I have high hopes that the process and the opportunity that was taken with respect to the *Child and Family Services Act* could be something that we continue for the purposes of having engagement on the health authority legislation and ultimately the health authority itself.

Ms. Blake: I wanted to go back to the question regarding COVID testing availability in the community of Old Crow. In my home community, there are a lot of folks who rely on the Internet to access information about where to get whatever service they are looking for, and I have a printout off the Yukon government website on where to pick up a COVID-19 at-home test. I notice that Old Crow is not listed on there. I am wondering if Old Crow will be added to the list, and if so, how soon will that happen?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member opposite for bringing that to our attention. Of course, it will need to be updated, and I think that it is an excellent reference to the fact that lots of folks in Old Crow do access information in this way. We will update that website to include the information that I provided today — probably not the number of tests, but certainly where they are available — and that will be completed — I am told that it can be done by tomorrow and I will request that it be done by tomorrow.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for that response.

I think the remainder of my questions I will hold onto for Committee of the Whole, because there are a lot of issues that I want to bring forward from my riding that I have been hearing from citizens. I have been travelling to Old Crow regularly, at least once a month since coming into this position, and meeting with citizens in the community and hearing concerns that are related to health and social services.

Some of the concerns that do come up are the need for ambulance services in the community, medical equipment at the health centre, supports for the staff at the health centre when they deal with traumatic experiences and death in the community. Part of that support for staff at the health centre is to decrease the impacts of vicarious trauma with situations that staff encounter. There have been questions that come from the community in regard to access to the Dawson hub, because right now, the service is being provided through one counsellor from the mental wellness service unit here in Whitehorse, and there are questions about how to maintain the connection and relationship with the staff at the Dawson hub.

There have been many concerns from citizens who have asked about optometry and dental services being available in the community. In my last trip to Old Crow at the end of February, we had a visit with a citizen, and he was taping his glasses together while we had a visit; there's a definite need for that service in the community.

I have lots of questions in regard to addiction support for citizens in the community. We have citizens who are on different — I guess different places in their journey, when it comes to dealing with addictions or accessing support services

— whether they're returning from treatment or pursuing treatment or trying to maintain sobriety and after-care supports, availability of local resources, such as reading material, videos, access to AA meetings and NA meetings in the community.

I just wanted to bring these issues forward now so that it's on record and also so you know that I'll be asking questions about these in Committee of the Whole. There are lots of concerns from our elders about respite care, home care, medication — med management — and also foot care and palliative care support for citizens in the community. Our community has experienced a high rate of suicide in recent years, and there are questions from youth and elders about what supports are going to be put in place, or could be made available, when it comes to talking about suicide and suicide prevention in the community.

There are questions about trauma regarding situations we see in the community; supports for families and those impacted by trauma or when there is death in the community; increased access to social workers in the community, because right now, we have the visiting social worker who is not always there when emergency situations arise; access to pediatric services, which is, I think, a follow-up to a letter that came from a citizen; domestic violence supports for citizens in the community; grief and loss support.

We have lost citizens to the opioid crisis and other forms of traumatic deaths, and our community feels there is just no time to process the grief or loss before another death happens, especially for our children and youth who are losing their parents, and also questions regarding access to detox and treatment services here in the territory.

Right now, we have some citizens accessing treatment services outside of the territory through funding agreements with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the feds, I believe. They are coming home to no after-care support. With Old Crow, there are limited services because we are an isolated community. The services that are available to our citizens primarily come from the First Nation, which could be limited when we're dealing with capacity issues. Those are some of the questions that I will bring forward in Committee of the Whole.

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Is there any further general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried

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 lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, 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 \$5,000,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$5,000,000 agreed to

Department of Health and Social Services agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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 10 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would like to take the opportunity to introduce my officials. To my right, I have Deputy Minister McConnell, and to my right, Deputy Minister Richard Gorczyca. I have some brief introductory comments.

I'm pleased to speak to you about the Department of Highways and Public Works supplementary budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year. This is a large and diverse department. We have a variety of divisions, branches, and agencies that provide central functions to the government as well as direct services to the public. With all these things to manage, we must make difficult choices with our spending so that we can provide the best possible service to Yukoners.

Despite a high level of care that goes into planning our budget, it is impossible to predict every cost. The supplementary budget allows us to address those unexpected costs and continue to provide top-quality services.

Highways and Public Works is expecting an increase of \$3.556 million to our 2021-22 O&M costs. I would like to provide some details of those expenditures.

As you all know, this year we experienced unusual weather events. Some were even record-breaking. Not only did it impact us in the winter with an increase in snowfall, but also in the spring when the melt caused major road washouts. We were required to increase the department's budget by an additional \$407,000 to maintain our roads and repair the damage from the

washouts. This is one example of how unanticipated weather events can significantly impact the department's budget.

Another impact to our budget this year was the rise in fuel costs and electrical costs, which increased the costs of heating our many buildings.

Unforeseen costs can come from a number of things, but perhaps the most significant was the pandemic. From the perspective of Highways and Public Works, our aviation industry was hard hit when the pandemic began and it continues to require our support. Through the essential air service program, we have provided an additional \$2.4 million to continue supporting the Yukon aviation industry. Those expenditures are 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

While we saw an increase in the O&M budget, we saw a commensurate decrease in the capital budget. This was due to a decrease in spending in this fiscal year on the Dempster fibre project. Due to weather and material availability, certain aspects of the project could not be completed last year, but the project is still on track. So, the net sum sought in the supplementary budget for Highways and Public Works to receive legislative appropriation is \$956,000, which is quite a modest number, in my view, in contrast to the \$355-million total budget.

As I wrap up today, I would like to reiterate that our department performs a significant range of services. The work that we do impacts all Yukoners, the work that we do is important, and we take pride in doing this work well.

Thank you for your time, Deputy Chair, and I look forward to any questions.

Mr. Hassard: I would like to thank the officials for being here today, as well, assisting the minister in this little exercise that we have today.

I have a couple of questions regarding contracting. Highways and Public Works recently put out RFQ 2022-2-1366 for vegetation control. I am curious why Highways and Public Works has taken to doing RFQs for something like vegetation control. Normally, this would be used in larger or more technical types of tenders. So, I am just curious if this is a new direction that the government is taking — if we can anticipate RFQs for more projects — or, I guess, generally, what direction is the government taking?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon government has implemented a roadway safety improvement program designed to make Yukon roads safer through brushing, improved lane markings, 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 programs. The department has brushed over 2,100 kilometres along Yukon highways, installed over nine kilometres of new barriers, and painted over 2,600 kilometres of highway lanes. Some of the considerations that all members will be aware of is that wildlife interactions represent a real danger for drivers in the Yukon. Frequent brushing allows drivers to better see wildlife crossings and help prevent collisions. Brushing also

helps to keep signs visible, decreases snow accumulation and drifting, and improves roadway drainage.

We have also had active engagements with the general public with respect to brushing and roadway safety improvements. In July 2021, Highways and Public Works sent 698 letters to property owners who are nearby 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 plant vegetation control, and also explained the benefits of vegetation control.

With respect to the specific question that the member opposite asked with respect to whether future brushing contracts would be proceeding by way of an RFQ, we can certainly return to the member with a response during Committee of the Whole with respect to the main estimates, as there is no request for additional funds with respect to this program in the supplementary budget. I look forward to the future discussions with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, including an answer to his question.

Mr. Hassard: I was hoping that I would be able to get an answer for contractors who have been asking me this question, without having to wait for weeks to come. I hope that the minister isn't offended, but I have trouble taking him at his word that he is going to get back to me with that information, because last fall, when I stood here in the House and asked about what Highways and Public Works was doing about aggregate for the Teslin bridge project, he promised that he would get back to me before the House rose, and I still haven't received a response from that.

So, even though it is not in the supplementary budget, maybe today he can give me an answer and tell me where that aggregate is coming from.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I just had an update from my officials with respect to the brushing contract — and trying to be responsive to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. Going forward, the purpose of the RFQs and the brushing control contracts is to create a qualified source list. I'm advised that there is an information session on this topic this upcoming Thursday. As I indicated, I can likely provide some additional information in future discussions in Committee of the Whole on the main estimates, but that is what I'm advised by the department on the direction that they are proceeding with respect to future brushing and vegetation control contracts.

On the other matter, with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge and with respect to the aggregate, what I would say right now is that, as the member opposite will know, the Nisutlin Bay bridge is a critical link along the Alaska Highway. In the spring of 2019, the Yukon government and the Teslin Tlingit Council signed a project charter for the bridge replacement. Through the project charter, we are working together to provide a safe, reliable structure that can accommodate an increase in traffic while also improving access for pedestrians and cyclists.

This project will provide a significant, positive economic outcome for the territory, local businesses, and the community of Teslin. As I have said previously, a tender was posted on

October 13, 2021 for two pre-qualified contractors and closed on February 3, 2022.

A proposal evaluation and additional steps are in progress. This will take some extra time and effort, given the complexity of the project. To allow us this time, we have extended the irrevocability period for an additional 30 calendar days until May 4, 2022. Discussions continue, engaging the Teslin Tlingit Council, the Village of Teslin, the public, and specific stakeholders on this project as it moves forward.

As I indicated previously in the House, the prices have come in higher than anticipated due to current global circumstances and the high premium on steel and other materials. We are in the process of securing options to secure additional funding needed to award this contract; however, awarding this contract is certainly a high priority for us, but we must also do our due diligence to evaluate whether we are making the right decision on behalf of Yukon taxpayers before we proceed with this award.

Part and parcel of the award and the additional benefits that we hope will accrue to the Village of Teslin, the Teslin Tlingit Council, the public, and specific stakeholders will presumably include the aggregate contract for the new Pelly-Nisutlin Bay bridge. That is all part of the discussions that are taking place with respect to the qualified contractors right now, so it would be premature to discuss that contract right now.

Mr. Hassard: The question was: Where was the aggregate going to be sourced? I asked this months ago. The government has to know where the aggregate is being sourced in order for the companies to even come up with a price to provide it to the government, so for the minister to stand here and say that we can't talk about that at this time is a little bizarre. Obviously, he is a little out of touch with what his job is here, so let's try another one.

The question regarding the Yukon First Nation procurement — it is my understanding that, in order to get paid for a job, the contractor has to provide proof of First Nation involvement. I am curious if the minister can tell us what type of proof they have to provide. Is it in terms of statutory declarations or does the government take the contractor's word for it? Does this apply to all contracts or specific contracts?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The final question faded a bit at the end there. I heard some questions about a statutory declaration, but what was the final part of that question?

Mr. Hassard: I was asking what type of proof the contractor has to provide. Does that proof need to be given for all contracts or are some contracts different from others?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: On December 1, 2021, verified Yukon First Nation businesses started to be listed on the Yukon First Nation business registry. There is a link to the registry under "Doing Business" on yukon.ca. The Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce accessed the registrar of the registry. The registry assists Yukon First Nation businesses with the application process and performs the business verifications. As of March 15, 2022, 76 Yukon First Nation businesses have gone through the verification process and are listed on the registry. Over the past year, the Yukon government has received feedback from the industry and our First Nation

partners on the “First Nation business” definition. Feedback focused on ensuring that Yukon First Nation businesses were being properly designated and that the definition of a “Yukon First Nation business” aligns with the intent of the policy.

After discussions with the technical working group, the Yukon government updated the “Yukon First Nation business” definition in February. As we learn more about the policy through implementation, we will continue to review the business definition and verification process with the technical working group and the Monitor and Review Committee that we are, in fact, meeting the intent of the policy.

With Yukon First Nation industry representatives, we co-developed the terms of reference for a monitor and review committee. The committee is responsible for monitoring outcomes of the policy and providing recommendations to the Yukon government for interventions or continuous improvement. The committee meets at minimum on a monthly basis and is working on their first annual report. Their report will be available on yukon.ca.

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. The Monitor and Review Committee is provided with monthly reporting on the impact of bid value reductions. Bid value reductions are an important way to meet the policy’s objectives. They will allow benefits to flow to the entire Yukon economy, which is a win-win for all businesses in the territory. All businesses can earn bid value reductions for Yukon First Nation participation in contracts.

I can advise with somewhat up-to-the-minute statistics as to how the First Nation procurement policy and the bid value reduction impacts have operated so far in the management of contracts. Up until the end of February 2022, only one tender has had a re-ranking of bids that changed the award outcome. The tender in question was the Macaulay Lodge demolition project, which was awarded to a Yukon First Nation-owned business. Since bid value reductions went into effect at the end of February, six percent of tenders have had bid value reductions for Yukon First Nation ownership applied and seven percent of tenders have had the bid value reduction for Yukon First Nation labour applied.

It is still early days with respect to the administration of these contracts. As you can hear from the stats that I’m providing to the House today, it’s still a relatively small number of tenders that are being considered that have qualified for bid value reduction for Yukon First Nation ownership or for bid value reduction for a Yukon First Nation labour component.

I can advise, with respect to the Monitor and Review Committee, that, generally speaking, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce has been tasked with the role of identifying First Nation businesses, but, once again, in Committee of the Whole with respect to the main estimates, I can very likely provide some additional information with respect to how that is operating.

Over the past year, the Yukon government has received feedback from industry and our Yukon First Nation partners on the “Yukon First Nation business” definition. The feedback has focused on ensuring that Yukon First Nation businesses were being properly designated and that the definition of a “Yukon First Nation business” aligns with the intent of the policy. After discussions with the technical working group, the Yukon government updated the “Yukon First Nation business” definition in February.

As we learn more about the policy through implementation, we will continue to review the business definition and verification process with the technical working group and the Monitor and Review Committee to ensure that we are, in fact, meeting the intent of the policy.

As I said in Committee of the Whole in the fall of 2021, it is certainly in Yukon First Nation businesses’ interests and in all Yukoners’ interests that the Yukon First Nation procurement policy is a success. There are a number of safeguards in place so that there is monitoring that is occurring on a monthly basis with the review committee. There very well may be bumps in the road, but the initial indicators are positive.

I can also provide the member opposite in future debates with some updated numbers on how many Yukon First Nation businesses have been verified, but, as I said, certainly all Yukoners — if I were to be so presumptive — do want this policy to be effective. We want to ensure that the Yukon First Nation businesses that are verified are bona fide Yukon First Nation businesses and that the filters are in place to determine if there are any concerns with respect to the representations that have been made by the applicant.

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: 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. 203, entitled *Third 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.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 54

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, March 23, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

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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
Wednesday, March 23, 2022 — 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

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In honour of the tribute to National Impaired Driving Prevention Week, we have in the gallery to welcome today Jacquie Van Marck, president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Yukon branch; Cory McEachern; Inspector Rob Nason of the RCMP; and Carlos Sanchez-Aguirre. We welcome those individuals to the gallery.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I am absolutely delighted to introduce the students of the Porter Creek Secondary School Rainbow Room. We have with us today Grey Spicer, Peyton Still, Cloud Kunnizzi-Njootli, Ana Thompson, Maddi Miller, Nari Barker, Azaria Hogan, Akira Thorsteison, Jamie Trimble, Kiersten O'Brien-Jackson, Emily Graham, Arianna Charles, Luka Eaton, Evey Moore, and, of course, their leader, Jason Cook. Please give them a warm welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Impaired Driving Prevention Week

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today in the House to recognize National Impaired Driving Prevention Week — a week that we use to educate Yukoners and all Canadians about the consequences of impaired driving due to alcohol, drugs, fatigue, or distraction.

As we know, these choices destroy lives, tear apart families, and impact the health of our communities each and every day. Although great strides have been made over the years to reduce impaired driving, it continues to be a deadly problem in our territory. It appears that no matter how much we talk about it, we continue to hear stories of lives cut too short.

It likely comes as no surprise that impaired driving is an issue in the Yukon. The numbers tell a story that is worse than you might think. Since the beginning of this year, 26 Yukoners have had impaired driving charges laid against them, and it is only March. In 2018, Yukon had a rate of impaired driving convictions over five times the national average. That is five times more than anywhere else in the country, but it is not just alcohol that is causing these numbers. Cannabis, prescription

medication, and other mind-altering substances, as well as distracted or fatigued driving, are also contributing to the driving tragedies that we see every day.

The excuses we hear are made far too often: "I'm really not that tired"; "I won't get caught"; "There's no one on the roads"; "Driving high is not so bad"; or "I just need to quickly check that text."

But, today, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the many Yukoners who do not make these excuses, and I want to recognize the many who make a safe choice — the choice to be a designated driver, the sober driver, the choice to plan ahead, to offer their friends a ride home, call them a cab and stop them from getting behind the wheel, the choice to put their phones on silent and to keep their eyes on the road. These people are our real heroes, but I want to stress that we all have a role to play.

The tragic consequences that result from impaired and distracted driving are 100-percent preventable. It is simple: If you drink or take drugs, do not drive. If you are tired and fatigued, wait until you are rested to drive. If your friend is impaired, don't let them behind the wheel. If you hear your phone beep, wait until you can pull over to check.

Preventing impaired driving and distracted driving is everyone's business and everyone's responsibility.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 20 through 26 as National Impaired Driving Prevention Week here in Canada.

This important week marks a national effort by government, law enforcement, and community organizations across the country to raise awareness around the impacts that impaired driving can have on individuals, families, and communities. This campaign centres around education and prevention. Injury or death resulting from impaired driving is entirely preventable. We're all aware that the decision to get behind the wheel after drinking alcohol or using drugs is one of the worst decisions that a person can make, yet it continues to happen.

Keep an eye on your friends and family members and make good, conscious decisions ahead of time to ensure that you have a safe ride home. Don't drive tired and don't drive distracted. Fatigue and distraction could lead to accidents as quickly as alcohol or drugs. Educate your kids and, most importantly, be there for them if they think they might need a ride home.

I would like to give our thanks to our local law enforcement for the work that they do year-round to ensure that our roads remain safe, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving does an exceptional job educating the public about the importance of choosing not to drive impaired.

While these organizations continue to do good work in education and enforcement, personal responsibility remains to be the number one preventive measure against impaired driving.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to add our voices to the serious issue of impaired driving in Canada.

The first time I was hit by an impaired driver was in the middle of the day during my final year of high school. My best friend, Joel, owned a 1979 Jeep Cherokee, and this vehicle was huge. No part of it was plastic. We were driving from Porter Creek toward downtown on Mountainview Drive when Joel said, “Oh no, she’s going to hit us.” I remember the impact; it rattled every part of me. I remember Joel asking if I was okay and us getting out of the passenger side of the vehicle because his side was entirely destroyed. There were ambulances called, and the other driver was surprisingly unhurt, but due to her level of impairment, maybe that shouldn’t have been such a surprise.

I remember my dad arriving on the scene, panicked because he had initially passed the accident scene going in the opposite direction with my little sister in the car. Joel and I were lucky. We walked away mostly unhurt, physically at least, and I cringed at oncoming traffic for months after that.

So, this wasn’t the only or the last time that I was hit by an impaired driver, and I’m sadly not alone. I am, however, lucky to have walked away, but everyone isn’t so fortunate. Impaired driving, whether by alcohol or drugs, continues to kill or injure more Canadians than any other crime. Illegal drugs, cannabis, and over-the-counter and prescription medications can all impact your judgment, coordination, and reaction time behind the wheel. It’s important to know that even one drink of alcohol can reduce your reaction time, blur or double your vision, impair your reflexes, and alter your attention span. Anytime a person gets behind the wheel of any kind of vehicle, they have a responsibility to themselves and others to do so in a safe and responsible manner.

Just a reminder, according to federal data in 2019, Yukon was second only to Prince Edward Island for the highest rates of impaired driving in the country — certainly not something to boast about but definitely something we can all change.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a document from yahoo!life that shows that, unlike Conservative leader Candice Bergen, the Yukon Party leader favours cooperative deals with the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling a series of documents regarding the Dawson City recreational centre. The first of these documents that I will table is a copy of the Dawson City recreation centre functional program and feasibility study developed by Republic Architecture Inc. indicating that an option entitled “Dome Road Option 1” is estimated to cost \$54 million. I would also note that the document is printed under the Government of Yukon logo.

The second document I have for tabling is a letter dated July 23, 2021 from the project team for the advancement of a new Dawson City recreation centre indicating that the project

team, which includes the Yukon government, is favouring a recommended option with a cost of \$54 million.

The third document is the minutes from the City of Dawson City Council from August 31, 2021, indicating that the city council voted unanimously in favour of Dome Road option 1, as identified in the Republic Architecture feasibility study, with a cost estimate of \$54 million.

The fourth document I have is a letter dated February 28 and signed by the Minister of Community Services regarding the Dawson City recreation centre, sent to the mayor of Dawson and the Chief of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation, and indicating that the Dawson recreation centre is estimated to cost as much as \$81.2 million.

The fifth document I have for tabling is a copy of Hansard from March 21, 2022, in which the Minister of Community Services told the Assembly that he had budgeted only \$21 million for a new Dawson City recreation centre.

Last but not least, I have for tabling a copy of the Government of Yukon’s most recent five-year capital concept, which indicates that the budget for the new Dawson recreation centre is only in the range of \$18.2 million to \$25.5 million.

Ms. Tredger: I have for tabling three letters. The first is from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals to the members of the Yukon Legislature, which indicates their support for the *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Secondly, I have two letters from the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance to the current and former ministers of Education. The first is dated November 5, 2019, and the second is dated February 15, 2022.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 11

Mr. Cathers: I have for presentation today a petition signed by roughly 60 Yukon citizens, along with a letter from me, indicating that this petition is endorsed as containing proper matter for consideration by the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The petition itself reads:

To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT for the past two years the government of Yukon has followed policies in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic that have caused hardship to many Yukoners; and

THAT the public during this time has not been allowed to ask meaningful questions of the government resulting in the perception of being ignored;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon government to have an open, civil, mediated forum between the public and government representatives such as the Premier and the Chief Medical Officer of Health so that questions can be asked regarding the rationale behind the pandemic policies of the past two years, and to hold this forum before June 30, 2022 in a large venue such as a school gymnasium.

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

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports creating Internet redundancy in the Yukon by allocating \$27 million toward the Dempster fibre project this year.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to provide the criteria for prioritizing the replacement or renovation of Yukon schools to school councils, the CSFY, and the First Nation School Board, including the information gathered by the Department of Education about building age, seismic mitigation considerations, operational needs, and enrolment growth.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide a public update on the status of the Shallow Bay rezoning initiative, which began in 2014 and has not been completed.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide a public update on the status of the development of a local area plan for Fox Lake, which began 10 years ago and has not been completed.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to recognize that closing the Braeburn solid-waste transfer station would result in an increase in fossil fuel emissions, as residents and local businesses would be forced to drive about an hour-and-a-half round trip to the Deep Creek transfer station.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to ensure that the Braeburn, Silver City, Keno, and Johnsons Crossing solid-waste transfer stations are kept open to support local residents and businesses.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow recommendation 4 of the final report of the Task Force on Acutely Intoxicated Persons at Risk by creating a sobering space for acutely intoxicated individuals in downtown Whitehorse.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow recommendation 4 of the Beaton and Allen report by creating a sobering space for acutely intoxicated individuals in downtown Whitehorse.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Safe at Home Society supportive housing project

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to speak about the conversion of the High Country Inn into supportive housing, which will be owned and operated by the Safe at Home Society.

Collaboration with our partners has been key for the success of the project to date. These include the Government of Canada, the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Housing Corporation, the Safe at Home Society, Northern Vision Development, and others.

In particular, I want to thank the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Through the northern carve-out national co-investment fund and the rapid housing initiative, \$15 million in federal investment funds has been provided to renovate the former High Country Inn. This will now add a total of 55 supportive housing units into our community.

The Yukon Housing Corporation will further support this project through \$1 million in funding under the housing initiatives fund. As well, under the municipal matching rental construction fund, the corporation will match future development incentives provided by the City of Whitehorse.

As we know, homelessness has far-reaching consequences. It implies not just a lack of housing, but also a lack of safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging. These are all things we, as humans today, need to thrive.

For those who experience homelessness, normal life activities are replaced by the struggle for day-to-day survival. Beyond its fundamental human costs, homelessness negatively impacts our economy and society more broadly. The costs are borne directly by our emergency services, health care institutions, and criminal justice system.

Solving homelessness is complex. It will take time and effort from all communities, but projects like this one by the Safe at Home Society are a step in the right direction.

The Safe at Home project will offer housing alongside client-centred services. It will provide urgent, stable, secure, and supportive housing for women, youth, and indigenous Yukoners who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. As part of delivering on *Putting People First*, the Yukon Housing Corporation participates in the re-housing of clients through the coordinated access table by name list. This is a tool used to identify individuals experiencing homelessness and to facilitate a coordinated re-housing case management approach.

This coordinated access system brings consistency to the way people experiencing homelessness are accessing housing and services. But, as we know, there is more work to be done as we support our vulnerable sector and the Yukoners who need supportive housing solutions. In line with the foundational goals of the Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing

program, now more than ever, we continue to work with our housing partners to provide housing with supported services. Through collaboration with our partners, I know that we will continue to work toward meeting the pressing needs across the housing continuum.

Finally, a special thanks goes to Kate Mechan, who has worked hard in a number of roles over the years to support our vulnerable sector and in particular now as the executive director of the Safe at Home Society. I commend her vision and tenacity on moving this supportive housing project forward and making it a reality.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. I would like to thank the minister for re-reading his press release that announced this project on January 31. I do need to thank everyone who is working both on the front lines and behind the scenes to address the housing crisis here in the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that everyone deserves to have a safe place to call home. As the old saying goes, “Home is where the heart is.” It is so important that they have a safe space to call home. With housing prices at record high levels and rental units coming off the market in the Yukon, thanks to the NDP-Liberal rent control policy, it makes finding a home that much more difficult.

That is why we were pleased to see the Safe at Home project come forward earlier this year. The project, which sees the refurbishing of the former High Country Inn, will see 55 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse. With the current housing crunch, these units will hopefully help.

Can the minister provide an update on how the facility will operate when completed? Has an operational plan been worked out since January’s announcement? Can the minister update us on the renovation work? Have supply chain issues delayed the renovations? Also, with so many groups involved, can the minister tell us who will be picking up the tab for any cost overruns?

The Yukon Housing Corporation has also committed to participating in the development of a community safety plan and consultations with the surrounding neighbourhood with respect to this project. Has that work begun yet? Who has the corporation met with and when? Can the minister now update us on the total amount of funding going toward this project from both CMHC and the Yukon Housing Corporation?

Finally, when will the facility open its doors to residents? Salamat po.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start with a big thanks to the Safe at Home Society, their staff, their board, and in particular Kate Mechan for the incredible work they have done in working to take this from an idea and bring it to this point in the process. This could not have happened without their commitment to the project.

As well, thanks need to be given to the many funding arms of the federal government, the City of Whitehorse, and the Yukon government. We have always believed and supported that housing is a human right — now more than ever. We are all too aware of the housing crisis that Yukoners are facing. From the homeless to those who are precariously housed, from

those facing legal evictions without cause to those trying to find an affordable rental, too many Yukoners face housing difficulties.

This project will provide not only housing to Yukoners, but supports to ensure the success of tenants. We look forward to the opening of these 55 units and congratulate all the individuals and funders involved in this commendable project.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will start off just providing a little information for the questions from the Official Opposition. From what I’m aware of, the operational plan is still underway concerning the partners that may be brought in, specifically for the first floor of that space and other opportunities for revenue generation with a commercial kitchen and potential rental space. I know that is still being worked on, and that’s updated as of this week.

Again, update on the work — I know that what I have been informed is that they are very comfortable with the work that is going forward. There is nothing flagged at this point concerning anything with supply chain disruption. I think that we’ve seen some of those numbers balance out, at least for wood and other products, but it is something we should be taking as a concern and certainly when we look at the Ukraine/Russia crisis and things like aluminum wire and other things that may not be specific to this particular project, but we probably will see cost escalators.

Again, as the note said that we provided today, right now we are at \$16 million. That looks like the number at this particular point. There have been no concerns from the company or from the organization on this going forward.

They are looking to the fall of this year to have people in those spots. I would offer up that Safe at Home is a fantastic organization. I really don’t want to speak on their behalf about the particulars of their operation. I am sure that the member opposite could reach out to Kate Mechan, and she would give a complete breakdown of what they are working through and what they are thinking. Again, we will make sure that we try to organize an opportunity for all MLAs to go and visit that space in the near future.

I appreciate the comments and the support from the Third Party on this particular project. We do feel that it is very important. Again, when we take a look at the situation in the Yukon, we do know that, since 2016, our territory’s population has grown by over 12 percent. We do know that the national average of growth was about 5.2 percent. We do know that, over the past five years, construction of private homes in the territory has increased by about 12.9 percent, so we are happy to see that, but we are still in the situation of playing catch-up from years before.

We need to continue to work with municipal and federal partners, First Nation governments, and local organizations. I think that this is something that we have been illustrating through our endeavours and our work. We have been putting those good partnerships to work. Projects like the High Country Inn will offer safe and dependable housing alongside client-centred services. For many of us who have had the opportunity to work with vulnerable youth, seeing that opportunity for

individuals — when they are what we call “aging out” — having some stability and support services is something that is incredibly important.

By providing homes for Yukoners who are experiencing homelessness, at the same time, this is increasing access to the support they need. This will help to ensure that they are successful in their journey to getting into a better situation and off the street.

I would just like to touch on the work of the previous minister and the work that continues. Again, we are pretty excited. This is a big year coming up. We support the development of the upcoming 84 units in Normandy Manor, an independent senior building with support services. The Safe at Home project is 55 more units, which we think is great. Challenge Disability Resource Group’s Cornerstone — I had the opportunity last night to drive and look at some of these projects that are coming to fruition. Again, 53 new homes for Yukoners this spring and the 47 homes here at 4th Avenue and Jeckell, as well as Boreal Commons, with 87 more units.

There are a lot of good solutions on the way. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Dawson City recreation centre

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, when we cited documents and letters regarding the Dawson City rec centre, the Minister of Community Services launched into a bizarre and aggressive partisan attack, trying to deny and dismiss the facts, but the facts are indeed the facts. In July 2021, the project team, made up of municipal and territorial representatives, recommended to the City of Dawson that they accept Dome Road option 1. Dome Road option 1 was estimated at \$54 million.

In August 2021, the City of Dawson voted unanimously in favour of this option. Then, this week, the minister told us that there is only \$21 million budgeted for this project, and we also see that same amount in the five-year capital concept. So, what we and many Yukoners would like to know is: Where will that additional \$33 million come from?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It’s my pleasure to rise again this afternoon to talk about all the recreational opportunities that we’re providing for Yukoners throughout the territory. We believe in recreation; we believe in investing in recreation, investing in our communities, and that’s what we’re doing.

The member is, again, unreliable with the facts. I didn’t say — it wasn’t a partisan attack. I was basically pointing out that the members opposite are sowing chaos in many places that is really unnecessary. It’s wholly unnecessary, and I think it does Yukoners a disservice because all it does is create doubt and friction at a time when people are looking for certainty. People are in very turbulent times. I think it behooves us as leaders in the territory to provide Yukoners with the right information.

The right information is this, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to building a rec centre in Dawson as soon as possible, perhaps as early as 2026. I have spoken to the mayor and council. We have provided letters — I’m glad to see some

research being done. Letters have been provided to the City of Dawson — absolutely — and the letters say that the cost — and I’m happy to talk about this more on further questions.

Mr. Dixon: In all that chaos and discord, I’m afraid we didn’t hear an answer.

These are the facts, Mr. Speaker. Last summer, the project team, which included representatives from the Yukon government, recommended the \$54-million option for this rec centre. Last August, Dawson City Council voted in favour of this option. Last month, the minister wrote a letter saying that the project could cost as much as \$80 million, and that letter was tabled just a few minutes ago, but this week, the minister has said that he only budgeted \$21 million in the five-year capital plan for this project.

Now, the minister may not like these facts, but they are the facts. So, can the minister tell us, simply, how this project is going to be funded?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What the facts are, in very short terms, Mr. Speaker — are this. We have committed to building a recreation centre in Dawson City, a long-awaited recreation facility — because frankly, when I toured the recreation facility in Dawson, it’s really awful. You wouldn’t believe the gaps in the boards, and the work that the maintenance staff is doing to try to keep that facility operational for the citizens in Dawson goes above and beyond.

Why are they doing that, Mr. Speaker? Because 10 years ago, at least, the opposition promised to build a recreation centre for Dawson, but did they build it? No. they didn’t get it done. They dug a hole in the ground, made a promise, and didn’t fulfill it. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to building a recreation centre in Dawson. We are committed to doing it by 2026 if possible. That’s sort of the deadline we’re pushing for.

Yes, indeed, the preferred option by the City of Dawson is the Dome Road option. The estimated cost is \$54 million. That’s the type of estimate that it is. It can wildly vary. It could be \$30 million-minus; it could be \$30 million-plus, but we’re going to get it done, Mr. Speaker. We’ll find the money to get that facility built.

Mr. Dixon: I think the minister’s explanation there is pretty loose with the facts as well.

The fact remains that there’s a gap between the most recent cost estimates that the minister just indicated for the rec centre in Dawson and what the minister has budgeted so far. Now, when you have a gap like that, there are only so many ways that the \$33 million can be dealt with: Either you get more money from some combination of municipal, territorial, and federal governments or you scale the project back to make it more affordable.

So, it’s clear that they are going to have to do one of these two things, Mr. Speaker, so what we’re asking is: Which of those two things is the minister going to do?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, you can cherry-pick details and that’s really what the agents of chaos across the way are trying to do.

Honestly, if they had actually provided the full context of the letter, we did say that the project could cost, at this very

early stage, up to this amount. We also said in that same letter that we would work with the City of Dawson to deliver a project that met the needs of the community in a cost-effective manner. So, we are working with the City of Dawson very closely to make sure that we have a good facility for that community that has waited far too long. Actually, Mr. Speaker, had it been built when the opposition actually agreed to build it, we wouldn't be in this mess and it would have saved Yukoners probably tens of millions of dollars. But they don't think that way, they don't plan that way, they never did a five-year capital plan, and they didn't follow through on their commitments.

The feasibility study completed by Dawson and funded by Community Services reviewed three options and two potential locations. We are now working with the municipality on the option that they have chosen. This engagement included public meetings and online surveys, and more public discussions will occur once we get further along in the planning. We are still planning. There is lots to be written on this piece, and the agents of chaos across the way would be better just to celebrate the fact that we are building recreation centres across the territory.

Question re: Electrical rebate

Mr. Hassard: So, yesterday, the Minister of Economic Development explained the reasoning behind the introduction of the \$150 rebate on electricity, which has been notable because it was explicitly copied from the program introduced by Alberta's Premier. Yesterday, the minister said — and I will quote: "Certainly, some feel that's in place because the current leader of the Conservatives in Alberta is under fire and going into a very significant leadership review in the short term." Well, that sounds familiar, Mr. Speaker. The Premier here in Yukon has been lagging in the polls, his popularity has tanked, and he is invisible in his own riding. Residents in the riding of Klondike are asking for the fuel tax to be waived as well.

So, will the government agree to waive the fuel tax for this year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am happy to rise to talk again about this important initiative. We announced it late last week. We have worked with the chamber of commerce. They approached us to talk about it. We worked with our utilities. We looked for a project here that was going to reach all Yukoners and support them across the board, including those who might not drive as much. It was all about trying to support Yukoners. We know that costs are going up. We know why that is — because of the war in Ukraine and that Russia has invaded Ukraine. We understand that prices are going up, and this is our work to support Yukoners.

I had hoped that the members opposite, the Yukon Party, would support this initiative. It is unfortunate that they don't, but I think that this is important — that we are supporting Yukoners. We developed this specifically to reach as many Yukoners and Yukon businesses to support them at this time.

Mr. Hassard: Just so that the minister understands, we have never been opposed to the \$150 rebate for the electricity, but it is pretty clear from the Minister of Economic Development's explanation that he thinks the Premier would only bring in this type of policy if they were struggling in the

polls. It's also clear that they outright copied this policy from the very same Premier whom they criticized. We saw earlier this year that the Liberals have dropped to third place, and the Premier's popularity has tanked. So, it stands to reason that they did it with the same motivation. But when they're plagiarizing Alberta's plan to give the \$150 rebate, they forgot that Alberta is also waiving the fuel tax.

Will the Liberals also waive the fuel tax and give Yukoners much-needed relief from the rising cost of living?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That was quite a tale that got woven.

What we're doing on this side of the floor is making sure that the policies that we put in place have the best impact for as many Yukoners as possible. As I stated yesterday, just a couple weeks ago in the member opposite's riding, Mayor Jack Bowers spoke about the challenges with the pressures that have been put on by the conflict abroad and the pricing pressures that it has put on inflation. One of the things that was stated was the fact that, yes, we have seen fuel costs go up, but there are a lot of people on fixed incomes in that community that the member opposite represents. Those individuals, whether or not we touch anything on a fuel tax, are still going to have to pay their electric bill. In this particular case, we want to make the best impact to the most Yukoners. This really has people on a fixed income in mind. We think it's good policy. That's why we're doing it.

Certainly, other than that, if the members opposite want to — yes, we know they are big fans of the Premier from Alberta. They brought him in to speak as a mentor to them at their AGM. That's not where we're going. We're just trying to make sure we can help as many Yukoners as possible.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please.

Specific Rule 1.c. — I just want to remind all members that cellphones are not allowed during Oral Question Period. I'm just giving all members a notification. Thank you.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly didn't seem like a coincidence that it was the Minister of Economic Development who made these comments about a Premier having his leadership challenged in responding to so-called "boutique policies". I'm sure that the minister has been thinking about that scenario a lot lately.

Unfortunately, while the government clearly copied the \$150-rebate program from Alberta, they only copied a small part of Alberta's program.

In addition to the electrical rebate, Alberta is also waiving their fuel tax for the year; whereas the proposal the Liberals have brought forward is only \$3-million worth of relief for Yukoners, the relief program that the Yukon Party has proposed — the waiving of the fuel tax — is \$9 million worth of relief. That's \$9 million back in the pockets of Yukoners.

Waiving the fuel tax will help reduce food prices, construction costs, and so much more. It's the right thing to do. Will the government agree to actually do both?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that anyone keeping notes will find that, at this point, we are in about two and a half weeks. What we heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition was

that we would see a brand-new approach by the Yukon Party. I think that we have now seen that this has quickly changed. Hopefully, the members opposite will take the cues from their leader across the way. We are not quite seeing that, but we will continue to work on behalf of Yukoners. We will continue to make sure that the policies that we put in place are policies that hit as many Yukoners as possible, support those individuals — specifically on fixed incomes. We will continue to watch what is happening with the business sector and make sure that we have programs in place that will help them the most.

Certainly, we will continue to watch sectors like tourism. Even though we see some great signs of recovery, we will make sure that we monitor and adapt like we always have. We will continue to be with Yukoners, as we have over the last two years, in a way that has led the country with the programs that we have had. I appreciate the support that we have had all the way from the Premier and my colleagues on this work.

Question re: Department of Education sexual orientation and gender identity policy

Ms. Tredger: Back in 2019, the students from the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance wrote a letter to the then-Minister of Education. The letter outlined a number of concerns that the students had with the department’s sexual orientation and gender identity policy. The minister never responded to the students’ concerns.

That policy is now 10 years old, and it continues to leave students vulnerable and lacking appropriate supports. Harassment and discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ students in Yukon schools are still commonplace and often go unaddressed. The government’s LGBTQ2S+ action plan committed them to updating this policy by June of this year.

Could the minister provide these students with an update on where these changes are at and if she will meet her deadline?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question, and I acknowledge the students here today in the Legislature. Thank you for coming.

The work around LGBTQ2S+ inclusion has been work that I have undertaken since coming into this position and being gifted the portfolio for the Women’s Directorate, now the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and work that I have taken very, very seriously. We’ve done a tremendous amount of work.

I know we’re going to get into some detail around that this afternoon. But going to the specific question around the sexual orientation and gender identity policy for schools, which is dated back to 2012, to support students who identify as LGBTQ2S+ students — or related to or allies of — we are working to ensure that all Yukon schools follow this policy and that all students are treated with the respect they deserve.

We’re updating this policy as part of Yukon government’s work to modernize and improve services and policies for Yukoners in the LGBTQ2S+ community. I will continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

Ms. Tredger: In the minister’s action plan, she states that she follows a “nothing about us without us” approach. That’s an admirable intent, but I’m not sure that has been the

case. The students at the PCGSA sent a second letter to the new minister on February 15 of this year. Thirty-six days later, the students have not heard back. This is after the minister told them to call her anytime if they needed anything.

In a beautiful display of solidarity, queer and trans students at Porter Creek Secondary are worried about their fellow students at other schools who have faced backlash from administration for promoting queer and trans activities within their school. I know that the minister has been made aware of these situations.

Can the minister tell students what steps have been taken to protect and support LGBTQ2S+ youth in all Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I’m happy to rise again and speak about this important topic. It’s very important to me. As I have stated, I have remained very committed to the work. When you talk about the action plan for LGBTQ2S+, it’s not my action plan; it is Yukon’s action plan. It is an action plan to change the culture, really, within our government services and the work that we do but for the Yukon as well. It’s the first time it has ever been done.

We did the first consultation on LGBTQ2S+ in the Yukon, and I was honoured to release that plan with our partners in July. One of the things — the principle that we have adopted is “Nothing about us without us.” That certainly has been my approach and our government’s approach. All Yukon schools follow the sexual orientation and gender identity policy. Are there some issues? Yes, there are.

I remain committed — I will continue to build on this. I just spoke with the children outside the Legislature, telling them that I am looking forward to coming to their class soon.

Ms. Tredger: In the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, in the foreword, the minister said — and I quote: “We acknowledge that so often, changes do not happen simply due to the goodwill of the government but through direct community action and hard-won challenges to unjust legislation and procedures”.

So, I hope that the minister knows these students need more than goodwill. They are having to challenge her department’s unjust procedures. The action plan commits her to evaluating the SOGI policy and partnership with students, educators, and the LGBTQ2S+ community. Time is running out to meet the June deadline, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister commit here and now to working in partnership with students, educators, and the LGBTQ2S+ community to update the SOGI policy ahead of the next school year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the supplementary question. I think that I have been very clear today around my commitment as the Minister responsible for both Education and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, our commitment to the action plan — to achieve inclusion in our territory. This is really important work that we take very seriously, and we are very committed to ensuring inclusion in Yukon and particularly in our schools.

I am very committed to seeing through the action plan. There is a specific section — and I know that we are going to get into a lot of debate around that today and we are going to

have some really specific discussion around a bill that actually is at the heart of this.

So, I am happy to — I am looking forward to meeting with the students at Porter Creek Secondary School and with the other gender and sexuality alliance group at Vanier at another time. I am looking forward to including all of the actions in our work going forward.

Question re: Flood mitigation impact on Schwatka Lake float plane operations

Ms. Van Bibber: This year, Yukon Energy has announced it will be lowering Schwatka Lake again to help prepare for potential flooding. While we are glad to see Yukon Energy taking action to mitigate flood potential, lowering Schwatka by 95 centimetres in April will have a real impact on float plane operators who use the lake.

These float plane operators are important to the ongoing operation of both the tourism and mining industries and need support to help recover from the economic challenges of the pandemic. One solution the float plane operators have proposed is dredging areas in the lake to improve the access for float planes.

Will the Government of Yukon work with the affected businesses to find a solution to address their concerns and allow them to continue to operate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, this past week, Yukon Energy had written a letter to the float plane operator folks and explained that they were going to continue to do this work to lower Schwatka. They haven't done it yet this year. They discovered that last year when they did it actually changed the peak of the flood by dropping it by 45 centimetres, which is huge. That's within their water licence.

Last year, I met with the float plane operators, and Yukon Energy did as well. This year, I have started conversation. I met with the president of Alkan just last week at the Premier's meeting at the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. We're in dialogue with them. I have reached out to the mayor of Whitehorse to begin that conversation, and I have conversations with colleagues going on about ways in which we can try to be supportive.

I think that it's important to note that the City of Whitehorse manages the float plane base. It's not the Yukon government, but we will work in support to try to assist with this work. I'm happy to let you know, Mr. Speaker, that the work is already underway.

Question re: Mining industry greenhouse gas reduction targets

Mr. Istchenko: The Liberal government has stated that they will establish an intensity-based greenhouse gas reduction target for the Yukon's mining industry by 2022.

Can the Minister of Environment tell us what consultation has taken place with the mining industry on these targets?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I can say is that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment are working very closely on all of our work around *Our Clean Future* to shift our energy economy

and make the territory more sustainable on our goal toward reducing our emissions by 45 percent by 2030.

The mining intensity targets issue is more my lead — or the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources' lead. There has been quite a bit of work around working with industry on this issue. For example, several weeks ago, I sat on a panel discussion that was hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Mines with the mining industry to talk about mining intensity targets and how we are going to work to transition the mining industry off of fossil fuels, along with all of our economy.

I am happy to answer further on that, but what I can say is that we are engaged very directly with the industry.

Mr. Istchenko: When was the last time the Minister of Environment met with anyone from the mining industry to specifically discuss these targets for their industry? Can the Minister of Environment share any of the documentation that was provided at those meetings?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just try to emphasize again that the lead for this is Energy, Mines and Resources. I think I just said that. We are working to establish the mining intensity targets. I have said that I have met with industry. In fact, it is a conversation that comes up at many meetings.

What I will do is try to get the member opposite the transcript from that forum that I just described and where we were working. It was a public forum. It was really well done. I am happy to try to get that information across to the members opposite. That work is underway. We are very committed to it.

What I want to say is that I have seen from industry that they, too, recognize that we need to shift off of fossil fuels. I want to thank them for their dedication toward that same goal that we all share as Canadians, as Yukoners, as northerners to shift off of fossil fuels.

Question re: Mining legislation

Mr. Kent: Last summer, the Yukon government announced in a joint news release that a private mining company and the Ross River Dena Council have partnered "... to acquire and assess the development potential of the Vangorda Lands within the traditional Ross River Kaska Dena territory."

At the Energy, Mines and Resources budget briefing last week, we were told that legislative changes are required before this acquisition can take place. Can the minister tell us what legislation needs to be changed, when consultation will begin on those changes, and when we can expect it to be introduced in the House?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is a very specific question. I thank the member opposite for this very specific question. I'm happy to look into what will be technically required around regulatory or legislative changes. I would be happy to bring back a legislative return or a ministerial statement to talk.

But what I do want to say is that we are committed to responsible development of the Yukon's mineral resources in a way that protects the environment and respects the rights and traditions of First Nations and benefits all of us — all Yukoners. We have built a strong and respectful government-to-government relationship with Yukon First Nations to foster

reconciliation. I can say that just this morning, I happened to attend one of the meetings on successor legislation — government to government with all of the First Nations as we work toward updating our one-century-old legislation. That is strong work and it is ongoing.

I am sorry that I don't have a specific response for the very specific question, but I'm happy to get that information for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, I did bring this up at the EMR briefing last week. So, it's unfortunate that I appear to have caught the minister off guard with this question.

However, in 2018, the former Deputy Premier consulted on changes to the *Quartz Mining Act*. According to the government website, the changes would — quote: "... allow First Nations to stake quartz mineral claims on specific land that is withdrawn from staking. The changes will also provide opportunities to remediate some of Yukon's abandoned Type II mine sites." This sounds similar to what's required in this instance. So, after considerable opposition to these changes from First Nations and various stakeholders, the former minister did not table any amendments.

So, are the proposed changes from 2018 the same ones that the minister intends to bring forward for the Vangorda deal, and if not, what will be different?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Where I will go with this, Mr. Speaker, is — I want to thank the folks who are working on the successor legislation right now. I had a conversation with one of the folks from Energy, Mines and Resources, and I asked him today: "How much of your work is now involved in dealing with changes to legislation?" He said, "All of it. Don't stand too close or it will be all of your work too."

We talked about the dedication of the public service from the Yukon government and from the First Nation governments. We talked about the importance of working with industry and other stakeholders like environmental organizations, and we talked about the great work that this group is doing on successor legislation. Again, it's a very specific question that is being asked. I am happy to get back to the member opposite. I hope that he can allow me the chance to just ask for that specific information to make sure I get it absolutely right for him.

What is important for Yukoners to know is that we are moving forward with successor legislation, working directly with First Nations, and that is a huge change for this territory.

Mr. Kent: For the minister, I wasn't aware — nor were my colleagues aware — that there would be legislative changes required for this transition of these claims to take place. It was offered up by officials at the EMR briefing last week. Again, I'm somewhat surprised that the minister isn't aware of the issue.

It was also confirmed at least week's briefing that a court process is necessary for these claims to be acquired. Can the minister provide us with details of what that court process will entail? Can it be initiated before the legislative changes are done? How much money has the government budgeted for these legal proceedings?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I can do is help the members opposite to see where we are right now in the process with this

amazing partnership that we're seeing with the Ross River Dena Council and mining executives. I hope that the members opposite are supportive of this particular initiative because it's really great to see partnerships with First Nations and mining companies, which are extremely important to us on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

We do know that the screening of the project has commenced. That's in my realm here. The Executive Council is currently considering commitments and comments that have been submitted through the public comment period. Now, we've submitted our comments during the public comment period on February 15 of this year. Our comments were based upon conversations about heritage and those resources in there that are key to the First Nations — fish, surface and water quality. To date, the proponent has responded to five information requests.

As we move our way through the screening of this project, I would hope that, at some point, the members opposite would embrace the fact that things have changed in the mining industry in the Yukon since their approach. Gone is the abeyance of litigation and in its place are these types of partnerships, so I hope that they relish that opportunity to also embrace these amazing partnerships.

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

Motion No. 288 — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion No. 288, standing in the name of Ms. Van Bibber; adjourned debate, Ms. Van Bibber.

Ms. Van Bibber: Today I rise to speak to a motion that I brought forward asking the Government of Yukon to create a Yukon celebration, as the federal government has dropped the royal ball on this special year. 2022 marks the Platinum Jubilee for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years on the throne.

Now, 70 years may seem like a lifetime for some. Well, it does represent a span of much change in our world to digest and understand. That is certainly a long time to hold one job. It is a uniquely historic accomplishment — an accomplishment that no one in these Chambers will see repeated in our lifetimes.

But it is not only the 70 years on the throne that merits respect; it is the way Her Majesty has presented herself as the sovereign of the Commonwealth that has garnered respect and admiration from so many. It is the manner with which she has conducted her affairs, the grace with which she conducts herself, and the dignity she displays that has earned her so many fans.

A bit of history about those 70 years — in 1923, Albert, who became King George VI, married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. They had two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret. Albert was most likely never going to be king and his children would just live a royal life, but this was not to be.

Albert's brother, King Edward VIII, had decided only a year after he was crowned King of the British Empire that the love of his life — a twice-divorced American socialite, Wallis Simpson — was more important than the throne — scandalous. Of course, due to royal protocols, for a King of the Church of England, this would never be accepted and could not happen.

By abdicating his duties, his brother and next-in-line Albert became officially King George VI and was known as “the Reluctant King”. His first-born daughter, Elizabeth, immediately became the heir presumptive.

When World War II broke out, King George and his family refused to leave England for safety, as suggested by the Prime Minister. The family stayed with the British people and his popularity rose. The family was praised for staying behind and facing the same dangers that all British citizens faced. He had every means to move out of the country to safety, and no one would have questioned it, due to his station.

The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, at least wanted the two princesses to be taken to Canada to be safe, and the Queen Mother said: “The children won't go without me. I won't leave without the King. And the King will never leave”.

The Academy Award movie *The King's Speech* was all about this time. The King had a stammer and any public speaking was painful. He was coached and learned methods to overcome his speech impediment and was finally able to do his radio addresses to his subjects with a little more ease.

Now, the King and Queen made a trip to Canada and the United States in 1939 and were well received. Mr. Speaker, I am a collector, and one of my collections relates to this visit. I have plates, spoons, mugs, and much more to commemorate this particular visit — the first time a monarch visited Canada. It is not the value in the collection but searching for the treasures.

King George was a heavy smoker, and he died at an early age of 56. Next in line to the throne, Princess Elizabeth, was visiting Kenya with her husband, Philip Mountbatten, at the time. On February 6, 1952, news rang out — “The King is dead — long live the Queen.” We knew then that King George VI had passed and his eldest daughter, Princess Elizabeth, had become Queen Elizabeth II and the reigning monarch for the Commonwealth. Her husband eventually became the Duke of Edinburgh.

As was the custom, the next monarch could choose a name. When asked, Elizabeth said, “Why, Elizabeth, of course. What else?”

However, it was not until June 2, 1953 that the coronation ceremony took place. It was a historic event that was televised despite the objections by many to this modern invasion of the dreaded TV cameras. Elizabeth already knew the value of reaching her subjects and allowing them to see the crowning ceremony. Thousands would watch and listen by radio. It was breathtaking in grandeur and tradition.

As part of the Commonwealth, Canada has ties to the royal family since we became a nation. Love them or not, the royals have been a part of all of our lives and we are part of the historic fabric that weaves our countries together.

Through her seven-decade reign, Her Majesty has made 22 visits to Canada. The first when she was still Princess Elizabeth representing her father in 1951. That was a 33-day trip. Speaking of her first view of Canada, she stated — and I quote: “I am sure that nowhere under the sun could one find a land more full of hope, of happiness and of fine, loyal, generous-hearted people.”

During a 1957 visit on October 14, Queen Elizabeth read the Speech from the Throne. It was the first time in Canadian history that a sovereign opened our Parliament. It wasn't until 1977 that she did so again.

Her one visit to Yukon was in 1959 during a 45-day trip visiting 10 provinces and two territories. The royal entourage made it to Whitehorse and our sleepy little town was on the royal map. However, not feeling well, she did not do a robust tour, but Prince Philip made appearances on her behalf.

I remember as a child the vision of a tall man walking with hands behind his back, and all the town's “who's who” were walking with him. I'm not sure if our dusty, post-gold rush, old-building Dawson City impressed him very much.

Her Majesty's last visit to Canada was in June 2010. She never made it back to the Yukon, but other royals have — most recently, the second in line to the throne, Prince William, and his wife, Kate. The Official Opposition leader, the MLA for Copperbelt North, was Minister of Economic Development at the time and he hosted part of the tour with the couple.

But that event showed how the royal celebrations can bring communities together. Businesses decorated their storefronts like is done in Britain during the jubilee parades. This will occur in Britain this June, and bunting in colours will be displayed everywhere.

Here in Whitehorse in 2016, residents packed the streets to meet, shake hands, and even just catch a glimpse of the famous royal couple, Prince William and Kate. For those Yukoners like the Official Opposition leader who had a part to play in hosting, the experience was once for a lifetime.

Our niece's son, Evan Lafreniere-Clark, made a presentation to the royal couple with the book *I Was Born Under a Spruce Tree* by JJ Van Bibber. He stole the show with his speech, and Prince William, who was not scheduled to say anything or speak, was so impressed with Evan that he did say a few words. Mr. Speaker, it was a proud family moment and I'm sure one that Evan will never forget.

Prince Charles visited Whitehorse and Mayo, Yukon in 2001. Along with the Commissioner of Yukon, Jack Cable, and me, as Administrator of Yukon, I had the pleasure of greeting Prince Charles at the airport on his Yukon arrival. It was a pleasure to welcome him to our territory as a born Yukoner.

As most know, Canada operates under the Westminster-style parliamentary system that has charted our democracy since our founding in 1867. We practise this system right here in our Legislative Assembly of the Yukon. Queen Elizabeth II is the sixth sovereign since Canada's Confederation on July 1, 1867.

When the Fathers of Confederation retained the monarch system of government, we became the Dominion of Canada. July 1 was known as Dominion Day — a day of celebration.

This name held true until the Constitution was brought home in 1982, and in 1983, Dominion Day became known as Canada Day.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up during a time when we rose every morning in class to sing *God Save the Queen*, and her photo was front and centre in every classroom. It taught us some very important lessons that have lasted a lifetime — routine, respect, and honour for our country and our head of state. There is a real fascination by society of all celebrities, and the royals are right up there. They are actually at a different level. There has been a global fascination and obsession with all things royal, even if one is not fond of the system as it is today. People comment on dress, food preference, and, of course, scandal. The need to know every minute detail knows no bounds, it seems.

Unfortunately, the paparazzi have made a living from getting their hands on any juicy information, true or not, surrounding any member of the royal family — no matter how distantly they are related to Her Majesty. This fascination has created some cynicism around the royal family. If 2012 to 2016 was the peak for royal family popularity, as Prince William and Kate Middleton married and refreshed the global celebrity for the family, the past few years have been strained with scandals or hardship — perhaps warranted and perhaps inflated due to paparazzi scrutiny.

Last year, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle departed the royal family in a public display and an appearance on *Oprah* that cast aspersions on the royal family. Only months later, the Queen lost the love of her life, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

They were married for 73 years. One commentator noted that — and I quote: “It was the importance of the solidity of that relationship, of their marriage, that was so crucial to the success of her reign...”

Just this January, the Queen stripped her second son, Prince Andrew, of his titles after the conclusion of court proceedings in the United States where he was accused of sexual assault. I can only imagine the toll that affair may have taken on her. But through these tumultuous recent years, the Queen has remained steady and stately. She has conducted herself with the same grace, dignity, and respect that merits our admiration and thanks. It is important that her conduct during her reign is remembered and honoured.

In 1969, the Duke of Edinburgh wanted the Queen to allow a film crew access to their daily lives to show the people that they were quite a normal family. The Queen, who was unsure, finally agreed, and she was right: It backfired. The film was shown perhaps five times and now has been archived forever. Most people could not relate to their lifestyle.

Many have watched the series *The Crown*, the historical drama based on historical facts, with a script of what could have transpired in the royals’ lives. It has drawn a huge audience and created much chatter. The series — for those who watch *The Crown* and who wait impatiently for the next chapter about their lives in some period of history — but some of the royal members are not happy with the portrayal or script, because although the conversations are fictional, many believe what they see and hear as gospel. Viewers, especially these days, can

be fickle and inconsistent on what they want to believe, but Her Majesty weathers it all.

Throughout her life, she has risen above the fray and continues to represent herself, her family, and her Commonwealth with dignity and grace. As the head of the House of Windsor, she always has the interest of her family at the front of mind to protect them, if possible.

From her sister, Margaret, and her scandals to the very public divorces of her children — Anne, Charles, and Andrew — she faced the world without us seeing a flinch. Strife seemed to peak with the horrifying death of the “people’s princess”, Diana, Princess of Wales. Diana was Prince Charles’ ex-wife and mother to the “heir and the spare,” William and Harry. The public waited for a message from Her Majesty, and when none came, they rebelled. They said the Queen had no feelings and was not giving their princess the proper respect. No one seemed aware that the Queen’s main concern was her grandsons, but she finally realized she was out of step and quickly travelled to London to make a public statement and appearance. Again, she did so with grace and dignity, and she was forgiven.

The movie with Helen Mirren — who did an amazing portrayal depicting this story in the 2006 major motion picture titled *The Queen* — it seems this story struck a chord with moviegoers around the world, as the film brought in \$123 million at the box office — probably the value of just one of Her Majesty’s crown jewels. The actress who played the Queen was already a Dame when she starred in the hit movie. Helen Mirren was bestowed the honour after her lengthy career.

So, through the movies, television, radio, and now social media, over her 70 years on the throne, you can say Queen Elizabeth has certainly fulfilled her leading role, and she has reached the significant plateau — 70 years as the Queen. And now, at age 95, Her Majesty still has all her faculties that have served her, the British people, the Commonwealth, and the world for all this time.

She does want to continue her work, as witnessed as recently as a few weeks ago. The Queen unfortunately had come down with a bout of COVID — not fun for anyone, even for a Queen; however, just a few days after recovery, she was photographed meeting with Canada’s Prime Minister. The duties continue if you are Her Majesty. It’s a quality certainly to be admired.

Beyond the obvious pageantry, the Crown functions as a safeguard for rights and freedoms, especially under special circumstances. It is part of our heritage and tradition, as well as our democratic practices.

Both the Monarchist League of Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion are so unhappy with Canada’s response to this historic time for the Commonwealth that they have taken the time to publicly voice their displeasure with the non-action from the current federal government.

Just think of the time frame, Mr. Speaker — from the 1950s to the 2020s and how society has changed, both for better and worse, and Queen Elizabeth has been there to witness and change with the times as best as she can adjust.

Our government in the national capital, Ottawa, consists of the Queen, the Senate, and the House of Commons. At the

provincial level, it is the Lieutenant Governor and the elected Assembly. In the territories, each has a Commissioner and an elected Assembly.

The mace bearing a crown that the Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for in this Chamber is the symbol of the legitimate right of the Legislature when in session to sit under the authority of the Crown.

In October 1987, Queen Elizabeth said — and I quote: “The Crown represents the basic political ideals which all Canadians share. It stands for the idea that individual people matter more than theories; that we are all subject to the rule of law. These ideals are guaranteed by a common loyalty, through the Sovereign, to community and country.”

I think everyone can get behind those words.

The current Governor General, Mary Simon, is our Queen’s representative in Canada. She was recently appointed and is the first indigenous Governor General. She resides at Rideau Hall, with a secondary residence at the Citadelle in Québec City.

Each province has a Lieutenant Governor appointed to represent their region of Canada on behalf of the Queen and reside in appropriate provincial government houses. In the three territories — the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut — a Commissioner is appointed by the Government of Canada to fill the role.

Territorial Commissioners are not direct royal representatives, but do the same duties as a Lieutenant Governor, such as read the Speech from the Throne, assent to bills, and sign most Yukon documents. Having had the pleasure of being Commissioner of Yukon from 2005 to 2010, it was amazing to see the interaction of all representatives from across Canada. I had the pleasure of serving with two Governors General: Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean and, later, His Excellency David Johnston. Both were wonderful people who started out with humble beginnings to serve in one of Canada’s most important positions.

I know that many Yukoners have had humble beginnings and have risen to achieve greatness in their own way. I believe that this motion speaks to the many Yukoners who wish to uphold the tradition of recognizing significant times in the life of the monarch. So, I lobby for the Government of Yukon to step up and help Yukoners celebrate. Each province is doing their own events, so why can’t we? I request that we strike a commemorative medal or made-in-Yukon pin. We could use this medal or pin to honour the many Yukoners who have made a contribution to our society in various ways.

Of utmost importance are the front-line workers who helped us these past two years during a very trying time of living through a pandemic.

As a collector, I personally know that memorabilia are lovely keepsakes and represent a time in one’s life that have significance and a special meaning. Of course, the Yukon government could not stop there, if they so choose. As 2022 is the year to celebrate this milestone, we are already three months in. Time is of importance to do something quickly.

As the federal government has definitely not done a good job of recognizing this special year, I request that the

Government of Yukon step up and be a champion for this motion for our Yukon people. If there is a thing or two that I do know, it is that citizens love ceremony and to be recognized for their work done for their community.

The second portion of my motion is a little more social, as I am sure that each community would welcome a contribution of any sort for them to host a community event — whether a tea, a street celebration, children’s games — the ideas are endless. This could be added to a celebration already happening or on the anniversary of Coronation Day, June 2.

It doesn’t have to be extravagant, but just something for people to honour the year in some celebratory way or in their own way. This is a prime opportunity after the pandemic and a gloomy couple of years to raise awareness of our head of state and to make some memories for all.

During the Queen’s last visit to Ottawa, she stated — and I quote: “During my lifetime, I have been a witness to this country for more than half its history since Confederation. I have watched with enormous admiration how Canada has grown and matured while remaining true to its history, its distinctive character and its values.”

Mr. Speaker, let us continue with making history and developing character for our youth and ensuring values are good and solid for the future. I believe that remembering the past, and understanding history and the links we have with other parts of the world, are to be celebrated. Let’s find the good in our Commonwealth country to celebrate this amazing woman who has seen so many changes in her time.

Every reference to history is both good and bad. Lately, our society tends to focus on the bad, so let’s look at the positives. Let’s try to be the society that initiates culture. I agree that there are events related to the Crown that are to be chastised. There are things about individual royals that we don’t much care for, but they are just people born into a position with not much choice for their destiny, especially the lead royals, like Prince Charles and now Prince William.

A community event honouring Her Majesty would give young Yukoners an opportunity to partially fulfill their dream by honouring Queen Elizabeth II. A recap of the years the Queen has celebrated with Canada: 1977, the Silver Jubilee, 25 years; 2002, the Gold Jubilee, 50 years; 2012, the Diamond Jubilee, 60 years; 2017, the Sapphire Jubilee, 65 years; and now the Yukon has the chance to add the year 2022 and the Platinum Jubilee of 70 years to this historic list. Let us put our focus on the longest reigning female monarch in history and on the service and duty given her whole life as a faithful servant: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

God Save the Queen.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise today in order to speak to Motion No. 288. This motion urges the Government of Yukon to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty by creating a commemorative medal to be awarded to first responders and EMS and those who have made significant contributions to Yukon. It also urges government to provide funding to interested communities for

the purpose of holding a celebration or community tea in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

I would like to thank my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, for bringing back this motion today. I'm looking forward to the debate and hearing from members about their thoughts on jubilee medals. A jubilee anniversary marks an opportunity for celebration and a chance to recognize achievement and dedication from Canadians.

Seventy years on the throne is certainly a special accomplishment throughout history. It is a unique time to share our collective appreciation for Canada, and jubilee medals have become a valued tradition for celebrating the jubilee. We only need to look back and see the celebrations that took place throughout the Commonwealth when royals are involved to understand the excitement and positivity it can bring.

In the Yukon in 2016, the royal visit by Prince William and Kate Middleton was one of the most anticipated events for years. The community rallied around the visit and the celebrations of the couple's popularity. Along Front Street and Main Street, Yukoners packed the barricades to catch a glimpse of Will and Kate. Businesses along the streets were decorated with the traditional bunting that we will see in Britain on June 5 for their street parties. Our current Yukon Party leader was part of the group to greet the royal couple in Carcross, as they toured the area.

The visit had international attention and brought excitement to the Yukon. Embracing that community spirit and excitement seems like something we all could use right now, because it has been difficult for Yukoners and for Canadians. Over the past two years of the pandemic, Yukoners have courageously fought the pandemic, but Yukoners are tired. Like all Canadians, Yukoners are near their limits and are ready for the end of the pandemic. If there was ever a time when we needed a celebration, it is now, as we begin to emerge from the pandemic and the restrictions that have been a struggle for so many. That's why I found it so disappointing that the Government of Canada is breaking with tradition and will not issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal in 2022 as part of the celebrations.

I would like to take some time to share why I think this is such a mistake for Canada. This seems like a lost opportunity to mark the occasion and, most of all, to thank Canadians who have provided positive contributions to our country, for example, all those health care workers who have worked tirelessly to keep us healthy and safe. What better way to celebrate than to thank those who have worked so hard to keep us safe? Like everyone, they have struggled during the pandemic but continued to work countless hours on the front lines. All parties in the Yukon have continued to express our thanks to health care workers. We did so again yesterday, as the Minister of Health and Social Services brought forward another tribute to COVID, this time marking the second anniversary of the pandemic in the Yukon.

On March 9, the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission told this House that we have had five tributes on COVID and a further 136 questions during Question Period that have addressed the pandemic. We have had many

other motions, news releases, statements, or debates that shared Yukoners' appreciation for health care workers and front-line workers.

In fact, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes shared many of those during his speech on March 9 this year. I think he had found that in the Legislature over the past two years, there have been five tributes on COVID. He noted that there have been at least 136 questions that have been asked, not even counting the supplemental questions. The member said that there had been at least two petitions that the government responded to, and he noted that he had also put forward a couple of motions. I might add that there have also been some joint statements and news releases from the government since I have been here, but I didn't track the exact number.

From what I have seen here, all parties have shared their thanks for the work done by health care workers during these debates. That's a lot of speeches; that's a lot of words. There have been many words of appreciation spoken over the past two years.

That's why I feel this Platinum Jubilee presents a different opportunity. It presents an opportunity for the federal government to put action to our words, to demonstrate our thanks with a special gift to those health care workers who have kept us safe during the pandemic.

We have spent so many words on appreciation. I do think that it is time we demonstrated that appreciation with a unique gift of jubilee medals — a truly unique gift that the federal government may never be in a position to award again.

In 2012, the Diamond Jubilee Medals were awarded to 60,000 to honour their contributions to Canada and achievements in their communities. The list included military, politicians, and famous and everyday Canadians who have made significant contributions to Canada or to a particular province, territory, region, or community within Canada.

Medals were awarded to a wide range of Canadians such as firefighters, police officers, community volunteers, and indigenous leaders. Canadian celebrities like Justin Bieber and Gordon Lightfoot received Diamond Jubilee Medals.

Mr. Speaker, some members of this Assembly might not be aware, but it was my great privilege and honour to be included in that group. I received a 2012 Diamond Jubilee Medal. Being a recipient of a 2012 Diamond Jubilee Medal is truly one of the best memories I have. There are other Canadians equally deserving over the past decade, and there are so many Yukoners and Canadians who have worked in health care over the pandemic and who equally deserve this recognition. That is why I feel that it is so important that we take this opportunity to thank those front-line workers who have done so much for Canadians these past two years.

I understand how the jubilee medal demonstrates Canada's and Canadians' appreciation for someone's work. However, I am hopeful that we might still see jubilee medals awarded.

I would like to take a moment to share why I think this motion is important to make that happen. By voting in support of this motion, Yukon MLAs could help reverse the decision of the Government of Canada, because a growing list of

organizations are lobbying the government, the Prime Minister, to award Platinum Jubilee Medals.

In February, the legion strongly opposed the decision to skip awarding jubilee medals and issued a news release asking the government to reconsider. The Monarchist League of Canada has expressed their disappointment as well. The Alberta government has decided to mark the occasion themselves with special events. Other provinces may follow.

So, perhaps there is an opportunity for the Yukon government to act if this motion does not yield results in Ottawa. However, it has been reported that Liberal backbenchers have organized and pushed to have the decision reversed; 96 Liberal MPs have written a group letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage asking that they introduce a Platinum Jubilee Medal. Perhaps we will see the Prime Minister reconsider his stance and take advantage of this great opportunity.

It would be wonderful if we could add the unanimous voice of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to this movement. Deserving Canadians should not miss out because of a poor decision.

Before closing, I would like to add a few more points about the importance of recognizing the Platinum Jubilee, particularly for new Canadians. A jubilee also presents an opportunity to learn more about our country and our history and new Canadians do not always share the same understanding of our country and how it was created. New Canadians do not always share the same understanding about the British monarchy and the Queen's role in Canada. Of course, part of the process for citizenship is passing the citizenship test. Some of the details are included in the test and the citizenship information kit provides the details, but that doesn't mean everyone really learns it or understands. There are even jokes that many people who are born Canadian citizens couldn't pass the test. Well, maybe that shows why we need to take those opportunities to educate and help everyone.

New Canadians take the Oath of Citizenship and swear allegiance to the Queen, but not everyone understands what that means or it could even mean different things to them. For example, Filipinos don't have experience as part of the Commonwealth. We are not part of a constitutional monarchy like in Canada. The Philippines is a republic with an elected president. There is no royal family now, but the House of Habsburg in Portugal was considered the royal family while the Philippines were claimed as a colony and became part of Spain from 1521 until the revolution in 1898. So, for Filipinos, the commonwealth is a 10-year transition period in our history.

From 1935 to 1945, the Commonwealth of the Philippines governed in preparation for independence from the United States. It was disrupted during Japanese occupation from 1942 until 1945 but gained full independence from the United States on July 4, 1946. So, jubilee celebrations help share our history and can help everyone learn more about Canada.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak of history, I know that we must acknowledge both the good and the bad. Filipinos understand, from our history as a colony of Spain and during Japanese occupation, that there were bad parts of the history indeed, but

last week, we saw an example of that work as Governor General Mary Simon met with the Queen. The Governor General reported that she had shared how Canada needs to address the historical wrongs of the past — and I quote: "... change Canada's history books so that young people could learn what the real history is, without necessarily pointing fingers."

Residential schools are part of Canada's history. Canada is working to make sure that new Canadians understand that part of history. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 93 in fact called upon the government to revise the new Canadian information kit and citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the treaties and the history of residential schools. Action 94 called for the oath of citizenship to include a provision to faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including treaties with indigenous peoples.

The history of residential schools is now part of the Canadian citizenship test, but often new Canadians don't fully understand it or know what it means, but it is part of Canada's Commonwealth history and we need to acknowledge it. Even a celebration like the Platinum Jubilee provides Yukoners and Canadians a chance to learn more about residential schools and how the Commonwealth shares that history. We should embrace all parts of the jubilee tradition to include as many Canadians as possible.

I know that I have spoken for a while, Mr. Speaker, and I am nearing the end of my time. I will be wrapping up soon, but I would just like to add a few more points on the importance of Platinum Jubilee Medals. In 2012, over 200 Yukoners were awarded Diamond Jubilee Medals. I can say first-hand what an honour it was to be included. I am sure that most of those Yukoners were as honoured and privileged as I am to have been recognized for our work. The medals are a way for Canada to show that we appreciate the accomplishments and work of Canadians to make our country better. Sharing in a celebration like the jubilee helps us celebrate being Canadian. It helps us celebrate and share our history, both the good and the bad. But most of all, it helps us recognize the work and accomplishments that speak to our shared values as Canadians by thanking those who make us proud.

During the pandemic, I can't think of a more deserving group or a group that has made us prouder than the health care workers who have kept us safe. That's why I was so pleased to see my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, bring forward this motion. I think we can safely say that none of us will be seeing another Platinum Jubilee in our lifetimes; 70 years is a long time; 70 years as the Queen is rare. The accomplishment itself may never be repeated. I haven't even spoken about the Queen herself and how she has served as a symbol for so many around the world.

I think my colleague did a very good job of sharing the Queen and her influence, so I was happy to focus on some other important points in support of the jubilee medals. I do encourage other members in the Assembly to vote in favour of this motion.

In closing, I would like to also suggest that, if we do unanimously support this motion, we will consider having it

forwarded to the Canadian Heritage minister. Doing that could only help the efforts by other Canadians lobbying the Prime Minister to change his mind and present Platinum Jubilee Medals, particularly to such deserving Canadians. That would be a welcome change of heart.

I will leave my comments there for today. Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: My comments will be brief.

I rise to respond to Motion No. 288, brought forward to the House by the Member for Porter Creek North. Motion No. 288 urges the Government of Yukon, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners Her Majesty's 70-year reign by: creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions that they have made to their community or to Yukon; and to provide funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2 in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

Mr. Speaker, our government will not be supporting this motion as the Commissioner of Yukon has already begun to plan celebrations for the 70 years on the throne of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Many of the details can now be found online at commissionerofyukon.ca.

On June 2, the Taylor House will be lit with purple lights in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee, and on June 3, a beautiful jubilee garden will be unveiled. The garden, which will be created by a local gardening centre, will be filled with beautiful flowers and a plaque will be put up in recognition of the jubilee.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, on June 11, the Commissioner's jubilee celebration will take place at the Dawson City Museum from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Both the Commissioner and a story laureate will be in attendance, and there will be commemorative pins given away to Yukoners. Cake and refreshments also will be served. I assume that there is a good chance that there will be a tea included and choice of refreshments available.

Yukoners attending are encouraged to wear period costumes, but they are not necessary to attend. I certainly hope and encourage all members of this Assembly who may have an opportunity to take the trip to beautiful Dawson City and the Klondike this summer to join the celebration.

Furthermore, that's not all, Mr. Speaker. There will be a jubilee garden party held on August 13 at the Commissioner's residence in Dawson. In the coming months, more information will be available with respect to this party.

As well, there is an exhibit at the Taylor House of all the royal visits to the Yukon since 1954. This includes a collection of books on the monarchy that guests can view. This exhibition will be available until the end of the calendar year.

As well, each Friday, the Commissioner does a jubilee Friday post on their Facebook page where they provide links to special events such as the new jubilee stamp and other events that are happening in relation to the Platinum Jubilee.

I would also like to highlight that Platinum Jubilee pins are already available at the Commissioner's office, which is open from Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that our government supports the Commissioner of Yukon's work to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee and that, by supporting this motion, we would be removing our confidence in the Commissioner's ability to properly observe this important celebration. In fact, our government has complete confidence in the Commissioner and we look forward to the extensively planned Queen's jubilee celebrations to happen over the course of this summer.

In the coming weeks, Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that the Commissioner will release more details on their plans to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee, and I am sure that all Members of the Legislative Assembly look forward to seeing those additional details and the schedule of events, which will be provided in due course.

As well, Yukoners may have seen the jubilee flag outside the Legislative Assembly in February as a kickoff to the jubilee celebrations. Of note, Mr. Speaker, we understand from the Commissioner's office that it was Her Majesty's wish that medals not be designed for the jubilee, given the hardship and suffering that the pandemic has caused. Some late-breaking research from my support people indicate that in the Commonwealth, as of right now, two countries have created jubilee medals, and they are Jamaica and the United Kingdom, which, of course, is a little bit problematic right now because Will and Kate are receiving a bit of a frosty reception in Jamaica based on the complex relationship that the United Kingdom has with many Caribbean countries and the legacy of slavery.

This does not negate the fact that our government does not recognize this momentous anniversary. Of course, Her Majesty is the longest reigning sovereign of Canada and, by virtue of that as well, the first to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Of course, I do agree with the observations made by the Member for Porter Creek North and the Member for Porter Creek Centre about how our Queen, Queen Elizabeth II, has always discharged her duties with grace, determination, and unflappable resolve during the seven decades of her reign. I have no intention of going into the impressive detail that the Member for Porter Creek North went into and some of the detail from the Member for Porter Creek Centre, but we all know that her unflappable resolve occurred initially before she was Queen, in the rubble that was the Blitz of London and the Battle of Britain. There are iconic photos of her supporting Londoners during that incredibly traumatic time, and, of course, we also know that she volunteered and was a member of the British Armed Forces during World War II. That was even before she became Queen, so this side of the House and I are not disputing the incredible service that Queen Elizabeth II has provided to the United Kingdom and to the Commonwealth.

The Yukon Liberal Party is a little bit surprised that the Yukon Party has chosen this as the second most important item to put forward to the Legislative Assembly on a Wednesday. As I have indicated —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Acting Speaker (Ms. Tredger): Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: I think that the last comment by the Member for Riverdale North may be in contravention of Standing Order 19(j), which prevents someone speaking disrespectfully of Her Majesty or any member of the royal family. I would ask that you rule on that matter.

Acting Speaker: Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I didn't hear any disparaging remarks toward the Queen. In fact, I think that the Member for Riverdale North has, throughout his presentation, been very respectful toward the Queen at all times. I think that he was pointing out that the members opposite chose this as their second most important topic to bring here to the Legislature.

Acting Speaker's ruling

Acting Speaker: This is a dispute between members. The Member for Riverdale North has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you. As I indicated in my prior comments, I have nothing but respect for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Although this is an important day for many Canadians across the country, I doubt that the celebrations are a top priority for Yukoners right now.

I know that Yukoners have many issues they would like our government to focus on, which of course include the climate emergency we face, mental health supports, critical infrastructure investments, and our ongoing response to the pandemic, to name a few. Instead, we are debating spending additional tax dollars on additional celebrations that are already being planned by the appropriate host.

I want to end by thanking the Commissioner of Yukon for her hard work to plan these celebrations and to ensure that Yukoners can meaningfully and significantly celebrate the Platinum Jubilee together. I look forward to the celebrations this summer, and I have full confidence in the Queen's representative and the Yukon's ability to successfully host them.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise in support of this motion. I would like to thank my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, for bringing forward this motion urging the government, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners by: creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions that they have made to their community or to Yukon; and providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2, 2022, in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Member for Porter Creek North for her service as Commissioner of the Yukon and note that one piece of information people may not

be aware of is — an interesting side note to the debate is that hanging on the wall in our office is one of the orders-in-council appointing me to Cabinet signed by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, back during her time as Commissioner of the Yukon.

I would like to talk about — beginning to rise and to speak to this motion — I would also like to acknowledge Queen Elizabeth II, particularly for her dignity and grace and her dedication and service to the Commonwealth. Even for those who may not personally be in favour of the monarchy, I would think and would hope that people would recognize her service to the Commonwealth, her dedication, and the very fact that she has dedicated her life to upholding the institution in the manner that she believes is appropriate.

I would note that, in stark contrast to most monarchies in history, this is a monarchy whose most defining feature, I would argue, is respect for democracy and democratic institutions, including the traditions within the British system, which has spread throughout the world through the Commonwealth and which dates back to the signing of the Magna Carta over 800 years ago. It has formed an important part of freedom and democracy around the world, including in countries such as the United States which, even while forming as republics — in that case, leaving the British system — they founded much of their system of laws and protections of the public on the traditions contained within British common law and on the legal system within the United Kingdom.

There are a few things that I want to make reference to in speaking about this. I would like to note, to begin with, that the Queen — the length of her reign begins with the first Prime Minister she worked with, who was Sir Winston Churchill. Her ongoing connection with prime ministers in Britain includes, typically as I understand it, weekly catch-ups with the Prime Minister, of which no record is kept, stretching over her 70-year reign. The chats range from the political to the personal, and over the years, stories have emerged that tell tales of how the Queen's meetings with Mr. Churchill often stretched from 30 minutes to two hours.

I would note as well that, as we are dealing with the world situation in Ukraine and the increasing concern about what some view as the rise of the Second Cold War, it is important to reflect back on the courage and the work of those who guided us through earlier troubling times in history, including the Second World War. I would note that the Queen has indicated, with regard to Mr. Churchill, that no other Prime Minister "... will ever for me be able to hold the place of my first prime minister, to whom both my husband and I owe so much and for whose wise guidance during the early years of my reign I shall always be so profoundly grateful."

Years later, when Churchill died in 1965, Queen Elizabeth II broke protocol by arriving at his funeral before his family. Protocol states that the Queen is supposed to be the last person to arrive at any function, but in this instance, she wanted to be respectful of Churchill and his family.

I would also note that, over the past seven decades, as noted by the Government of Canada, Queen Elizabeth II has been a constant presence in the lives of Canadians and has

witnessed growth and significant change in Canadian society. The Queen has cultivated enduring ties with Canadians over years of connecting with our rich cultures and traditions.

Throughout her reign, the Queen has made 22 official tours of Canada — more than any other Commonwealth country. Her travels have brought her east, west, and north to large cities, small towns, and tiny hamlets. She has met countless Canadians and been present for most important milestones and celebrations. Her Majesty has said, in multiple speeches, that she always regarded Canada as home and shares in the pride that we take in our achievements. As noted by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, in fact, she has been the Queen of Canada for more than half the time since Confederation.

In honouring Her Majesty and speaking to the value of this motion and the importance of both honouring the service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and speaking to the value of recognizing extraordinary contributions from Yukoners and front-line workers through the creation of a medal as proposed by my colleague, it is worth noting that, in stark contrast to most nations and empires, under Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, countries have had the democratic will of their citizens shown great respect by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

It is notable that Canada established its own Constitution and moved away from any formal control by the Parliament of Britain simply by asking nicely. Barbados has moved down the road of becoming a republic while maintaining membership in the Commonwealth — again, under Her Majesty's reign, simply by asking nicely.

I want to recognize, as my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, did — I believe that her words were that every reference to history is both good and bad. Of course, at some point, things have happened under the current monarch, or previously, that have not been perfect, and it is notable that, around the world, throughout the world, there is very little about the history of any country that is perfect, but we should celebrate what is good, and that includes, I would contend, acknowledging the service of Her Majesty to the Commonwealth and celebrating as well the contributions of those who are deserving of a medal.

I would also note that the Royal Canadian Legion supports this and has expressed concern and their disagreement with the federal government's decision not to recognize this with a Platinum Jubilee Medal. It was interesting that the Member for Riverdale North claimed to have some indication that the request had come from the Crown itself, and that would suggest that he may want to check his facts and if he has information we do not, to provide it. But the Royal Canadian Legion, I would note, representing veterans, has formally expressed their disagreement with the federal government's decision and has urged the creation of local recognitions, such as the one proposed by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North.

I just want to talk about the fact that the Queen, in her late teens, also participated in the war effort. After asking her father repeatedly to let her pitch in, Queen Elizabeth II — then an 18-year-old princess — joined the woman's Auxiliary Territorial Service during World War II. Known as second subaltern

Elizabeth Windsor, she donned a pair of coveralls and trained in London as a mechanic and military truck driver. The Queen remains the only female member of the royal family to have entered the Armed Forces and is the only living head of state who served in World War II. I think that's notable and commendable.

Mr. Speaker, I also just want to make reference to another bit of history about the Queen. It's notable, as members mentioned, that she has ruled for longer than any other monarch in British history and continues to carry out a full program of engagements. The Queen also, on her 21st birthday, famously declared in a speech broadcast on the radio from Cape Town: "I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service..."

It is fair to say that she has done just that. The Queen also said, according to the royal website — and I quote: "... I feel enormously proud of what the Commonwealth has achieved, and all of it within my lifetime." Again, I do think that it is worth commending and recognizing the service of the Queen and the fact that a big part of her legacy has been support for patronage and charities around the world in Commonwealth countries, as well as for acknowledging the service and contribution of citizens to their countries and to the Commonwealth.

I want to just briefly talk about some of the comments that Sir Winston Churchill made about the monarchy itself. It's noted, in doing research for this, that the Queen, as I mentioned — the first Prime Minister of Britain with whom she worked was Sir Winston Churchill — has, since that time, seen many prime ministers there and in Canada and other Commonwealth countries, and it's clear that the Queen was an admirer of Sir Winston Churchill, and Sir Winston Churchill was a great admirer of the Queen.

Sir Winston Churchill declared that constitutional monarchy was a practical instrument and a means of national self-preservation against every type of republic and every degree of dictatorship. He also noted: "These are the days when in other countries ignorant people are often disposed to imagine that progress consists in converting oneself from a monarchy into a republic. In this country we have known the blessings of limited monarchy. Great traditional and constitutional chains of events have come to make an arrangement, to make a situation, unwritten, which enables our affairs to proceed on what I believe is a superior level of smoothness and democratic progress."

I just want to note that whatever someone's views on a monarchy and whether we should be one or whether we should be a republic, I would think and would hope that all would acknowledge that Queen Elizabeth II has clearly respected what she believes is the duty of a monarch and made the monarchy, as I mentioned, one for which its most defining feature is respect for democracy, the democratic institution, and the will of citizens in Commonwealth countries. As Mr. Churchill referred to it, it has been a limited monarchy.

The British monarchy, Mr. Churchill said, "...has no interests divergent from those of the British people.' That is a principle Her Majesty the Queen has splendidly maintained

through all the trauma and heartbreak, the highs and lows of her long reign. Ever since as a girl of 21..." — that's what it said in what I am reading. Ever since she was 21 — I would rephrase the quote from what I was reading. She said that "... my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service."

It is fair to say that she has certainly done that through tragedy, through adversity, and been a source of continuity and tradition that is about respecting the democratic traditions and the rule of law within the Westminster system.

It has, of course, around the globe and here in this Legislative Assembly, resulted in that much of what we do is rooted in those traditions. While no traditions are perfect, it is important to recognize the good in what we have.

In 1951, Queen Elizabeth II made her first visit to Canada as Princess Elizabeth representing her father, King George VI. With her husband, Prince Philip, by her side, she travelled for 33 days from coast to coast and was enthusiastically greeted by thousands of Canadians. Of this visit, she said, "I am sure that nowhere under the sun could one find a land more full of hope, of happiness and of fine, loyal, generous-hearted people ... They have placed in our hearts a love for their country and its people which will never grow cold and which will always draw us to their shores."

Just a few months later, on February 6, 1952, the Queen acceded to the throne upon the passing of her father, King George VI. Days prior to her coronation, which took place on June 2, 1953, the Canadian Parliament passed the *Royal Style and Titles Act*, making her the Queen of Canada, the first monarch in Canadian history with this title.

In 1957, during her first official visit to Canada as Queen, Her Majesty read the Speech from the Throne, the first occasion in Canadian history that a sovereign has personally presided over the opening of Parliament. She would do so again in 1977.

I would just note for the reference of Hansard that I'm currently reading from information that can also be found on the Government of Canada's website.

In 1959, Her Majesty made a 45-day visit to Canada where she visited all 10 provinces and two territories and inaugurated the St. Lawrence Seaway a historic binational project, along with the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker, and the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In the early years of her reign, the Queen established a personal connection with Canada, becoming increasingly present and involved just as the country was struggling for a national identity of its own. At the start of the decade, the Queen approved and adopted her personal Canadian flag, which is used to indicate her presence in Canada.

In 1964, the Queen travelled to Prince Edward Island and to the cities of Québec and Ottawa to mark the centennial of the historic Charlottetown and Québec conferences that led to Confederation in 1867. While in Québec, she visited the Citadel and addressed the National Assembly in both official languages. In 1965, she proclaimed the red and white flag with a single maple leaf in its centre as the national flag of Canada, the foremost symbol of our national identity.

In June 1967, Queen Elizabeth II took part in Expo 67 in Montréal and then joined thousands on Parliament Hill in Ottawa for festivities to celebrate Canada's centennial on July 1. On the same day, the Order of Canada, one of Canada's highest civilian honours, was established under the authority of the Queen. Since then, more than 7,000 people from all sectors of society who have made a difference to this country have been invested in this order. I would note that one of them is the mover is this motion, the Member for Porter Creek North, who has been awarded this honour.

Mr. Speaker, I understand from your indication that my time to speak is running to an end, so I would just commend this motion to the House and urge all members to support it.

Ms. White: It has been an informative afternoon, definitely educational, and I really appreciate the enthusiasm that was brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North. I appreciate her history with the Office of the Commissioner and her love of these types of celebrations. I also recognize that we had a visitor for a good portion of the afternoon.

Although I appreciate the enthusiasm with which the Member for Porter Creek North brought forward this motion — and I appreciate what I heard from my other colleague in Porter Creek, as well — the NDP is not going to be supporting this motion. If it was just built on the enthusiasm of others, I would indeed.

We echo that it is a remarkable milestone that Queen Elizabeth II has reached with this 70th anniversary, and we know that many Yukoners are pleased to celebrate her accomplishments and longevity on the throne as head of the Commonwealth. I think that it is important that we mention right now that the person in this position also failed to protect the well-being of indigenous peoples, and especially children, in Canada. I am waiting for a point of order, to be honest.

I think that it is important, too, that we acknowledge that the history and relations with indigenous peoples in Canada have not been good. The legacy of residential schools almost overlaps with that. So, we can talk about the good things and we can talk about the other things, and to be honest, we have just seen a country saying that they want to separate and they want the acknowledgement of slavery. They were looking for that apology. So, although I appreciate, again, the enthusiasm with which this was brought forward, it is a hard one. I can refer to myself as, at times, definitely an uncomfortable member of the Commonwealth. For sure, swearing allegiance to the Queen was something that I had to think about. That was an interesting one, and I appreciate all the things that come along with the Commonwealth, but there are struggles.

In the Yukon, we believe that it is the Commissioner of the Yukon — the Queen's appointed representative — who is responsible for celebrations regarding the Queen.

To date, the Commissioner will be hosting jubilee events across the territory, in here and in Whitehorse, and we know that some events have already taken place, including the raising of the jubilee flag in February, the virtual exhibition, and more.

We also note that the federal government has offered funding for community celebrations to celebrate the Queen's jubilee. As communities in the territory bring forward their desire, we look forward to them hosting things.

But it is at times an uncomfortable history. Despite all the accomplishments and all the positives, there are things — and not just in Canada, but in 51 of the other Commonwealth countries. We can look toward Australia and New Zealand, with the Maori or the aboriginal people; we can look toward our Caribbean relatives as well. Again, if it was just based on the enthusiasm and the love shown by the Member for Porter Creek North, I would say yes, but there is so much more tied around with that, so the NDP will not be supporting this motion today.

Mr. Istchenko: So, I rise to speak to Motion No. 288, as brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North.

On February 6, 2022, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service. To celebrate this unprecedented anniversary event, some initiatives will take place throughout the United Kingdom — a chance for people to come together to celebrate this incredible milestone.

In line with the long history of lighting beacons to celebrate royal jubilees, coronations, and weddings, there will be over 1,500 beacons lit throughout the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and UK-overseen territories. For the first time, beacons will also be lit in each of the capital cities of the Commonwealth countries to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Mr. Speaker, the Queen has a long-established personal connection with Canada. I'm going to highlight a few that some of my fellow colleagues have, but I think it's important for what I have to say today.

She has made 22 official tours through Canada. She has said multiple times that she always regarded Canada as home and shares in the pride that we take in our achievements. I wanted to touch on just a couple of snapshots of her service in Canada. In 1965, the Queen proclaimed the red and white flag with the maple leaf as the national flag of Canada. On Canada Day in 1967, she joined thousands of Canadians on Parliament Hill to celebrate Canada's centennial. On the same day, the Order of Canada was established under the authority of the Queen. Since then, over 7,000 people from across the country have been invested into the order on account of the differences they have made to this country.

We just so happen to have one of these people seated among us here today, which is the Member for Porter Creek North. I am sure that we are all aware that the Queen has taken part in some incredibly significant events in Canadian history. In 1982, she signed the proclamation that patriated our Constitution. This gave Canada complete independence from British law and brought about the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which we hear in this House and discuss through our Westminster system.

The Queen has visited Canada to officially open the Olympic and Commonwealth games. She has dropped the

ceremonial puck at an NHL game, joined by great Canadians Cassie Campbell and Wayne Gretzky; they are Canada's hockey greats. She has toured the north and celebrated the creation of Nunavut in 2002 and has been present for centennials, anniversaries, and other notable events across the country for decades.

For decades, she has been there. In 2002, Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Golden Jubilee, marking her 50-year reign. During her tour that year, she travelled to the new territory of Nunavut, which she established in 1999. This visit marked a milestone in the Queen's relationship with the north and its people.

Canada celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty in 2012, marking the 60th anniversary of the Queen in Canada. On September 9, 2015, another milestone was passed when she became our longest reigning sovereign, officially surpassing the reign of her great-grandmother, Queen Victoria. In 2021, Queen Elizabeth II sent a message to the people of Canada to mark our first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. She said — and I quote: "I join with all Canadians on this first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to reflect on the painful history that Indigenous peoples endured in residential schools in Canada, and on the work that remains to heal and to continue to build an inclusive society."

Indigenous people from across Canada have played a significant part in the Queen's role in Canada. In fact, in 1953, hereditary Chief Joe Mathias of the Squamish Nation attended her coronation in London. This year, as we celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, we reflect on our history as Canadians. It is complex. We look back on our many accomplishments and, as we heard earlier from the Leader of the Third Party, some of the challenges that have brought us to this point in time. Over the past seven decades, our sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II, has been with us on our journey. She has participated in our triumphs, shared in our sorrows, and has been witness to our growth as a nation.

On a personal note, my grandfather, Ron Watson, was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal for all that he did during the war and after the war, building our community of Haines Junction and the communities up the north Alaska Highway.

I was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal from my unit, 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, for contributions to the Canadian military and to my community. As we know, we've heard that a number of colleagues on this side of the House have also been awarded a jubilee medal, and chances are that each one of us in here in today knows someone who has also received one.

I was pretty proud to be a Ranger when I was on the tarmac, when William and Kate came, to do an honour guard. I was also very honoured to be part of the Governor General's change-of-command parade in Ottawa in 2005. In light of where we are today in society and what's happening over in Europe, the Governor General, who is the viceregal federal representative for the Queen in Canada — the Governor General was Adrienne Clarkson at the time, and she was leaving office. She had huge focus on the Canadian Ranger program. She was the

first one to be here in the Yukon to give out special service medals to rangers who were dedicated in the ranger program, focusing on the north, letting the world know that we have a military in the north and that Arctic sovereignty is very important to us.

The Queen actually served in World War II, as we heard earlier, and fought together as our allies against Hitler. That's what makes our country what we are today. She has been a huge influence on awards and decorations in our country. Every year on Remembrance Day, communities across the country remember those who sacrificed and those who have served. An important part of that ceremony is the singing of *God Save the Queen*, showing that Her Majesty is an integral part of our military history and the freedoms that we recognize today.

So, as the motion says, creating something in the Yukon for her 70th would be appropriate, in light of all we have been through in the past few years. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it would be an honour to have something to present to deserving Yukoners.

The motion brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North — I just want to highlight how important that would be, in light of two years in a pandemic: an opportunity to recognize and thank hardworking individuals who have made a difference to their community and to Canada during the pandemic.

The Minister of Highways and Public Works spoke earlier about some of the things that will be happening — some of the celebrations — but I didn't hear him mention Beaver Creek; I didn't hear him mention a bunch of communities. Yes, there is a tea in Dawson, and there are some events, but having a medal that we could have at every community, that a chief, a mayor — someone — could present to those who were there for us during this tough time, during this pandemic, I think is needed.

I'm a little bit disappointed and bewildered in our country today that there's actually not a plan federally to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal. Other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, are doing something, and I think the Yukon should. Of course, I support this motion — 135 percent — or 180 percent. I wish and I would encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this motion. Thank you for your time today.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 288 as brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North.

Now, the motion reads: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners by creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions that they have made to their community or to Yukon; and providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2, 2022, in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

Now, on February 6 of this year, Her Majesty the Queen became the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Seventy years as Queen — 70 years of service to the

people of the United Kingdom, the realms, and the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth of Nations, Mr. Speaker, includes Canada, which celebrated its confederation on July 1, 1867.

Canada became the first independent country within the British Empire. The British Commonwealth of Nations was adopted and formalized during the 1926 Imperial Conference in the Balfour Declaration. Britain and its dominions agreed they were equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Today, we use the term "Commonwealth" to describe this humanitarian coalition of countries. It was formalized with the 1931 Statute of Westminster.

It is devoted to the development of free and democratic societies and the promotion of peace and prosperity to improve the lives of all of the people in the Commonwealth. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state of 15 member states, or the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth realms, each of which recognize the Queen as their monarch. The Commonwealth itself consists of those 15 member states, 34 other republics, and five others that have different monarchs.

In 1931, Newfoundland was one of the founding states of the Commonwealth, in addition to Canada. It reverted back to British rule in 1934 for a time, but merged with Canada in 1949 to become the province we know today. I think that this little bit of Commonwealth history is important. It helps for Canadians to understand the importance of what it means to be a Commonwealth country and to understand how Canada fits into this group of nations.

It is unfortunate that this motion had to be brought forward in the first place. Seventy years is an incredible milestone. Traditionally, these milestone anniversaries of the Queen's reign have been celebrated nationally and throughout the Commonwealth. We have long celebrated these milestones in Canada and we have a long history of issuing jubilee medals to honour-deserving Canadians.

This year, the Government of Canada announced a series of initiatives to mark the Queen's 70 years of service. It was said that Canada has no plans to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal, however. The Member for Porter Creek North brought forward a motion in May 2021. This motion urged the Government of Canada and the Chancellery of Honours to maintain a Canadian tradition of creating and awarding a jubilee medal to recognize Her Majesty's reign and to honour deserving Canadians — to honour Canadians who have made a significant contribution to their region or community, who have made their community and their country better.

COVID-19 has impacted every jurisdiction, region, and community across the country. This is an opportunity to recognize some of the incredible contributions from front-line workers — those who have been serving their communities throughout the pandemic, since day one.

It is a missed opportunity on a national level. It is a break from Canadian tradition — and no explanation from the federal government for doing so. The motion we are debating today is

about honouring this tradition on a regional level, a chance to honour deserving Yukoners who have stepped up to provide service and assistance to their neighbours and communities during an unprecedented, confusing, and somewhat scary time.

Health care professionals, law enforcement, educators, essential front-line service workers — we have thanked them here in the House as recently as yesterday. We have been through a lot in the past two years. Over the course of these two years, we have seen a resiliency throughout our territory that is unlike anything we have seen before. We have seen our neighbours, families, and friends rally around each other through periods of isolation. We have seen Yukoners come out in droves to support businesses to ensure that they did not have to shutter. Of course, we know that not all businesses were so lucky.

Health care professionals, EMS, law enforcement, educators, and those who delivered essential services all worked to keep things going. Everyone has felt the effects of the pandemic in one way or another. Many have worked tirelessly to get us through it. We have seen a number of unintended negative impacts on society. We have seen a serious decline in mental health for many. We have seen a serious increase in drug overdoses. We have seen routine health care put on the back burner. We have seen so much division in our community in the face of this pandemic — family and friends with invisible lines drawn between them. Through this, Yukoners persevered. There are so many incredible Yukoners who deserve our thanks and recognition. Jubilee medals have always provided us with the opportunity to do just that and to thank and recognize those who have made their communities a better place.

Regardless of how Canadians feel on an individual basis about the monarchy, 70 years is an incredibly long time for an individual to do any job. The Queen's position in Canada is symbolic in nature but truly significant to many. Her Majesty has been Queen for my entire life. The monarchy remains an important part of Canadian history. Queen Elizabeth II, as head of state, has dedicated her life to humanitarian efforts. As such, it is certainly fitting that we continue to honour Canadians who have done the same on this 70th anniversary of her reign.

The second part of this motion speaks to the Government of Yukon providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a celebration or tea on June 2 to allow community members to come together in celebration, and this is not something that we have been able to do in some time. I know that a large number of my constituents would be happy to have an opportunity to gather in celebration of this remarkable woman.

It would certainly be a great thing to not only be able to celebrate Her Majesty, but also to take the opportunity to recognize exemplary members of our community. Recently, the recipients of the 2020-21 Community Safety Awards were announced, and I am pleased to hear how the Watson Lake System Navigation Project was one of these recipients. Led by Angela Miller and Sue Rudd, this project has been operating in the community for four years and provided outreach and navigation support for individuals living with

neurodevelopmental disabilities. This program has helped to improve health, mental wellness, and safety for people in Watson Lake. I would like to thank Angela and Sue for their continued work in our community.

John Moses was another recipient, as a volunteer for EMS in Watson Lake. John has worked extensively throughout the community and takes on a number of roles, wherever he is needed. His continued advocacy of safety and security for the marginalized population is appreciated, and I am happy to see recognition for his actions.

I am happy to see each of these individuals recognized for their contributions to society, and these are only the most recent nods to the incredible work done in my community. There are others in Watson Lake who deserve recognition for the work that they do and the time that they dedicate to their community.

I know that this is true in each and every community across the Yukon. It is these types of contributions that have been considered historically for jubilee medals. We have seen considerable efforts put in by a number of Yukoners throughout the pandemic — individuals who have gone above and beyond to ensure that Yukoners remain informed, supported, and safe throughout the last two years. We have seen EMS workers provide unwavering support to our community, even in the early days when we didn't quite know how this virus would impact our communities. Vaccination and testing teams worked to ensure our safety, travelling throughout the territory and responding to community outbreaks with calm and professionalism.

I believe that these are some of the acts that should be recognized with Platinum Jubilee Medals. I think that this is an opportunity to celebrate those who have dedicated their time and expertise to their community and shown what it means to be a Yukoner.

I do note that the Member for Riverdale North commented on his opinion that opposition private members' day should be spent talking about something else. He didn't say what — anything else, I guess. I was quite offended by that, I must say.

I understand that the government and their coalition partners are not going to be voting in support of this motion. I think that's a real shame. I think it's a lost opportunity.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak to Motion No. 288, as brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North.

While I've always respected the monarchy, I would never refer to myself as a strong monarchist, but 70 years really is an impressive feat. February 6, 2022 is the day that actually marked this incredible milestone — the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Now, we know that over 1,500 beacons will be lit throughout the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, and the UK's overseas territories. However, here in Canada, there don't even appear to be plans to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal. I think that this is very unfortunate.

Queen Elizabeth II has a long-established personal connection with Canada. As we've heard from other members today, she had done 22 official tours through Canada during her reign. It was on one of those trips that she was met by some

Yukon First Nation chiefs who were travelling to Ottawa, and one of those chiefs was a former Speaker of this Legislative Assembly and a very good friend of mine, Mr. Sam Johnston. Sam has told me this story on more than one occasion — about that particular day and how it will always be fondly remembered as one of the most honourable days in his career when he was able to meet the Queen.

Now, this year, the proposal for the Platinum Jubilee Medal is to recognize and be presented to a very important and crucial group in our community. It's proposed to recognize admirable service for military and RCMP personnel, to first responders, teachers, long-term care workers, and others. So, you may ask: Why is it so important to recognize this incredible milestone at this time? Well, there is a very good answer that comes to mind quickly — for me anyway and hopefully for a lot of people in this Legislature. Our health care professionals and first responders have been so essential to protecting our community and protecting public health, and the world is, quite frankly, in a place we've never seen before. Two years ago, as we all know, the world as we know it was turned upside-down by this thing called "COVID". It has really blown things up and changed much in our world. In two years, our communities have been put under significant stress and pressure, and mental issues are on the rise. The pandemic itself has had a very strange effect on people. I know that others have mentioned this today, but people really were scared and confused. From the beginning of the pandemic, people were worried about their health, to the last couple of years when economic impacts have led to job losses, closure of businesses. People have gone from living paycheque to paycheque to trying to figure out how they are even going to make a mortgage payment. Entire livelihoods have been thrown away as a result.

The social impacts have been just as devastating to our small community. COVID became the most polarizing issue in recent history, pitting people against people and even causing division between family members. At the beginning of the pandemic, lack of knowledge about the virus was creating havoc. In addition to those impacted by the closure of businesses, there were also essential businesses that stayed open during the pandemic so that our society could continue to operate. While it is true that some people had the ability to continue to do their jobs from the safety of their own homes, many others didn't actually have that luxury.

Mr. Speaker, "front-line workers" became a very common phrase, even here in this Legislature. Those front-line workers were everyone from health care workers to grocery store clerks to truck drivers. They are the people who essentially keep us alive and moving every day. They couldn't stay at home to work, even if they wanted to. They kept our hospitals open, they kept our ambulances running, they kept our health care systems working, and they did so much more. These individuals were quite literally on the front lines. It's important to recognize them and show them that this Legislature values their work, their sacrifices, and the countless hours of overtime that they put in to keep this entire territory safe and operating.

Now, over the past number of months, we've praised our front-line workers. We've given tributes here in the Legislature

and said kind words. We've even put up signs thanking the truckers, even though recent history shows us that the Liberals may not have actually appreciated those truck drivers as much as we thought, but that's another story.

Despite all of these praises for our front-line workers and our front-line EMS and all of those people who sacrificed for two years for our community, the government has not always shown their support for these individuals.

Last fall, a strange thing took place, and these mandates were imposed. Many individuals who had sacrificed for our community and had been praised were actually forced out of work. In effect, government went from praising these people to actually shunning and vilifying many of them. Right here in the Yukon, there are people we praised just six months ago who are now unable to work today because of this.

I often use the front-line workers and the EMS crew in Ross River as a great example of a group of individuals who did all we could possibly ask in the worst of possible times. They put in overtime. They worked whenever we needed them to. They were on the front lines of COVID. They were dealing with sick people. They made personal sacrifices to keep our communities safe, but despite all of these efforts, they had their knees cut right out from under them by the government mandates. That's why it is so important to support something like the jubilee medal to honour those front-line workers.

Government shouldn't be vilifying them. We should be honouring them. When our society is divided, it can certainly create tougher times for all of us.

We haven't seen darker times here in the Yukon, I don't believe. Addictions are at an all-time high, the number of opioid deaths is staggering, and people have been forced to shut down businesses and lay off employees. Many of those employees had been faithful to those businesses for a number of years. Thankfully, it appears that the light is beginning to shine again. We see spring slowly coming back to us and the world of COVID begins to regain some normalcy. Now we have a glorious opportunity to show our appreciation for those people who really stood out and helped others through those dark days.

I would like to speak about some of the other groups that would be honoured under the proposal for the Platinum Jubilee, and that, of course, is military personnel and RCMP. Those individuals are also essential front-line heroes in our communities. In fact, with world events the way they are today — we have Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine — now even more than ever we see the importance of our veterans and our currently serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We never want armed conflict, but when it does happen and when democracy is under attack, we need them. They literally put their lives on the line for us, so it is important to recognize the efforts of these individuals and their sacrifices. From support through benefits and pensions, we must all continue to fight for these individuals to be recognized and honoured.

The debate today is about how we can honour them. An incredible way to do this would be to support the creation of a Platinum Jubilee Medal for the Yukon so that all Yukon veterans and service members know that they are cherished members of our society. I certainly had hoped that the other two

parties in the Legislature would see the importance of this today; unfortunately, it doesn't sound as if they will be supporting this motion.

The RCMP is another important front-line group that keeps our community safe. Every day, they respond to calls and, in the line of their everyday duties, they are quite literally, again, putting their lives on the line.

A routine traffic stop or routine response to a safety issue on a lake or a river — this is not a safe job and the members of the RCMP wake up every day knowing this, but they still don the suit and off they go. We all know that without them, our communities would certainly be less safe.

So, again, I think this is a perfect example of why this topic of debate is so important here today. The RCMP — they are there every day to keep us safe and to respond when they're needed most. They really should be honoured. They should be respected and it's just another example of why I think the creation of this Platinum Jubilee Medal would be an excellent opportunity to do just that.

Teachers are the backbone of our society. They teach our children and they set up the next generation for success. Quite simply, without teachers, our society would be nowhere. Throughout the pandemic, teachers kept showing up to work, teach our students, and keep our education system going. Despite the risk of COVID, they showed up and they got it done. That was crucial and it was appreciated. That frankly was a sacrifice and I want to say thank you to all of the teachers. Thank you for helping our students, not just with education, but with mental health supports throughout the pandemic. This was a difficult time and, for many, teachers made it easier. We know that the government may not have always been there for the teachers during this time. They maybe didn't always listen or provide the supports that they needed or give clear direction about what was required during the pandemic, but the community as a whole recognizes their sacrifices.

We know that Alberta has taken the opportunity to provide some 7,000 residents with a Platinum Jubilee Medal to honour them for their significant contributions to society. So, why would we in the Yukon not take advantage of this opportunity to recognize Yukoners who have made significant contributions to society right here?

Now, the second part of the motion talks about providing funding to communities that may wish to hold a community tea or celebration on June 2 to honour Her Majesty's 70-year reign. I can tell you that, as a resident from a small town here in the Yukon, people are looking for something to celebrate.

This would provide communities with important opportunities to hold community events, to bring everyone together, and to start the healing process. People need a reason to be happy and join together in harmony, and this is a glorious opportunity to do just that.

So, as I said at the beginning, I am not much of a monarchy guy, but I do think that this is a perfect opportunity to show our support not only for the Queen and her 70 years, but also for citizens of the Yukon who deserve a little extra recognition. I certainly hope to see this motion pass the House, even though, from what I have heard, it probably won't. But, again, I would

like to thank the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this motion forward. I do believe that it is an important issue, and I hope that it gets the recognition that it deserves.

Mr. Kent: I am going to be brief in my remarks here this afternoon. I know that a number of colleagues have spoken to this motion and I, too, would like to join them in thanking the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this forward. Like many of my colleagues, and like many Yukoners, we were certainly disappointed in the decision by Canadian Heritage not to honour the Platinum Jubilee with the issuance of a medal. I know that, on a number of occasions in this Legislature during my time here, we have honoured veterans, and we have honoured members of the legion, so I think that it is appropriate to read into the record a legion press release from February 23, 2022. It states — and I quote: “The Royal Canadian Legion is disappointed and bewildered to hear our country does to plan to issue a Platinum Jubilee medal in 2022. A recent media report confirmed the decision by the Department of Canadian Heritage. This year commemorates the 70th anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's ascension to the throne.” And then a quote from the dominion president, Bruce Julian: He says — and I quote: “I am saddened by this decision ... A unique medal would also have allowed us an opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding service of fellow citizens.”

My understanding, from this news release, is that the Legion for close to two years was advocating for having a Platinum Jubilee Medal presented to Canadians who have made a real difference in their communities. I think the important part from this legion press release is that it would recognize admirable service from military and RCMP personnel to first responders, teachers, long-term care workers, and others.

Mr. Julian goes on to say that he hopes the decision not to produce a medal will be reconsidered.

So, the legion is Canada's largest veteran support and community service organization. They are a non-profit organization. They have a national reach and 1,350 branches across Canada, including those in the Yukon. They also have branches in the United States and Europe, and they have 250,000 members, many of whom volunteer an extraordinary amount of time. We certainly recognize that from the local legion here in Whitehorse, branch 254, with the incredible amount of work they do in the community and the support they provide to veterans, as well as the broader community, through donations to organizations, such as the Yukon Hospital Foundation and others. They're an incredibly important part, and I think their voices should be respected and considered when it comes to what we're doing here.

I also have a note from the Monarchist League of Canada in which they — the title of this is that 96 Liberal Members of Parliament write to the Heritage minister asking that a jubilee medal be issued. In that — I'll just quote from the first part of this. It says, “After reporting to you earlier that the Government seemed adamant in its decision not to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal in the Canadian tradition, it was heartening to learn that a large body of Liberal backbenchers have written a group letter

to the Minister of Canadian Heritage asking that such a Medal be struck. It might have had much more effect had such an effort been mounted many months ago, when so many monarchists felt very much alone in their advocacy, rather than after a decision was announced.”

This goes on to talk a little bit more about the importance of the Queen and other aspects of why a medal should be issued. But, of note, as I mentioned, there are 96 Liberal MPs who have signed this, according to this document. Many long-term Members of Parliament and many new Members of Parliament, including Brendan Hanley, the newly elected Member of Parliament for the Yukon, has also signed on to this.

While Liberals in this Legislature don't appear to support the issuance of a medal, their colleague, the former chief medical officer of health and the current Member of Parliament for the Yukon, has signed on to this letter to the Heritage minister asking that a jubilee medal be issued. We thank Member of Parliament Hanley for that, and hopefully that gets some traction at the federal level. I am not confident that it will, and that's why I think that it is important that we are here talking about this motion today from the Member for Porter Creek North.

Colleagues have talked about what other jurisdictions have done, most notably, what we have seen in Alberta. There was a bill introduced on February 22 of this year. The minister responsible was the Minister of Culture and Status of Women. Bill No. 1, which was entitled *Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Recognition Act*, celebrates Her Majesty's 70 years of reign and honours her legacy of public service. The act would establish awards and scholarships to recognize Albertans who have helped change Alberta for the better through volunteerism, public service, and community leadership. Again, I think that this links back to what the Legion was looking for, as far as teachers, first responders, and health care workers who have given so much through the pandemic.

Of course, when it comes to the royals, there is a strong Yukon connection going back to the 1950s. Queen Elizabeth, at that time, did a 45-day visit to Canada and visited every jurisdiction, including the Yukon. Obviously, that was an exciting time for many Yukoners who were here during that time. More recently, in 2001, Prince Charles visited the Yukon, with stops in Whitehorse and Mayo. I was a member of this Legislature at that time — the Member for Riverside, the former riding of Riverside — and had the opportunity to meet Prince Charles when he was here. I know that he very much enjoyed his trip to Mayo. I, along with colleagues at the time, enjoyed meeting with him here in Whitehorse upon his return from Mayo. I remember, at the time, we gathered in small groups in the room so that the prince could come through the room and talk to us. I was with the former Member for Klondike, the late Peter Jenkins, and his wife, the late Karen Jenkins.

It was a very special time, I think, for us as opposing politicians — or politicians on different sides, representing different parties — but to come together to meet with Prince Charles at that time was quite exciting. Of course, 15 years later in 2016, I had the opportunity to attend events around that royal

visit, as a Member of the Legislature for the riding of Riverdale North at the time. Of course, William and Kate came and visited Whitehorse and got to meet with the late Doug Bell at the MacBride Museum, as well as visit with many constituents in Whitehorse and went out to Carcross as well.

I think the royal family has a long and dedicated connection to our country and to our territory. The Queen has made 22 official tours of Canada, more than any other Commonwealth country during her 70 years of service.

I know my family and I are strong monarchists. We're very appreciative of the Queen and that she does represent our country and that indeed, when we swear our oaths, we swear allegiance to the Queen — Queen Elizabeth — the second Queen of Canada.

I think that this is a very timely motion, and it's a very important motion. Without the federal government supporting it — and again, hopefully the Liberal MPs, including our Member of Parliament, Brendan Hanley, and the letter is effective with the Liberal government in getting them to change their mind. But if they don't, I think that adopting this motion here today and voting in favour of it would be a great way for us in the Yukon to honour members of our community — very deserving members of our community — with this and allow for those celebrations that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin referenced to take place in many of our communities. I certainly agree with him that, now that COVID-19 restrictions have been loosened and eliminated in many cases, gatherings and people getting back together and looking for reasons to celebrate is something that I've heard many are looking forward to for this summer and, of course, the many months going forward.

With that, I will conclude my remarks and indicate that I will be supporting this motion here today. I am hopeful that perhaps others across the way will change their mind and agree to support this motion, especially given what is happening with their Liberal colleagues in Ottawa and this letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this, and again, thank you to the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this important motion forward here today.

Mr. Dixon: I will be fairly brief in my comments. I would like to speak about this more, but, of course, we are somewhat limited in our time today. This is something that I have supported and felt strongly about for some time now. I want to begin my comments by thanking sincerely the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this motion forward. I think it is something that is extremely positive and is an extremely genuine endeavour to bring forward a motion of this nature and offer up a suggestion for the government as to how they should respond to the decision by the federal government not to issue the Platinum Jubilee Medal.

I have a lot to say about the role of the Crown in our country and the important role that the Queen has played in the development of our nation, but I will limit my comments, due to time, to a few specific issues.

I was a Member of the Legislative Assembly back in 2012 when the Queen had her Diamond Jubilee, and I was so

honoured to receive a letter from then-Commissioner, Mr. Phillips, which included a number of celebratory comments, but also noted that it would have been an honour — in his words, at least — to receive nominations for the Diamond Jubilee anniversary, which was being celebrated in 2012. Back then, I believe that it was in the neighbourhood of close to 60,000 Canadians who were honoured in 2012 with a Diamond Jubilee Medal. Since this issue has been in the news in the last year or so, I have heard from a number of those folks who received medals, and I can say that, almost universally, folks find it to be an incredible honour and one that they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

I remember seeing one particular individual — Adam van Koeverden, who is a former Olympian and now Liberal Member of Parliament — talking about how he received the medal from Stephen Harper. While he was no fan of Prime Minister Harper in the slightest, the recognition coming from the Crown was what he took a lot of pleasure in. It is something that he reflected on just last week in the media — about how important it was to him. That was some of the impetus for the most recent letter that has been sent by Liberal MPs from across the country, including our own here in Yukon, which is urging the federal government to reconsider its decision. Indeed, Mr. van Koeverden is a signatory to that letter. I hope that the federal government reconsiders that with pressure from their own caucus to revisit that decision.

In light of the decision to forego the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal, a number of people in civic society have raised their voices. We have heard the Monarchist League; we have heard the legion — all have taken a strong position urging the government to take action. I do note the Monarchist League's comment about the letter from the Liberal MPs. First of all, they certainly welcomed it, but they also noticed one profound inaccuracy in it, which was that the letter referred to the "British monarch". The fundamental error there is that this is with respect to the Canadian monarch — to the Queen of Canada. The second thing that they noted was that it would have been nice if this had come earlier. I certainly echo that.

It also causes me to recall the motion tabled by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, last year to this very same effect, so this is not a new issue for us. This is an issue that we have been tuned into since last year when the rumblings began and the federal government was considering not awarding a Platinum Jubilee. That was the impetus, as I understand it, behind the motion that the Member for Porter Creek North put forward last year. It is one that we even considered calling for debate then.

This motion, of course, is calling on the Yukon government to step in and fill in the gap in leadership where the federal government had left off. We have seen that in other jurisdictions. Alberta, as has been referenced by my colleagues, tabled similar legislation to create a medal there. That is great, although it has been pointed out to us that, while that is welcomed and appreciated, a medal issued by the provincial government does not carry the same recognition or weight as one delivered by the federal government and, of course, the Governor General.

While we knew that there were some practical limitations to the issuance of a territorial medal, we thought that something was better than nothing and that it was indeed a worthwhile endeavour to consider offering a territorial-level medal.

I wanted to say a little bit more about the role of the Crown in our country and our democracy as a foundational piece of our Constitution. Unfortunately, time just won't permit me to do that. I will leave that for another day and perhaps another debate.

I will conclude by again thanking the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this motion forward. I would reiterate my disappointment that it won't pass and that we won't be issuing a Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal here in Yukon. My primary disappointment is with the federal government for not issuing one from the federal government. I had hoped the Yukon could step in and fill the gap, and unfortunately, that's not going to be the case.

Like many of my colleagues, I look forward to celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee throughout the next year. I look forward to the events that are planned for this year. At every opportunity, I will be sure to wear the medal that we've been gifted — each one of us — which was a gift from Her Majesty or from the Governor General, who is her representative here.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude. Again, for a final time, I urge my colleagues to reconsider and consider supporting this motion to enact this motion and to take action to honour the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the words that were spoken today from all sides. It was an interesting debate. A little history — as the Leader of the Third Party said — I think is important.

This motion was primarily to speak to the celebration as a nation to celebrate the Queen's 70th year of reigning — the longest reigning female monarch, as I had stated.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition just stated, to be an official medal, the award must be sanctioned by the Government of Canada. I was told by a military member that if it's a provincial or territorial medal, it can't be worn with the official medals.

So, hopefully, those members of the House of Commons who are trying to overturn the government's thoughts on this will succeed. However, my motion was to have a local medal, and that would be just what it is — Yukon memorabilia. But as we said, it would be something. The main point of the motion was to recognize the well-deserved front-line workers. That's who this medal would have been given to.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to share.

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: 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. Tredger: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are eight yea, nine nay.

Speaker: The nays have it.

I declare the motion defeated.

Motion No. 288 negatived

BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS**Bill No. 304: Act to Amend the Education Act —
Second Reading**

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 304, standing in the name of Ms. Tredger.

Ms. Tredger: I move that Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

Ms. Tredger: I am very happy and very excited to be talking about this bill on the floor of this House today.

I want to start by talking about the students who were outside this Legislature today and then sat in our gallery today. They came down from Porter Creek to talk about how important this bill is to them, how important it is for them to have safe spaces in their schools, and how they are willing to make signs and show up with flags and stand in front of our Legislature to talk about how important it is.

They gave me this bracelet, which I am so excited to be wearing. I told them that, when I talked today, I would be wearing this bracelet and I would be thinking about them. That is what I intend to do, is think about them, and I actually am going to ask us all to do that today so that when we are having this conversation, we are putting students at the centre of it — that we are thinking about what our LGBTQ2S+ students need to feel safe in their schools, because conversations get complicated with adults. There are so many interests and so

many things happening, but I think that if we can bring it back to what is at the heart of this — students — I think that the way forward is really clear.

That is actually where this bill started, was in conversations with students. I was speaking with students and talking about what they were facing, and the stories they told me were sometimes very hard to hear. They told me stories of being supported, of having family and community who supported them, and other students told me that they didn't have that. They told me that they wanted community. They told me about their desire for peer support. They also told me stories of desperation, stories of being afraid for their mental health and not knowing where to turn for help, and so I said: "What can we do? What can we do?" They said something that would help is knowing that we have support at school, knowing that we have a safe place to go when we are at school.

I think that is so important, because the LGBTQ2S+ community has faced such challenges over the years and continues to face such challenges. It is true; lots of things have gotten better, and I am so grateful for the work of activists, community members, and allies who have really pushed us to a place where we haven't been in a long time, but it is still tough, and it is especially tough for youth.

There are a lot of statistics that I could read to you. I have read many of them in this House before. I could talk about how a Canadian study found that 65 percent of transgender youth ages 14 to 18 have seriously considered suicide in the last year. That is compared to 13 percent of their peers. I could tell you that only one-quarter of that group reported that their mental health was good.

Some of the kids we are talking about don't have supportive families. Some of them are experiencing bullying from peers. We would like to think that our schools are safe spaces, but it is not always true, and that is why we need to make sure that every school does have a safe space. One shining example of how this can work is the Rainbow Room at Porter Creek Secondary School, and I think that is pretty clear from seeing the students here today. I was up there talking to the students, and they told me about how, in the last few years, their school has become more welcoming, it has become friendlier, and it has become kinder and safer for them. I said: "Why is that? What has happened? What has changed?" And they said, "This space. Having this space has made us feel safe here, and it has also made us feel safer outside of this space, when we are in the rest of the school." Having that peer support, that teacher support, buoys them for the rest of the day and has helped teach their peers how to be kinder and more welcoming.

There is lots of evidence to support places like GSAs. I'm going to talk about GSAs lots today. By that, I mean a gender sexuality alliance. They're also sometimes called gay-straight alliances. There is lots of evidence that students who participate in GSAs have a greater sense of belonging in their school. What could be better than having more belonging for students in our schools?

They talk about having higher self-esteem and lower rates of depression. It was found that a particularly important piece is the advocacy that GSAs do — and students who had GSAs

that did advocacy found they were less likely to experience discriminatory school policies and practices. They found that their peers and their educators were more supportive.

I've shared stories. I've shared evidence. I want to tell you one more story about why I think this is so important. When I was in high school, I wasn't out yet, but I still knew where I was welcomed and where I wasn't welcomed. I was so lucky to have teachers who did create a safe haven in their classrooms. I loved their classes. At the time, I couldn't have told you why I loved their classes so much, but I showed up early and I stayed late, and I came at lunch and I was open in the classroom and talking about and learning and open to new ideas. I loved those classes, and I learned so much in those classes.

Unfortunately, that wasn't all of my classes. I remember one class in particular where students knew that they could get their teacher's approval by sharing the latest gay joke they had heard. I remember that teacher telling a student that he needed to change what he wore to come to class, because it was making him uncomfortable. I wish I could say that I called out that teacher. I wish I could say that I went to administration and made sure it changed. But when you're just one student, it's hard. When you don't have peer support, when you don't have explicit support from your teachers and your administration, it was just too hard. Instead, what happened was I drifted out of class. I sat at the back and kept my head down. I made sure that no one ever paid attention to me in that class. Mostly, I quit going to that class. I was not a student who missed a lot of school, and I did not skip a lot of classes, but I didn't go to that class very much.

Would that experience have been different if there was a GSA at my school? Maybe. Maybe I would have gone to that club and told my peers what happened, and we would have found strength in numbers to challenge it. Maybe I would have told them that story, and a supportive teacher would have overheard who could have taken action. Like I said, I was so lucky that I did have classes where I felt safe, but what if those teachers hadn't happened to be around? A GSA would have made sure that there was a safe space, no matter which teachers were in the school.

We risk a lot when students don't have safe spaces. We risk losing them from classes. We risk losing them from schools. We risk losing them altogether.

I hope that I have made a compelling case for why safe spaces are important in schools. Despite lots of talk and lots of work on plans, there are many schools that don't have safe spaces like this. There are many that do, and I want to applaud the teachers who have taken it on themselves to create GSAs and create safe spaces in their classrooms. I am so grateful to you for the work that you do to protect our students, but there are schools that don't have these spaces. That is what this bill wants to change. This bill wants to make sure that every student, no matter what school you go to and no matter which teachers happen to be there that year, that you'll have a safe space in your classroom.

Let's talk about the policy that is in place right now to protect students. We have the sexual orientation and gender identity policy — the SOGI policy. What it says about GSAs is

— and I quote: “The administrator will make best efforts to facilitate the formation of Gay/Straight Alliance clubs (GSAs), where students or staff come forward requesting this support.” I will come back to this in a minute as to why that is not adequate. There is also the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. It says that — and I quote: “... encourage schools to support Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) or similar clubs.” Neither of these pieces of policy go far enough. The problem with the first one is that students have to come forward to request the support. That is an enormous barrier that is just not realistic for many students to cross.

I think that a very typical experience with a GSA for a student might be that, long before they're out, they hear such a thing exists, and they think that maybe they are safer in this school. They feel a little better. Maybe the next year, they make up excuses to wander down that hallway and walk by the door and maybe peek in really quickly when no one is looking. Maybe then the next year, they feel brave enough to walk in that door and join the club. The next year, they are out in front of the Legislature, waving flags and fighting for their rights.

That progression would never happen if that GSA didn't already exist for them. If we had to wait until that student was ready to ask, they would never have had the chance to find the peer support to make that request. I wouldn't have, as a student. I know many students who wouldn't. I have talked to parents who want support for their kids, but they are not sure how to advocate for support for them at school without outing their kids, which their kids are not ready to do. We need to have these in place automatically, already available for all students, whether they are ready to ask for them or not.

The second concern I have is with action plan language where schools are “encouraged” to support GSAs. Encouraging is great until someone digs in their heels. Encouraging is great until you get an administrator who really is opposed, and then it's not enough. We need to go beyond “encourage”. This can't be optional. It's not optional whether we support our queer students. It has to happen. It needs to be mandatory.

The final problem I have is that, without a strong mandate, the support tends to be piecemeal. That's what we're seeing right now. We see individual educators rising to the challenge, taking this on to make safe spaces for their students. But then what happens if that educator moves schools or has a busy workload the next semester? Suddenly, that support disappears. That's not the fault of any educator. We need system support for our students. We need a system-level change to make sure that they have the support they need.

This bill fixes these problems by making GSAs, or similar activities, a requirement for all schools.

Now, you'll notice I said “GSAs or similar activities”, and I want to speak a little bit about that in the bill. As we were putting thought into designing this bill, we acknowledged that there are a huge variety of schools in the Yukon. There are schools of hundreds of students. There are schools with fewer than 20 students. There are schools in Whitehorse; there are schools in rural communities. So, we thought: How can we make sure that this bill works to support students in all schools?

Now, some of those schools I really want to see have a GSA. Some of them already do, and that's fantastic, but there are schools that probably won't work for. Is it reasonable to ask a school with fewer than 20 students to have a student organization? Maybe; maybe not. It's going to depend on the school. So, that's why we landed on the wording of talking about activities that support students.

I'm really excited about this wording, because it's very flexible. It allows schools to take this mandate and make it work for them and adapt it to their particular, unique school community. Maybe for them it will be a picnic. Maybe for them it will be a movie night. Maybe for them it will be a field trip or a trip joining up with another school in their region. There are so many opportunities here, and I'm very excited to see what they come up with.

I'm going to leave the technical side of the bill for now, because I'm sure I'll have lots of opportunity to answer questions further on.

I want to close by talking about some of the reactions I've heard to this bill, because I've talked to a lot of people about this bill. What I've heard overwhelmingly is excitement about the possibilities it presents. I talked to teachers who have been trying for years to make this happen without any central support, who see this gap and know it needs to be filled and know that there is a limit to what they can do on their own. I've talked to parents who want support for their children. They want their children to have a place they can go at school, but don't know how to ask for that and advocate for their child as an individual. That support needs to already be there and they are so excited that's a possibility.

The most powerful reactions that I've had have been from students themselves. I'm going to finish with one story. A friend of mine shared that she told an 11-year-old she knew that this might happen, and the 11-year-old burst into tears and said: "I can't believe I might have this at my school. That would mean so much for me to have this at my school."

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to start by acknowledging the young people who were here in the gallery today as I did during Question Period earlier. I am always happy to see our young people come and be part of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly. After all, it is their House. I am pleased to stand today to speak to Bill No. 304 to share my initial thoughts on the proposed amendment to the *Education Act* brought forward by the NDP. I am very interested in looking into it further as we proceed through this process.

As the Minister of Education, my focus is on ensuring the safety and well-being of all children in our care. Our government has done a tremendous amount of work to make Yukon laws inclusive and to make the territory a safe and supportive home for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Students in the LGBTQ2S+ community are a marginalized group in schools. I recognize that and see the need to continue making changes that will continue to improve the lives of our students. All youth and staff deserve a safe and supportive school, and I take this very seriously. I think this is the core of

my job as the minister. I'm absolutely committed to putting policies and programs in place so that students and staff feel safe, welcome, and included.

I wanted to talk a little bit about consultation and engagement to help ensure that the government is meeting the needs and the priorities of Yukoners. We have done extensive consultation and engagement. We initiated a territory-wide public engagement process in the fall of 2018 to identify ways to strengthen our legislation, policies, programs, services, and practices. We hired a Vancouver-based organization, QMUNITY, which is a non-profit focused on improving the lives of LGBTQ2S+ individuals to facilitate the engagement. The reason that — we looked for really specific skillsets and folks who knew what the uniqueness would be in consultation with a community such as the LGBTQ2S+ community and to work with us in a different way — and that is, in fact, what we did. They brought a lot of insight and ways of consultation that stand today in terms of how we conduct consultations around marginalized groups.

QMUNITY initiated a pre-engagement process. They met with LGBTQ2S+ community members and equality-seeking organizations to determine the appropriate method, scope, duration, and design of the public engagement. In January 2019, QMUNITY hosted 12 focus groups in a number of different demographics. They worked in Watson Lake, Dawson, and Haines Junction, and they held senior- and elder-specific focus groups in continuing care. They met specifically with youth and youth workers, including: educators; trans and non-binary; families; loved ones; significant others; queer, indigenous, or two-spirit folks; newcomers to the Yukon; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other women who have sex with women; gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men; and the Government of Yukon sexuality orientation and gender-identity working group.

There was extensive work done around this consultation. We also hosted three larger community dialogues. The themes of each of these dialogues were: mental health and wellness; safety, justice and employment; and LGBTQ2S+ culture and community building.

I thank you for your opening comments today — to the member for the New Democratic Party. We will get into more detail, I think, when we get into Committee of the Whole, but I think that the work you do around consultation is critically important. It's probably easier to have discussions with folks who are in agreement. It's harder to have discussions with folks who may be oppositional to amendments, bills, or different pieces of legislation. I'll go into some of that and what we've done as a government in terms of the legislative agenda that we've had since 2017. I'm curious about that, and I will be asking more questions about that for sure in Committee of the Whole in terms of the different groups that the New Democratic Party has met with and what some of that outcome is.

When we did our consultation, we published a "what we heard" document in 2019. Some of the feedback we heard was: a need for education and training and LGBTQ2S+ culture competency across departments and sectors; a cultural shift toward more acceptance that would require systemic and

institutional leadership from Government of Yukon and associated professionals; person-centred services in rural and remote communities outside of Whitehorse, including mobile and active outreach to communities; gender-neutral washrooms with low-barrier access in facilities like schools, hospitals, and other government buildings. Additionally, specific feedback was received regarding health care, education, employment, and business LGBTQ2S+ culture in community.

We found, through the engagement, that stakeholders were generally supportive to take steps to positively impact diversity and inclusion. Stakeholders also expressed a strong desire for clear, timely, and coordinated action in the priorities of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and organizations.

We initiated a second phase because we received a massive amount of information and priorities that were expressed to us, so we then initiated a further process where we looked at an engagement with a purpose to prioritize what we heard during and after the engagement.

So, there was some information that came after the engagement. From the LGBTQ2S+ prioritization survey, we found that 75 percent of the respondents said that legislation to ban conversion therapy in Yukon was extremely or very important.

Related to the discussion today around Bill No. 304, 74 percent of respondents said it was extremely or very important to ensure that sexual orientation and gender identity — SOGI — policies are implemented and that gender sexuality alliances, or GSAs, or similar clubs are supported by school leadership and educators; 77 percent said it was extremely or very important to provide education and training for teachers and school administrators in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency; 81 percent of respondents said that improving anti-bullying initiatives in Yukon schools, especially for LGBTQ2S+ youth, is extremely or very important; and 70 percent said that providing extracurricular programming in more inclusive or queer relationships and diverse gender identities is extremely or very important. All of that can be found in a lot more detail in the “what we heard” document to look at more specific feedback in different themed areas.

In terms of what resulted from all of that, I was very proud that Government of Yukon, alongside our partners, released the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan* in the summer of 2021. Across Canada and around the world, systemic transphobia, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination results in inequity for LGBTQ2S+ people. This includes experiencing barriers to programs and services that others may take for granted. This five-year plan is based on what we heard through our public engagement and, of course, then the second phase of the prioritization around how we would structure a plan that would reflect what we heard through this whole consultation and how we would prioritize that and what work we would do first.

It includes over 100 actions under eight themes: health care; education and youth; community and culture; inclusive governance; Government of Yukon as a workplace; public facilities; gender data; and tourism and culture.

We have definitely made some changes already. Much of this work is underway. I would like to just highlight a few of the areas that we have achieved or are still working on: expanding health care insurance coverage for the trans and gender-diverse community; extending coverage for gender-affirming therapy for trans Yukoners; extending coverage for trans-affirming medical therapies, procedures, and surgeries — this is leading policy in the country and maybe even throughout North America — providing HIV pre-exposure and post-exposure medications for HIV free of charge to those who request it; offering World Professional Association for Transgender Health training, at no cost, to Yukon government clinicians and non-governmental organizations; passing the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act* to ban conversion therapy in the Yukon; making LGBTQ2S+ awareness and inclusion training available to all Yukon government employees through our internal Yukon Learn website; integrating inclusive language into new government communication and including it in the official Government of Yukon style guide; funding for All Genders Yukon Society to offer mental wellness services; renovating the Whitehorse visitor information centre and updating signage to provide gender-inclusive washrooms in this building; for the first time, providing operational funding to Queer Yukon Society; and working in partnership with all LGBTQ2S+ societies to support the development and implementation of this action plan and to work toward establishing a Yukon Pride Centre.

We continue with our partners to implement all the actions in the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. I look forward to carrying out this important work alongside our partners and always striving to be a more inclusive government.

As I said earlier today, we are embracing the principle of “Nothing about us without us”. That is something that definitely works in that way. We all have to achieve the milestones that we have achieved together.

Regarding education and youth specifically in the plan, the plan identifies four areas of focus: implementing the SOGI policy; encourage schools to support gender and sexuality alliances or similar clubs; providing education and training for teachers and school administrators in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency; improving anti-bullying initiatives in Yukon schools, especially for LGBTQ2S+ youth; and encouraging extracurricular programs that are more inclusive of queer relationships and diverse gender identities.

Our focus is on children, first and foremost. We have taken action and will continue to take action. When I think about the safety and well-being of our students, I think about their right to dignity, respect, fairness, and equality. That is why we are committed to ensuring that Government of Yukon laws, policies, and practices meet both the legal rules and social standards for LGBTQ2S+ non-discrimination, including in schools. I am proud of the commitment and action that our government has taken already.

We have addressed non-discrimination in many of our laws. In 2017, we took the first step when we amended the *Human Rights Act* to make it illegal to discriminate against a person on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression

by including gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination in the *Human Rights Act*. We ensured that all trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners know that their basic rights and freedoms are explicitly protected. At that time, we also amended the *Vital Statistics Act* to remove the requirement for sex-reassignment surgery before a person can change the sex on their birth registration, ensuring that trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners are able to make those changes. We enabled the regulations to allow birth certificates and non-binary X sex gender markers. These steps help to ensure that trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners have fair and equitable access to all government programs and services.

The *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* in 2018 increased representation of diverse voices on government boards and committees that influence key areas of decision-making, such as childcare, social assistance, violence prevention, and provision of care. Specifically, we improved the following acts: *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, to prevent employee organizations that discriminate against any employee on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression from certifying as a bargaining unit; the *Care Consent Act*, the *Child Care Act*, the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*, and the *Social Services Act*, to enable and promote cultural, regional, and gender diversity in appointments and memberships of the respective boards and committees.

We also passed Bill No. 9, the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*. The act bans the provision of conversion therapy to minors, supporting the government's commitment to inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit-plus Yukoners. The Canadian Psychological Association of Canada and the Canadian Psychiatric Society have broadly discredited conversion therapy and the aim of the act was to protect minors and adults who have a substitute decision-maker or guardian appointed from harm associated with the practice. The act also clarified that conversion therapy is not an insured service.

So, we are very pleased with the changes that we made in those acts. We further passed an *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)*, which included the repeal of the *Married Women's Property Act*.

Updating legislation to be more inclusive of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners is a long-term project that we are making progress on and will continue to support and look at other ways that we can improve laws in our territory for the goal of inclusion.

In this regard, I really appreciate the members opposite for bringing this proposed legislation forward. I would like to speak specifically about a couple of things today. I also appreciate that not all students may feel comfortable coming forward with a request to set up a GSA or a request that the school provide options for inclusive activities.

Having a policy in place will help ease the ability for some students to participate and feel comfortable in their learning environment. The concept and intent of the bill is in alignment with the *Education Act* and policies. The Safe and Caring Schools policy is based on respect, responsibility, and rights

and is supported by the *Education Act* in several sections, including the preamble and those related to duties of students, parents, and school councils, teachers, and administrators.

The purpose of the Safe and Caring Schools policy is to promote the safety of people in schools; to ensure all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity; to promote responsible citizenship by encouraging appropriate participation in civic life of the school community; to maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect; to encourage the use of non-violent and restorative approaches to solve conflict; and to prevent bullying in schools.

I'm proud that we have put in place a SOGI policy for schools as well. Our government values diversity in its school community and wants to provide safe, welcoming, inclusive, and affirming learning environments for all students.

I want to note that the work that we've done around inclusive and special education is also another area where there are key commitments to inclusive education. There is a tremendous amount of work that is underway right now that will support the policies that we're looking to review, to enhance, and to really improve on. We recognize that students and school community members identifying as LGBTQ2S+, or questioning, face a unique set of challenges within schools, including being targets for discriminatory behaviours. Our school communities share the responsibility for supporting students and staff in addressing and facing these challenges.

We want to reduce homophobic and gender-based comments, discrimination, and bullying that are demeaning to all students, parents, guardians, and employees, regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. The SOGI policy does not permit or tolerate any homophobic behaviour or bullying, whether by commission or by failing to act to end the behaviour. Staff will respond to all incidents and provide support and assistance to those who are intended or unintended targets of such behaviour.

I would like to acknowledge that there are schools that have already established GSAs or programs. Both Porter Creek Secondary School and Vanier Secondary School have shown leadership in the creation of GSAs. This is valuable work and means a lot to the students in these schools. I appreciate the intention behind the proposed amendment and I believe this is something we need to be discussing.

However, I have some concerns on how the amendment was developed. Very early in my time as minister, I had the privilege of meeting with Queer Yukon. They were very clear and told me that, if we were to embark on a law or policy changes impacting the queer community, we needed to talk with the queer community. They said, "Nothing about us without us." I've said that a few times today. That is a phrase I take to heart. I definitely believe it — and on a number of fronts. I mean, I definitely feel that, when we're working to make life better in any area, that's a really good principle to embrace.

I appreciate that even a small change in a law can have a large impact on the people who interact with that law. I know that in the work we do every day, we take care to ensure that there are not negative consequences of our work, especially as

legislators. Even the most well-intentioned change can have unintended consequences.

That is why we take time to fully research legislative changes before we proceed, and that is why we invest considerable time and effort into consulting with people so that Yukoners can have an opportunity to provide feedback. Our government has made it a priority to ensure that all voices are heard in the development of legislation. So, I do have some concerns that there is not an opportunity for extensive public conversation on this proposed legislative change; however, I have pointed out the work that we have done with the LGBTQ2S+ community on the action plan and the relation to that plan.

I look forward to hearing from the Member for Whitehorse Centre on how this was developed and who was offered the opportunity to influence this change. I want to take a minute to acknowledge — as the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — all the strong, courageous, and determined people in Yukon and elsewhere who have put their hard work, life stories, and even sometimes their lives on the line to advance gender equality and LGBTQ2S+ rights and freedoms. I want to acknowledge the Member for Whitehorse Centre's own personal story today. I thank you very much for sharing that with us and having the courage to do that. I really appreciate the vulnerability that we can show in being real and human first. I think that this is the type of Legislature that I want to be part of.

I want to thank all of our partners, all of the equality-seeking groups — All Genders Yukon, Queer Yukon, the gay-straight alliance — and all of their work, voices, and the work that they continue to do each and every day with their incredible contributions to our communities. I am proud to have learned so much from each of these groups and so many more. I think that I have to mention Chase Blodgett and the work Chase has done in our territory and the friendship that we have developed. I really appreciate it, and always know that I can go and speak to Chase about matters relating to LGBTQ2S+ or education.

We are able to be here today to consider Bill No. 304 because of the work of these organizations and their pursuit of a stronger, more inclusive Yukon. I want to encourage the LGBTQ2S+ community and their allies to stay engaged. Follow the process of this plan and challenge us to do better when our efforts do not meet the mark or when priorities change.

I want to close today by emphasizing our priority to put the safety and well-being of students before anything else. We are focused on supporting students and their families and staff and the school community and building a more inclusive Yukon. I support the intention of this bill and hope that, through our questions in Committee of the Whole, we can learn more about the development and have a good, healthy debate.

I had the opportunity this morning to go to the First Nation Education Conference, and I was very encouraged by that discussion. Something that the Member for Whitehorse Centre said today, speaking from the heart, keeping that space open and keeping the children there, was part of what I heard this morning at this conference. It was so moving and so inspiring.

I know we are speaking about something very specific here in terms of the LGBTQ2S+ community, but I think that it applies to all.

I look forward to moving into Committee of the Whole and thank the member for bringing the bill forward.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to rise at second reading to speak to Bill No. 304, put forward by my colleague, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre. I wanted to begin by agreeing with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that it is really great to see the engagement of young people, as we saw earlier today. Regardless of the issue that comes up, whether it is a policy issue, a legislative issue, or anything else, it is always encouraging to see young people get engaged in politics and get interested in their rights, the rights of others, the legislation that governs the territory, and issues that, for us as legislators, are everyday matters, but for a lot of people, are not top of mind. I think it is very encouraging, and I appreciate the member's advice that we should think about kids and those affected by this as we debate this bill and this material.

I would also like to say thank you for a second reason to the member, and that is simply for bringing this bill forward. It's probably no surprise to anyone in this Legislature that I'm very much a proponent of Members of the Legislative Assembly bringing forward legislative changes that they see as appropriate in their capacity as an MLA. What I mean by that is that, for some time now, the trend of the Yukon Legislative Assembly has been that only the government can bring forward legislation. This is something on which my views have personally changed over the last number of years. I was certainly not extremely interested in private members' bills when I was a member of the government. I was often dismissive of them. That is something that I have had a lot of time to reflect on, having been on both sides of the aisle. I think it's worth noting that it is very much an important thing for MLAs to consider that we have the ability to bring forward legislation, and it is a legitimate ability and one that this Legislature is fully within its capacity to address.

The Minister of Education raised some points that I will be echoing, for sure. I found myself agreeing with a number of comments that she made about the need for consultation. In agreeing with her, I am also aware of the limitations that exist for opposition members to conduct that kind of legislation. I know that we have faced this type of issue before. On the government side of the Legislature, the government has literally thousands of public servants available to them to assist with consultation and drafting development, and that is not the case for us in the opposition.

I am certainly sensitive to the amount of work that it takes for a private member to bring forward a bill like this that amends very serious legislation and that proposes to make a real change in the laws that govern the territory. That was the second introductory point that I wanted to make — my appreciation for and belief in the importance of Members of the Legislative Assembly bringing forward legislation like this in this form.

I would like to turn now to the bill itself. I would be remiss if I didn't note, of course, that a very similar bill was tabled last week — Bill No. 303, I believe, was its title — to a very similar effect as this bill. Subsequent to that tabling, the member then tabled a second bill — this bill, Bill No. 304, which is now before us in the Legislature.

The intent of the bill is fairly clearly laid out, in my view, in the summary. I will read from it: "This bill amends the *Education Act* to: Ensure that all schools in the Yukon have safe spaces for LGBTQ2+ students in the form of student activities or organizations." The intent of the bill is fairly captured in that summary. As expressed there, that is an intent I can certainly support and agree with.

I think that safe spaces for students is imperative for government and for our education system to ensure. I certainly appreciate the intent expressed here in the summary. Ensuring that, in particular, LGBTQ2S+ students have access to safe spaces is, without doubt, something that we support. I think that all students should have access to safe and welcoming learning environments when they come to school, not only for the fact that this supports a healthy learning environment, but also because it is simply the right thing to do.

Without doubt, I can say at this stage that I support what I think is the intent of the bill. However, like the minister, I do have some questions and concerns about the process by which we arrived here. I will have some questions about some of the content as well. I would be remiss if I didn't also note that the Member for Whitehorse Centre was extremely proactive and offered all legislators a briefing on this bill. I was pleased to attend that earlier this week. I sat down and had what I felt was a fairly frank discussion with the sponsor of the bill, as well as with her colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, and their staff member, who I understand was integral in bringing this together.

In my view, I thought I was fairly frank about some of the questions I had around the content of the legislation. I asked questions about the section of the act that it was amending. For instance, I asked why we had chosen the duties of the principal as the section of the *Education Act* to amend. I also asked about the "must" versus "may" usage of language. I note that, in the act, one section includes a "must" and another includes a "may", and I asked the member to explain that at our briefing, and she did.

I should note, though, that despite having a briefing in the committee room, I do think it's important for others to see the permanent record of Hansard, and so I will be asking questions in Committee of the Whole that will be familiar to the sponsor of the bill, but I do think it's important to get those on the record.

Another issue that I had asked about was what was different between the first Bill No. 303 and this Bill No. 304. I noted that many of the concerns I had with Bill No. 303 were allayed by Bill No. 304. Bill No. 304 is much better laid out, and I think it's much more coherent in its expression of what it's trying to achieve. So, I appreciated the explanation there.

In particular, article (x) in this bill is one that — in a previous bill, I did have — it did raise some red flags for me,

and having it explained as it is now in article (x) with respect to the staff member I think is an improvement on the bill from last week.

I also noted a question about the reasoning behind the coming into force provisions of this act. I had noted, at the time, that typically when we see coming into force provisions of this nature, it's done by a government bill that is intended at allowing for the subsequent development of regulations. My question to the NDP at that time was: Does this bill contemplate regulations? Or do they contemplate regulations being needed? They had answered no or they had indicated, at least, that they didn't believe so.

However, I did note that, by including the provision that this act will come into force on a day to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council Office, it did require an action by the Commissioner in Executive Council Office to actually bring this particular bill into force and the legislation into force. I did raise that question, and I understand that it's possible, at least, that the sponsor of the bill is willing to entertain amendments to it or maybe even perhaps be proposing amendments themselves.

The other part that I wanted to address — and it was one that was touched on a fair amount by the Minister of Education — was the need for consultation. I appreciated the comments in that respect, because as we know, over the past several weeks, this Legislature has debated a number of different pieces of private members' business, not the least of which was a private member's bill from my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, who proposed changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We have also seen amendments proposed in Committee of the Whole to bills that have been before the Legislature, namely, the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, which this Legislature saw an amendment tabled to that bill.

Throughout that, there has been a lot of discussion about the nature and need for consultation, and I wanted to take a moment to note some of the quotes from earlier this Sitting for members. The first one I came across was from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on March 9. That member said — and I quote: "However, we had better be pretty careful about how we introduce it so that we don't inadvertently, through the way in which we have amended a piece of legislation here — if it's through a private member's bill or however it is amended — that it be done appropriately, because we are talking about incredibly serious issues. I just want to make sure that there needs to be that forethought that would go into how this legislation would be shaped."

The minister went on to say — and I quote again: "Normally, when there is a piece of legislation that we would go through, that engagement would happen. It would be done well ahead of time. Often there are two rounds of it. You would start with asking very open-ended questions about what the public thinks we should do. Then when you start to get closer on a piece of legislation, you would go back out and again talk with various groups and certainly with other governments — incredibly important — and then almost always we would issue a 'what we heard' document."

There are other ministers who commented on that to a very similar effect, but suffice it to say, I think that their consultation of this type is necessary, and I agreed very much with the comments of the Minister of Education when the minister indicated that — first of all, something that the minister said was that the work you do in consultation is critically important.

She went on to say that even a small change in the law can have unintended consequences. So, I don't know for sure that this bill will have any unintended consequences, but quite frankly, I don't know. That's why I took note of a quote from the Leader of the Third Party earlier this Sitting along the same lines. The Leader of the Third Party, in debate on the CEMA bill, said — and I'll quote: "Considering that, I think it's an important..." —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 304 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 23, 2022:

35-1-53

Amendment supporting LGBTQ2S+ students, letter re (dated March 23, 2022) from Theodore Hupé, President, Yukon Association of Educational Professionals, to Members of the Legislative Assembly (Tredger)

35-1-54

Department of Education's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy, letter re (dated February 15, 2022) from students of the Porter Creek Secondary School's Gender and Sexuality Alliance to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Tredger)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 55

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 24, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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

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Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier 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

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 24, 2022 — 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. Motion No. 346, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is out of order; and Motion No. 349, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, was not placed on today's Notice Paper at the request of the member.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will ask my colleagues to help me welcome two visitors here to the Legislative Assembly today. We have with us Stephen Rotstein, who is the president of the Canadian Bar Association. I can note that he is also the first-ever public sector lawyer to be president of the Federation of Law Societies. With him is Sylvie McCallum Rougerie, who is the CBA Yukon branch president. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also ask the Assembly to welcome Kelly Milner, who is here with us today — a well-known local producer and creator, as well as director with the Screen Production Yukon Association.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Northern Canada Producer Accelerator program

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge the contributions of the Screen Production Yukon Association to our territory and to our economy. The association supports, develops, and creates Yukon's screen media industry. They provide a broad range of professional development opportunities for producers and all above-the-line and below-the-line crew members. SPYA was incorporated as a non-profit society in 1999 as the Northern Film and Video Industry Association. If you are looking for a grip or electric equipment rental, crew members and/or production services, they are the people to talk to.

A high-value, high-return-on-investment sector, Yukon's media production industry is on a strong growth trajectory. This small but mighty sector is one of the anchors of our cultural

economy and annually contributes an estimated \$8 million to the Yukon economy. One-third of Yukon's 20 production companies are over 10 years old, creating about 86 full-time, private sector jobs. The industry generates over \$400,000 in tax revenue for the Yukon.

I would also like to recognize their executive director, Moira Sauer, and president, Teresa Earle, as well as Kelly Milner for their work on the creation of the Northern Canada Producer Accelerator program. This new undertaking has attracted the support of Canada's largest national broadcasters, including CBC, APTN, Bell Media, Blue Ant Media, Corus Entertainment, and Rogers Group of Funds. The program offers training, mentorship, networking, and market access to producers who reside in the Yukon or the Northwest Territories.

The Northern Canada Producer Accelerator program will select 10 content producers from across the Yukon and the Northwest Territories for this opportunity. After completing the curriculum and mentorship components, the participants will be offered customized pitch opportunities with national and international decision-makers. The deadline for applications is March 31.

This program will provide Yukon producers with the training and resources needed to advance their careers in the media industry.

In closing, the future of the northern media industry lies in supporting and training up-and-coming creators to meet their maximum potential. I'm very glad to see that these partners could come together to create something truly special that will pave the way for Yukon producers to tell their stories, and I'm excited to see the end results.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to a new initiative, the Northern Canada Producer Accelerator, or NCPA. The growth of the film industry in our beautiful north is being augmented by this new program that was announced in early March. Between Yukon and Northwest Territories, a call has gone out to apply to this amazing opportunity to grow, to be mentored, and to learn more about the film and TV industry. The goal of this program is to market some very polished northern content to the world. The application period started earlier, on March 10, and runs to March 31, 2022.

There will be a selection of 10 finalists from the two territories to participate. Through a series of time periods, finalists will take courses and will have completed a project by November 2022. The final steps give producers direct access to the market.

All submissions must adhere to a set of principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion and must be a registered business. Films around Yukon topics have been around for years. Even Hollywood loved the idea. In 1925, Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* is one such wonder. Then Jack London had many of his stories made into films, such as *The Call of the Wild*. This definitely raised awareness of the north.

For many years, NEDAA produced local content and stories about the indigenous people of Yukon and the changes and the history. It is still great to see some of those older films as the memory of people past resonates with many of us today.

The Department of Tourism and Culture originally housed a smaller film and sound portion where it provided funds to assist many local filmmakers and musicians with small amounts of funds. In 2004, the formation of our own Yukon Film and Sound Commission has made it more streamlined and accessible for artistic assistance. The goal then, as it is now, is to increase film and sound production, maximize employment in the industry, create sustainable growth, and showcase our local talent, be they musicians, filmmakers, crew members, or technical crews.

Now, an added level of national support for the industry is very welcome. So, those with aspirations to become part of the film and sound industry and have a business, get those applications in. We wish all who become finalists the best in their next project. Big screen or TV access might be in your future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: On behalf of the Yukon NDP, I would like to add our congratulations to everyone involved in the Northern Canada Producer Accelerator. It takes a lot of work to get something like this off the ground, so thank you.

It's not always easy to be an artist in the north, often far from resources, mentorship, and broader audiences. This program will help fill that gap for northern filmmakers.

Yukoners have so many stories to tell. We all benefit from hearing them and the rest of the world will benefit from hearing them. We cannot wait to see the projects that come out of this program.

I understand that applicants have one week left to apply, so good luck to everyone.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling three letters. The first is dated January 19, 2022. It's addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services from the Child and Youth Advocate with a request for consultation documentation on the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*.

The second is another letter from the Child and Youth Advocate to the Minister of Health and Social Services dated March 23, 2022 — yesterday — expressing concerns with Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

I have, as well, a letter dated March 11, 2022 from the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner addressed to the Premier, the Leader of the Third Party, and me, with comments about Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a newspaper article and photographs from the *Whitehorse Star* dated September 7, 2011. The article and photos are regarding a sod-turning ceremony for a new Dawson City recreation centre on the eve of the 2011 Yukon territorial election — a recreation centre that was promised and never built by the conservative Yukon Party government of the day.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling a letter dated March 17, 2022 from the Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Peter Johnston in relation to Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

I also have for tabling a letter of response dated November 20, 2019 to the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance to correct information presented yesterday in Question Period.

I also have for tabling a copy of an e-mail that was sent to Mr. Jason Cook, who was here with us yesterday, that had the response letter attached.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 11 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 11 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Lake Laberge on March 23, 2022.

The petition presented by the Member for Lake Laberge meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 11 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. 11 shall be provided on or before April 6, 2022.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the confidence and supply agreement.

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

THAT the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate appear in Committee of the Whole prior to the end of the 2022 Spring Sitting, with advance notice of the date of the witness' appearance provided to the Legislative Assembly by the Government of Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the acting chief medical officer of health appear in Committee of the Whole prior to the end of the 2022 Spring Sitting, with advance notice of the date of the witness' appearance provided to the Legislative Assembly by the Government of Yukon.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

COVID-19 relief and recovery fund for non-governmental organizations

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Over the past two years, our government has delivered a range of support programs to help Yukoners, local businesses, and organizations impacted by the COVID-19 situation. The Yukon's diverse non-profit sector is filled with thousands of dedicated individuals who care about making differences in the lives of Yukoners. Throughout this pandemic, non-profit and non-governmental organizations have faced challenges in raising funds and delivering services. They have shown great determination by continuing to provide essential services and supports to Yukoners across the territory.

That's why I'm happy to announce that our government has teamed up with Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon to launch a short-term COVID-19 relief and recovery fund for non-profits and non-governmental organizations. The program will provide up to \$10,000 to eligible non-profits and NGOs in the territory to help them keep their operations safe for the staff, volunteers, and clients as they recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

Eligible applicants include Yukon-based non-profits and NGOs that have been affected by the pandemic and have had to adjust their operations in order to continue delivering services to Yukoners. This funding will help organizations continue to pay staff, keep their doors open, and provide valuable community services as they resume fundraising and return to more normal operations.

Organizations will be able to retroactively access this support for costs that were incurred starting February 1, 2022. This program was designed in partnership with the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council and will be administered by Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon. This support program complements a number of programs being delivered through various levels of government to support the non-profit sector. Again, through consultation with the sector, we found that a number of highly targeted programs rolled out over the past two years did help many NGOs and non-profits, but did not reach all organizations in this sector. The COVID-19 relief and recovery fund will fill the gap and provide the accessibility and flexibility needed to support Yukon's NGO and non-profit sector while ensuring that Yukoners can continue to access the services that they rely on.

In closing, I would again like to thank the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council for all their work, Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon, and the Department of Economic Development for their hard work on this program. I look forward to seeing non-profits and NGOs continuing to thrive in our territory.

Ms. Van Bibber: Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, do so much for our territory. They help the most vulnerable, they advocate for businesses, they support environmental initiatives, they organize and run many community events, and there are even NGOs that support NGOs.

As with many industries during the pandemic, the non-profit and NGO sector has been hit hard. Many rely on volunteers to operate, and during the pandemic, those volunteers have had other items on their mind or have had to take care of their own loved ones who are sick, so they haven't been able to give more freely of their time.

Others have had services reduced so much, employees have had to be laid off. That is why we are pleased to see this government program come forward and be run through the NGO that supports NGOs — Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon. The press release says that the relief and recovery fund will provide up to \$10,000 to eligible organizations to create and maintain a safe environment for staff and clientele, stabilize service delivery, resume fundraising activities, increase earned revenue, and take advantage of existing and future opportunities for recovery support through all levels of government.

Obviously, like us, the minister heard reports that some NGOs were seeing funding shortfalls due to the pandemic. Hopefully, this new program addresses those issues. However, I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how the government plans to support NGOs that are also dealing with the rising cost of heating fuel and electricity. The minister says that this money will help keep the doors open. How much of this money is enough to help deal with those rising costs?

Ms. White: Like many, we appreciate yesterday's announcement and today's statement on the new COVID-19 relief and recovery fund available for non-profits and non-governmental organizations. We, too, acknowledge that the last two years have been difficult for all, and I'm sure that this initiative will be a welcome relief, but I would like to suggest that the Yukon government can and needs to go further in their support for what amounts to the social safety net of the territory.

These organizations are the backstop that prevent many from falling through the cracks. This week, for the first time in a public way, I brought forward the concern of many of those who will qualify for this support about the human consumption of hand sanitizer. When the pandemic hit, alcohol-based hand sanitizer was available and given freely everywhere, including all Yukon government facilities. This availability is literally killing Yukoners. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer was never made to be safely consumed, but that's what we're seeing.

Had Yukon government stores still existed, we could have seen the Yukon government use its substantial buying power to support the purpose and use of non-alcohol-based hand sanitizers approved for COVID prevention by the Government of Canada. This action alone could have prevented what's currently happening, and what's about to happen, as this new

addiction takes root, but the Liberal government shut down that valuable resource.

I can't imagine a single organization that won't be applying for this emergency funding, but I also know of at least two critical community supports at risk because of a lack of realistic core funding support by this government. The Humane Society of Yukon reached out to the Minister of Environment in early March, highlighting that operational funding for this organization has remained fixed for years without any inflationary increase and is putting animal welfare at risk in the territory. The Second Opinion Society, after providing critical mental health supports for 30 years, was informed earlier this month that their funding was being reduced to a six-month contract — this after providing valuable virtual mental health supports throughout the pandemic. SOS was in the process of pivoting to an ongoing virtual service that had been supported by the Yukon government, which then changed its mind. These are just two examples of what some NGOs that provide critical services to Yukoners have gone through during the pandemic and continue to go through.

This pandemic has been hard on businesses and NGOs alike, but especially hard on NGOs that rely on government funding and fundraising to keep their doors open. Changes over the last few years have seen three-year agreements reduced to a one-year agreement or even less. This is not the way the government should be funding or treating NGOs that provide that critical safety net for Yukoners.

We are pleased to see this program announced, but at the same time, we feel strongly that this government needs to reconsider how they continue to support NGOs and non-profit organizations into the future.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, to the question from the Official Opposition concerning cost escalators, I think that our approach on this will be to continue to work with a group of individuals from the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council. They have done exemplary work. The leader in this has been Wendy Morrison, who has been the chair. She has done a phenomenal job. I would also just like to touch on the fact that Alex Jegier, the vice-chair, and individuals like Kristina Craig who have great visibility to what is happening with our communities and with our most vulnerable populations — Eileen Melnychuk, Tracey Bilsky, Lana Selby, and Lianne Maitland, as well as Bruno Bourdache from the Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon.

I think that in all these cases, we are looking at a multi-year approach. This is something that we have heard from these groups. Again, we will look at what the impact is of the financial allocations that we are making. We will take into consideration how many individual organizations put applications in, and that gives us a good opportunity to see if we are meeting their needs. What is important to know is that this was something that was very supported by this group of people. They really helped us to define and build this program. We really appreciate their volunteer time, of course, helping us make sure that we have the biggest impact.

I also want to just thank the Minister of Community Services, who was there with me along the way making sure

that we built this program and was in those meetings with the organizations.

I won't get into too many specifics. I trust — and I think that all Yukoners can trust after seeing the last two years that our public service does exemplary work. I know that the Department of Environment and the Department of Health and Social Services will engage with those organizations. And I am sure that those organizations, both of which have great leaders, will make sure that they get to the table and we can come up with some solutions. I look forward to those particulars that I don't have all the details on.

Again, I truly appreciate the advice from the Leader of the Third Party, who has worked with lots of NGOs. This is something that we are going to have to keep a very close eye on, and we are going to have to continue to watch how NGOs have been impacted over the last number of years, understanding that they fill very important gaps in service that we see in our communities. We really count on them to keep Yukoners safe and smiling and with the best quality of life that they possibly can have.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: *Child and Family Services Act* amendments

Mr. Dixon: Since the Liberal government tabled amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, a range of stakeholders and officers of the Legislature have raised red flags. Yesterday, the Child and Youth Advocate wrote to the minister. In that letter, the advocate said — and I quote: “I am gravely concerned that your government intends to push Bill No. 11 through to third reading in the Legislative Assembly without making the amendments necessary to ensure the Bill upholds the rights of children and is compliant with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.”

How does the minister respond to these grave concerns raised by this independent officer of the Legislature?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to see that the Yukon's Child and Youth Advocate has joined us here in the Legislative Assembly today. I look very much forward to addressing all of the issues that have been brought forward to our attention and to the attention of the Department of Health and Social Services during the debate, which will take place later today, or at least begin later today, and I look forward to that conversation very much.

The individual issues brought forward deserve answers; they deserve to be discussed, and I look forward to that happening in Committee of the Whole.

What I can say and should say about Bill No. 11, which is before this Legislative Assembly, is that it is innovative and it is groundbreaking. It has been developed in partnership with Yukon First Nations, and it is designed to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children in our child welfare system. That is a progressive piece of legislation, and I look very much forward to it passing this House and the debate that will happen before that.

Mr. Dixon: Unfortunately, those answers and that discussion should have happened before the bill came to the Legislature.

The letter goes on to say that over the past year, this minister has ignored repeated requests from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate for the information and documents necessary to conduct their review of the bill. Here's a quote from the letter: "... your Department of Health and Social Services has essentially ignored our formal requests since May 2021 for a draft of Bill No. 11 for the express purpose of conducting our CRIA well in advance of the Bill being tabled..."

Why did the Minister of Health and Social Services ignore the repeated requests of the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity to stand. Once again, the members of the opposition prove unreliable with respect to the information presented here.

Repeated requests were not ignored. Our work was ongoing. The draft bill was provided to the Child and Youth Advocate as soon as it was ready. A number of other pieces of information requested by the Child and Youth Advocate were provided to her office for the purposes of her doing her work and her evaluation, and we looked very much forward to that.

We did, in fact, receive a report that has been considered very carefully by the Department of Health and Social Services, and those individuals — all 14 representatives of Yukon First Nations in the territory, with 12 at the table all the time and two who were kept informed throughout the process — have looked at the concerns expressed in that report. We certainly look forward to further discussion with respect to this matter.

The draft Bill No. 11, as I have said, is groundbreaking. It will serve Yukon children. It will serve Yukon indigenous children in a way that has never before been seen and certainly wasn't seen in the bill that was brought forward by the members of the opposition in 2010.

I certainly look forward to further discussion.

Mr. Dixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have simply read a direct quote from the letter that was tabled earlier that was addressed to the minister, sent yesterday by the Child and Youth Advocate indicating that her department had ignored repeated requests for information.

Despite ignoring repeated requests over the past year to provide the necessary material for the Child and Youth Advocate to conduct a child rights impact assessment, or CRIA, the advocate was able to complete one in time for the tabling of this bill.

The CRIA makes it clear that amendments are needed to the bill in order to uphold the fundamental rights of children. Will the minister agree to make the legislative amendments recommended by the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I have been clear. I'm very excited about the opportunity to debate Bill No. 11. It is on the legislative Order Paper for today. I look forward to having discussions with all members of this Legislative Assembly about any issues that they choose to bring forward, and I absolutely expect that we will also be discussing the issues raised by the Child and Youth Advocate. I certainly appreciate

her doing so, so that we can have a full debate with respect to the impact and the importance of this legislation.

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Mr. Cathers: According to numbers provided by the Minister of Health and Social Services, over one-fifth of Yukoners do not have a family doctor. Fixing this is a top priority for Yukoners, and it should be a top priority for this minister. We have raised this repeatedly and urged government to take action, including reinstating the physician recruitment position that previously existed.

During the Fall Sitting, the minister was unable to point to any real action that she was taking to fix the doctor shortage. My question today is simple: What action, if any, has the minister taken since the fall to encourage more family doctors to move to the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Once again, the members opposite have proven unreliable, and I don't think it's a service to Yukoners for them to be providing information that is incorrect.

The *Putting People First* report found that approximately 21 percent of Yukoners do not have access to a family physician. As we implement *Putting People First* to address that concern, we remain committed to expanding Yukoners' access to primary health care services.

Our government is absolutely aware of the concern. We work with many Yukoners in relation to their concerns about primary care practices or acute care facilities here in the territory. We have addressed these issues in a number of ways and continue to work on this file every day.

The pandemic has significantly impacted our ability to recruit physicians and other health care providers, as it has across the country — this being a national issue. There are a number of opportunities that we have taken here in the territory to reduce the individual's concerns and to address having acute care professionals available to Yukoners.

I look forward to further answering this question.

Mr. Cathers: The minister likes to effectively claim "fake news" if she doesn't like the fact, but I would remind her that it was on this very issue last fall that the NDP were mocking her math.

Talking points are not action, and that seems to be all the minister has on the issue of family doctors.

Yukoners who need a family doctor are looking for action, not talking points. This Liberal government has the worst record in the entire country on doctor recruitment. According to a report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the number of physicians per capita increased in 10 provinces and two territories between 2015 and 2019. Only one jurisdiction, the Yukon, got worse — under this Liberal government. We have the lowest ratio of family doctors per capita. The obvious cause is the lack of real action by the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Maybe this is one of the reasons that the Third Party doesn't think it's safe for the minister to be in Cabinet. Can she point to a single real action that she has taken to fix this crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm happy to respond to this question, as I have on repeated occasions. We continue to

explore options to connect Yukoners, recognizing the concern with primary health care services. We have adopted *Putting People First*, which will dramatically change and shift the way in which medical services are provided here in the territory. We have initiated a “find a doctor” program, which has matched more than 1,100 Yukoners with a family doctor, and we have expanded access to virtual care alternatives here in the territory and throughout — the opportunities for individuals to have access to virtual care alternatives.

I can indicate that we have expanded our opportunities to contract and hire additional nurse practitioners to have service — to expand some services at additional existing clinics. We are working to operate a bilingual health care clinic, which will provide primary care to individuals. We have also been working to access options for a professional recruiter or recruitment firm. We have been working with the Yukon Medical Association with respect to recruiting physicians and that concern.

I look forward to more questions.

Mr. Cathers: Again, we heard talking points, but no real actions. If there are no doctors taking patients, a matchmaking service is not much help. This Liberal government, despite the Premier’s laughter, has the worst record in the entire country on family doctor recruitment. Yukoners take this issue seriously; so should the Premier and his minister.

In five years, every other province and territory in the country had an increase in family doctors per capita. Only in the Yukon under this Liberal government has the issue gone so badly that the ratio of physicians per capita has gone downhill.

Since becoming Minister of Health and Social Services last year, the walk-in clinic closed. This problem is actually getting worse. Family doctors are leaving the Yukon and the population is growing.

Will the minister agree to actually make doctor recruitment a top priority, reinstate the physician recruitment position, and work with the Yukon Medical Association on an urgent strategy to encourage family doctors to move to the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Actually, I can and will agree to all of those points by the member opposite because they are already happening at the Department of Health and Social Services.

First of all, let’s just talk about the walk-in clinic for a second, which is a private business that closed last year. Our response is to work with the Yukon’s local health community to reopen a walk-in clinic, so that can serve Yukoners in the Whitehorse area or across the territory if they are here in Whitehorse. Our work to open that walk-in clinic, which is unprecedented in this territory, despite the fact that there have been other times when medical services have been reduced for Yukoners — but has never happened before.

The amount of \$89,000 has been put aside for nursing education bursary and health profession education bursary programs. It is something that the member opposite likes to ask about a lot. It is available for 16 new health-related education bursaries here in the territory each year through the Department of Health and Social Services. In addition, the Department of Health and Social Services provides \$150,000 to the Yukon

Registered Nurses Association, which administers the continuing nursing education fund.

Between 2019 and 2020, Yukon’s supply of resident physicians increased by approximately eight percent.

Question re: Support for seniors

Ms. White: The Yukon’s senior and elder population is growing every day and we see the need for a wide variety of services in place to support them, yet this government is constantly falling short. There are hundreds of seniors without a family doctor. There are seniors living in their cars because they have been priced out of the rental market and seniors who can’t afford hearing aids, dentures, or glasses, and the list goes on.

Aging in the Yukon is only getting more expensive, and right now, seniors and elders are being priced out of basic health care. We need more support to allow people to age in place, we need home care services across the territory, and we need better access to primary care and specialists alike.

Will the minister recognize the gaps in services for seniors and fix them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In September 2020, the aging-in-place action plan was released. It was based on extensive public engagement with more than 1,200 people from across the territory.

Its vision is to ensure that all Yukoners, regardless of age, income, or ability, have access to the supports that they need to live safe, independent, and comfortable lives in their own home or community for as long as possible. The first aging-in-place annual report will be publicly released in the very near future.

We work with the individuals who are representatives of the aging and seniors and elders community here in the territory on a regular basis. This is a top priority for us. We recognize that the Yukon population is, in fact, aging and that an aging-in-place action plan and all of the situations with respect to elders will continue to become more and more prevalent in our community.

We’re looking forward, we’re looking ahead, we’re working with the community, and I look forward to further questions.

Ms. White: Like so many problems in the territory, this government is happy to let someone else deal with it. A new private senior facility in the Yukon has been in the works for decades, and the government has pumped millions of dollars into this project already. But it’s impossible to find out who will be operating it. The last time we got a clear answer from this government was in 2018 in a tabled response from the then-minister when they said that it would be run by Connecting Care.

Connecting Care is notorious for chronic understaffing and poor quality care in their other facilities. At one of their Alberta facilities, staffing was so low that seniors went without showers for months at a time. Of the 130 seniors who lived there, 93 got COVID. That’s just one example among many.

Can the minister confirm whether Connecting Care will still be operating this facility? If they aren’t, who will?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think it is incredibly important that we recognize the services that must be available for our seniors and elders in our community.

The aging-in-place action plan has been developed with Yukoners by Yukoners. I think one of my colleagues said yesterday that this is not our report; this is Yukon's report. That must be abided by and it must be considered.

The report summarizes the progress that has been made so far toward implementing the 56 recommendations. That's the annual report that will be issued very quickly. The responsibility to implement the actions is shared across seven Yukon government departments and agencies. These departments and agencies are working collaboratively with partners — including First Nation governments, non-governmental organizations, and community groups — to implement the aging-in-place actions and to achieve our common goals.

Of the 56 recommendations — and action plan — 45 actions, or 80 percent, are complete, underway, or in the planning or development stages; 11 actions, 20 percent, have not yet been started. We look forward to continuing this work together to the benefit of seniors and elders here in our territory.

Ms. White: It's unfortunate that we didn't get an answer. So, private senior care will make cuts to everything before cutting into profits. That's literally their business model.

But slashing basic care didn't start with the pandemic. Every year, more seniors die of neglect, dehydration, and preventable infections in private residences compared to public ones. Despite all of this, the minister hasn't put a single regulation in place to protect folks who will be living in the new private seniors assisted-living facility.

Regulations for public facilities won't apply to this new facility, so we're looking at a completely unregulated facility that will soon host seniors and elders.

Will the minister introduce regulations for this facility in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this important issue because seniors and the aging population here in the territory is something that absolutely is critical. I can note that, with respect to long-term care — I'm not sure about the allegations or the accusations made in this question, but I certainly will follow up on them. Our government is committed to culturally safe and responsive health and social services.

As part of this work, the Department of Health and Social Services is enhancing programming to recognize, honour, and celebrate Yukon First Nation history, culture, and traditional practices and to support spiritual well-being of First Nation residents living in long-term care homes and their families.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank those workers in our long-term care homes who have been front-of-line and kept our seniors and elders safe during the last two years of this COVID-19 pandemic. It is not over; they have struggled on a daily basis to come to work to make sure that their patients and their clients are safe and well-cared for, and they should be celebrated with respect to that opportunity.

Our long-term care services here in the territory are second to none.

Question re: Ross River School

Mr. Hassard: The school in Ross River is the heart of the community. Unfortunately, the school continues to be plagued with structural issues, but this Liberal government's only solution has been to apply band-aid fixes.

When asked in the legislature what the government is going to do long term to fix this school, the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works talked about a new roof and paving the parking lot. These do not address the fact that the walls are cracking and the school is slowly sinking into the ground.

Since the previous minister didn't think fixing the Ross River School was important, what will the new minister do to actually fix the school in Ross River?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The health and safety of students across the territory is, of course, 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. I can advise today that the latest building condition inspection report was completed in March of this year and confirmed, as we expected, that the school remains safe for occupancy.

The next inspection will occur in May of this year. Work will continue on the existing school to keep it safe and to help prevent structural movement. By way of background, the Ross River School has been undergoing quarterly inspections to monitor for any structural issues.

Mr. Hassard: Again, no answer for the people in Ross River.

Over the last three budgets, the Liberals have budgeted roughly \$8.5 million for the Ross River School, but they have only spent just over \$2 million of that. The evidence demonstrates that fixing this school is not a priority for this Liberal government, and everyone knows that if this school was in the City of Whitehorse, they would have treated this as a top priority.

Can the minister explain why the government has lapsed over \$6 million in the last three years of funding that was supposed to go toward important remediation work for the school in Ross River?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The health and safety of students across the territory is a top priority. The safety of all school structures is a priority for this government. The member opposite will know that there are ongoing discussions with the community of Ross River and the Ross River Dena Council with respect to a possible new site for a school at some point in the future. Those conversations are ongoing, but in the interim, there are these four-times-per-year inspections of this current school indicating that there are no substantial concerns.

Is it built on impermanent permafrost? Absolutely, as is a lot of the community of Ross River; hence the discussions about a redeployment of a possible school site going forward. Those discussions are going forward and we certainly hope that they bear fruit in the future.

Mr. Hassard: So, more talk about priorities, but no real answers. Yesterday, when we asked about the new Dawson City rec centre, the Minister of Community Services said this about the condition of the building — and I'll quote: "... it's really awful. You wouldn't believe the gaps in the boards, and the work that the maintenance staff is doing to try to keep that facility operational..."

Well, the Ross River School has cracks in the walls, the building is sinking into the ground, the floor is twisting, doors don't close properly — Mr. Speaker, the conditions are deplorable, and these conditions would not be tolerated in a Whitehorse school.

Why doesn't the government feel that the Ross River School deserves the same level of priority as a rec centre?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to rise today and talk about — I mean, the members opposite are talking about recreation facilities now, and I'm happy to talk about all the work we're putting into recreation facilities across the territory.

The member opposite is absolutely correct. The Dawson City rec centre is problematic. It has been problematic for a long time. As we saw earlier today, I tabled a document. In 2011, the Yukon Party dug a hole in the ground. Then, five years later, in 2016, the now Leader of the Yukon Party was still digging that hole. This is the party of band-aids and broken dreams. They promise things on the eve of election, and they don't deliver. That's what we're seeing again and again.

This government is investing in our Yukon in a way that hasn't been seen in decades. We are building schools, we're building recreation centres, we are building the infrastructure that will drive the territory into the future, and I'm happy to talk about this all afternoon.

Question re: Child Development Centre building

Ms. Clarke: Last summer, evidence of mould was discovered at the Child Development Centre building. As a result, the facility was closed, and the CDC was relocated and bounced around into temporary spaces throughout the city. This has created a disruption for this important organization, as some employees have already relocated multiple times in the last year.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us what the plan is for the old Child Development Centre building? Will it be remediated, or will it be demolished?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. The safety and suitability of government buildings is a priority for the Department of Highways and Public Works.

As the member opposite identified, in the spring of 2021, the Child Development Centre experienced extensive leaking from the extreme snow load last winter, leading to water damage in the building.

During the remediation work last July, the walls and ceilings were opened, and the contractor found evidence of mould. Once evidence of mould was found, the building was immediately closed to facilitate the testing process. One week later, the tests confirmed mould on the main floor. The department has determined that extensive work is required to

remediate the current building, and it will not be available for the Child Development Centre in this school year. We are currently working on next steps for this building.

Ms. Clarke: The Child Development Centre provides essential services and outreach to our community. Disruptions to their activities and services need to be dealt with swiftly. We know that the government has hired a consultant to develop cost estimates with respect to dealing with the mould at the facility.

What is the current cost estimate for remediation or demolition of the existing Child Development Centre building?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question. As the member opposite has accurately identified, the work is ongoing. However, I can advise that the remediation contractor took appropriate measures to protect the safety of workers and the public once mould was discovered.

The Child Development Centre is an addition to the Education building, but does not share the same ventilation system. The cost estimate for remediation of the mould ranges, depending on whether the building will be demolished or renovated. If renovated, there will be significant additional costs, of course, for roof repairs, interior renovations, and building code upgrades.

The department is currently reviewing all information in order to make a reasoned and financially and fiscally responsible decision on whether the building should be demolished or renovated to meet other Yukon government space needs. This process will take some time, and the Child Development Centre has been informed that they will not be moved back into the building in the foreseeable future.

This government recognizes the fantastic work that the Child Development Centre does, and all members of the government on this side of the House have visited the Child Development Centre at various times to be briefed on the wonderful work that they do for all manner of children in the Yukon.

Ms. Clarke: Most recently, a large number of staff from the Child Development Centre were required to relocate from NVD place to Copper Ridge Place. Much of the rest of the staff are located in other buildings and offices throughout the city. It is untenable for staff to continue to be bounced around and separated from each other all over this city. A long-term space is required.

What is the government's plan to provide a long-term space to the Child Development Centre, and when will it be in place?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question today. I certainly want to speak to the Child Development Centre's important work in helping families and young children access early learning and therapeutic services. This is very vital work that they do, and I thank them for that.

It is unfortunate that the Child Development Centre had to relocate from their building. We appreciate their flexibility and ability to move and quickly resume their service delivery, including the therapeutic preschool. We have committed to supporting the CDC financially and logistically while they work through these moves. Department officials are in regular contact with CDC staff.

Again, I thank them for their work. I think that the Highways and Public Works officials acknowledged the work that they have done to work quickly to find alternatives. We will continue to work with the Child Development Centre and find the best location and/or facility for them to continue their services. Again, thank you to the Minister of Highways and Public Works for the work that he has done to pay close attention to this very important matter.

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

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate in Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some 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.

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just welcoming two folks from the Department of Health and Social Services. Please have a seat. We have with us Geri MacDonald, who is the director of Family and Children's Services, as well as Caitlin Knutson, who has worked extensively on this Bill No. 11 and is here to support us during this debate. Thank you both for joining us.

I would like to proceed with some opening comments with respect to Committee of the Whole, and I look forward to our discussion of Bill No. 11.

Thank you for the opportunity, Deputy Chair, to rise today to speak to this Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family*

Services Act (2022), and to speak about it. This is my opportunity to indicate the importance and the critical reasons that we have brought this particular piece of legislation forward.

I should note that Caitlin Knutson, who is with us, is a senior policy advisor with the Department of Health and Social Services and has worked extensively on this bill. I really appreciate the support from both she and Geri MacDonald here today.

I want to again take the opportunity to acknowledge the work and the dedication of Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations in the development of this amending bill, as well as the recommendations put forward by the independent advisory committee in its final report, called *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*.

This government-to-government collaborative process on the amendments responds directly to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, specifically the call for all levels of government to work together to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children in care.

Over the past five years, we have been working hard to reduce the number of children in the care of the director of Family and Children's Services. In December of 2021, there were 84 children in out-of-home care here in the territory, and 72 percent of those were Yukon First Nation children.

A key component of this work has been to shift toward working together with families and communities to find extended family members who are able to care for children instead of bringing children into care and into the custody of the director. That is a key shift of the Department of Health and Social Services in collaboration with our work with Yukon First Nations.

As I noted at second reading, this history of this bill coming to the floor for debate is extremely important.

In 2018, the *Child and Family Services Act Review Advisory Committee* was established by the then-Minister of Health and Social Services. This independent committee determined the mechanisms for gathering information for its own review. Committee members completed 18 months of public engagement, travelled to all Yukon communities, and held meetings and interviews with Yukon First Nation community organizations and individuals. There were focus groups, community-specific meetings, individual meetings, written submissions by individuals, community organizations, experts, and key stakeholders.

This extensive consultation resulted in the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report. That was tabled in this Legislature in October 2019. The *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee was established in July 2020 with representation from 12 Yukon First Nations. It was co-chaired by the Council of Yukon First Nations' executive director, Shadelle Chambers, and by Geri MacDonald, who is here with us today, the director of Family and Children's Services with the Government of Yukon.

The mandate of this steering committee was to review all required actions from *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. The committee also reviewed the federal

act, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families 2020*, to address any discrepancies between it and the Yukon's *Child and Family Services Act*.

The *Child and Family Services Act* executive partnership committee was established to provide guidance and oversight to the steering committee. It had representation from three Yukon First Nations and two Health and Social Services assistant deputy ministers.

The amending bill that we present to you today is the outcome and the result of many months and hundreds of hours of concerted effort by all parties involved.

I would like to take a moment to speak about some specific provisions of this bill. The definitions, the guiding principles, the service delivery principles, and the best interests of the child have all been amended. They have been amended to update the preamble to clarify the Yukon government's commitment to reconciliation, working government-to-government, family preservation and reunification, honouring cultural and community connections, and to acknowledge historical trauma caused within and by the child welfare system.

The guiding principles have been amended to update the service delivery principles and to update the guiding principles and to focus and strengthen the act's foundational guidance, which centres on the best interests of the child, preserving and reunifying families, reflecting values that are fundamental to Yukon First Nations, and involving and connecting with communities and culture.

It has been updated with respect to the best interests of the child to more fully consider the child's need to be protected from harm, the importance of family integrity and connections with community and culture, as well as to match the best interests of the child framework established in *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families 2020* — the federal legislation.

It has been updated to add a definition of "preventive" that clarifies the preventative services that are intended to preserve families that have an identified protection concern and to work to prevent further escalation of risk, which will prevent the potential need to separate children from their families.

It has been updated to add a purpose statement that clarifies that the *Child and Family Services Act* is the legislated scheme for children who are in need of protective intervention and for adoptions.

Sections 6 through 9 outline the collaborative process to develop a case plan for any child in need of protective intervention. This process is child- and family-led and intends to bring together important supports and people to collaborate on a plan for the child. This amending bill will replace the phrase "family conference or other cooperative planning process" with "collaborative planning" as the preferred practice for developing a case plan. This is truly innovative.

The amending bill will require the director to make all reasonable efforts to use a collaborative planning process when developing or renewing a case plan, including for interim case plans.

The amending bill will specify that the collaborative planning process and alternate dispute resolution mechanisms

may include culturally appropriate approaches, such as peacemaking circles or family circles.

The amending bill will require the director to invite an authorized representative of each Yukon First Nation and indigenous governing body of which a child or their parent is a member. The amending bill will add the persons in whose care the child is to the list of invited participants and specify that counsellors and social workers are relevant service provider participants.

Under the current act, sections 10 through 20 outline the types of written agreements that a director can establish to provide supportive programs and services to children, youth, families, extended family members, or others. These agreements cover a range of care scenarios, including when a child or youth is residing with their parents, extended family, or if they are in out-of-home care or are transitioning out of care and into independent living.

This bill will expand supports and written agreements to include prenatal services for expectant parents at risk of becoming involved with child protection once the child is born. It will expand eligibility for transitional supports and written agreements to youth who are turning 19 and/or are under the age of 26. It clarifies that youth who were previously placed in extended family care by their parent or by a court order for a total of at least two years are eligible for transitional supports. It will permit the director to extend transitional supports and written agreements beyond a person's 26th birthday in exceptional circumstances related to achieving goals set out in their care plan — such as finishing school, a degree, or other training, for example — and identify additional transitional supports for a successful transition into independent living. It will help with tuition or income or safe housing if necessary.

The amending bill will clarify the purpose of the transitional case plan and the need for amendment and permit the use of a collaborative planning process when amending. It will extend the term of agreements with extended family members from the typical six months to 12 months in order to reduce the risk of disruption of supports. It will require a case plan for the provision of supports under all agreements. That case plan must be reviewed every six months for as long as an agreement remains in place or 12 months in the case of an extended family agreement. It will remove a "special needs agreement" for children with disabilities to avoid forcing families to enter the child welfare system in order to receive services solely to meet the complex needs of their children.

Another innovative change is that the Government of Yukon's Social Supports branch now provides a comprehensive continuum of disability supports and services throughout a person's lifetime. The *Child and Family Services Act* will support children with disabilities who have a protective concern. It will clarify that a child, a youth, or a family may self-refer and request an agreement for supports and specify that a child or youth must be in need or at risk of protective intervention for the directive to offer most supports, excluding prenatal or transitional supports. It will permit the director to offer supports without a written agreement in an emergency or

on a short-term basis — for example, while a case plan is being developed.

Although the current act sets out the criteria for determining when protective intervention is needed, as well as the processes by which the need for protective intervention is identified and investigated, the bill will further refine these processes and bring much-needed clarity.

With respect to the criteria for determining when protective intervention is needed, the bill recognizes and will further clarify emotional harm and its possible sources. It will further clarify and describe abandonment. It enables and provides an alternative option to an intrusive child protection investigation when the parents of a child are cooperative and can be supported through voluntary services. This option is only for non-criminal matters, of course, and when there is acknowledgement by the parents of the child protection concern. The director must also notify each First Nation and indigenous governing body of which the child or parent — either parent or both parents — is a member in both circumstances when there is an investigation and when the parents are cooperating and report the results of the investigation to those parties.

For children who need to come into the care or the custody of the director, case plans need to be developed as described under sections 44 and 45. These case plans will also be developed using a collaborative planning process. The bill also requires that a cultural plan has to be completed. These cultural plans will be for all children in the care of the director. There will be supports and respect for cultural activities and teachings, no matter the culture that the child is from.

All case plans will be reviewed every six months, and the director will be required to invite participants of the collaborative planning process to participate in the review of that process.

There are a few amendments that pertain to court processes and the party status to a proceeding. The amending bill will require that the director notify the child's birth parents of the application and hearing and ensure that they are served relevant documents, even if they do not have custody of a child. The changes require the director to notify each Yukon First Nation and indigenous governing body of which the child, or their parent, is a member. By contrast, the current act only requires that the child's Yukon First Nation be notified. That is not satisfactory any longer.

The amending bill will provide a right to be a party to a court application to a child's birth parents, except in situations of adoption, to their extended family members or other persons to whom the parent has given care of the child, and each First Nation and indigenous governing body of which the child, or their parent, is a member. This is truly exceptional.

The amending bill will place a maximum of a 70-day limit for each adjournment to a hearing and add factors that the judge must take into account before granting an adjournment, such as the best interests of the child, whether the adjournment will promote family reunification, and whether the adjournment will impact a timely return of a child to their parent or the child's access to community and culture.

The changes will enable a judge to extend the time period a child is in temporary custody to allow families to continue working with Family and Children's Services to address their child protection concerns and work toward family reunification.

Currently, the judge must generally make a continuing custody order if a certain total cumulative time period for temporary custody is met. This practice — this requirement — may well disrupt family reunification efforts, so it's being changed.

Under the current act, the director must place a child who is in their temporary custody or continuing custody in a foster home or a group home. The act also sets out certain rules and considerations for the director to follow when placing a child.

Bill No. 11 will enable the director to place a child with an extended family member or someone else living in the child's community if placing the child on a short-term basis. It will enable the director to place a child in their temporary custody or continuing custody with an extended family member, subject to the director's ongoing supervision, to ensure the children remain in their communities.

The bill will add criteria for the director to consider when determining whether or where to place a child in out-of-home care in order to ensure that children remain with siblings and close to their parents and their extended family members and thereby preserve their cultural and community connections. This will be the law.

Bill No. 11 specifies that "sibling" includes sibling-like relationships, as identified by the child or a parent, such as a cousin or a close friend. It clearly extends the connections for children with their close family and culture.

The bill will enable the director to apply for a court order to obtain information from a third party if it is relevant to their ongoing duties, such as determining who should be allowed to contact or visit the child in their care or their custody and to set out conditions relevant to both the application and the order, if granted. The check and balance here is that it is an application to a court.

The current act sets out the process for adoption processes in sections 95 through 155. Bill No. 11 will clarify that adoption-related information can only be shared as outlined in division 6, also known under the title of "Adoptions". Bill No. 11 will also require the consent of Yukon First Nations and indigenous governing bodies prior to the adoption of an indigenous child.

There were a number of administrative and service quality accountability amendments in the bill. The bill will better facilitate the collection and disclosure of personal information and personal health information by the director if it is appropriate and related to a child protection concern. It will also require the minister to publish an annual report and to specify the content of the annual report to improve transparency and accountability. It will enable the director to share information relating to the provision of services with Yukon First Nations, indigenous governing bodies, the federal government, and provinces and territories, as need be.

It will provide regulation-making powers with respect to the requirements for short-term placements, and it will provide regulation-making powers with respect to transitioning —

Deputy Chair: Order.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that and I appreciate the minister's opening remarks. I realize that the minister has opening remarks and so I would like to offer her the opportunity to continue them.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that; I was very near the end. My opportunity was to, again, thank child and family services — the act advisory committee — for embracing the *Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report and the *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee for the government-to-government discussions that led to the proposed amendments and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

These amendments are the result of so much time and focused efforts toward reforming our child welfare system by putting children and their interests at its centre. These amendments are the next step on our path forward to reform and work together with Yukon First Nations toward healthy, safe, and supported children and families. I appreciate the opportunity to finish my note.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's opening remarks on this bill. I would like to join the minister in welcoming officials from the department here. I appreciate their presence to aid the minister in responding to our questions and discussion with regard to this bill.

I am aware of the general desire to see this bill to move forward with a certain degree of speed, so I will forego the normal opening speech that MLAs, in responding to a bill, may offer, and I would point to my comments at second reading.

I will begin then by getting right into some questions. I would like to begin with the consultation process for the development of the bill. Obviously, the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report, which was completed by the advisory committee a number of years ago, was a guiding document for this legislative work, so I am wondering if the minister can offer a bit of an explanation of how that report was taken by the government, how it was interpreted, thought about, and implemented into the act or the bill that we see before us.

I would also like for the minister to explain a little bit about how this report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, was dealt with by — the minister could correct me here — either a steering committee or an advisory committee that was made up of Yukon First Nation representation as well as the Yukon government — so how that advisory or steering committee interpreted this report and dealt with it and how this report was used to inform the creation of this bill.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question. This is an incredibly important aspect of the process to getting here today with this bill. I can advise that the steering committee went through each and every one of the — I guess they are recommended actions as opposed to — or “required” I think is the wording that is used — required actions instead of recommendations, so, let's use that language — the “required

actions”. The steering committee went through each and every one. They provided their advice to government on the required actions related to the report of *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*.

The first phase of that implementation project, or of the *Child and Family Services Act* implementation project, was focused on legislative requirements and the required actions that were necessary in relation to those required actions.

The next phase will focus on the implementation of these amendments and the broader Family and Children's Services policy and practice reform. It should be noted — many policy and practice reform actions are currently underway in anticipation of the work that will be needed to bring innovative approaches through policy and practice.

Of the 149 required actions, 26 were not accepted. These required actions were not accepted for various reasons, including that they would expand the scope of the *Child and Family Services Act* too broadly for its focus or they would erode parental custodial rights, which may impact the child's and the parents' voices in the decision-making process. It might be that they were not accepted because they were not consistent with other parts of the legislation or they weren't practical and may not impact the outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system. Noting that the focus of this *Child and Family Services Act* Steering Committee was to encompass the required actions of *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* into the *Child and Family Services Act* in a way that did not impact parental or custodial rights or the children's voices or any of those things in an adverse way.

We can share further details of the specifically required actions that were not accepted, if that is appropriate. Of the accepted required actions that were non-legislative — so the focus, of course, was on the legislative ones to bring us to here today — related to policy and practice reform — and that work is underway, as I have noted. Working groups have been proposed to further understand how we can work together to implement the intent of those important required actions. They have not been put by the wayside, but they did not impact the work that is here in this bill to amend the legislation with that focus, of course.

We have established the prenatal and infant support services for the at-risk expectant people working group that will focus on developing options and a Yukon model for preventive supports for expectant people at risk of becoming involved with child protection after birth.

This is an incredibly important step because this is an area of child protection work that has been of concern for many years. This is work that the Department of Health and Social Services is looking forward to, planning, and doing at this time with the expectation that there will be support, should the bill pass. But in any event, as I've described earlier, the shift that is taking place is with respect to how this new and current legislation must be better adapted to the needs of children and families.

At this time, the working group includes representation from Yukon First Nations, the federal government, and community organizations. There were also other areas

identified by the *Child and Family Services Act* Steering Committee as needing further discussion and collaboration to understand some of these issues more deeply. We're looking to establish working groups in a number of areas that will support child welfare reform initiatives. This is one piece of the work that needs to be done to go forward with child welfare reform.

There were areas that required more focus, discussion, and understanding to advance them to the reform that is required and to consider all options. The proposed working groups include custom adoptions, legal representation, coordination of prevention services and supports, and youth justice. I hope that responds to the member's question.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answers. Based on her answer, my understanding is that the *Child and Family Services Act* Steering Committee took the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report and its 149 required actions and then considered and distilled them and broke them down into — for lack of a better word — pots of actions that would either need to be dealt with through legislation, through policy, or through intergovernmental relations between the government and First Nations.

That represents the first phase of a multi-phased approach, which we are at right now — those legislative changes. Right now, phase 2, I suppose, is beginning, once this bill passes, around implementation, policy reform, and other issues. I think I have that right.

I was wondering if the minister could — and she indicated that she could, so I hope she can now — offer up the list of required actions from the act review committee, in *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, that were not included.

I understand that it's very logical in having read them, and I can understand why some would not have been included, and the minister began to answer some of that. Some were outside the scope of this legislation, et cetera, but I'm hoping that the minister can offer up a list of those. I believe it was 20-odd required actions that were not included in the bill.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I will list the numbers of the — there are 26 required actions that were not accepted by the committee for current work for various reasons, as I've said earlier. Let's see if I can — if I use this, it won't be in a particular order, but I'm happy to do that. They won't be in numerical order; I should say that.

I will try it like this: 20 were somewhat legislative related — 20 of the 26 required actions were somewhat legislative related that were not accepted. I have said that these are not in numerical order: 113 suggested that the name of the act be changed, and that wasn't accepted; 28 indicated that there should be a cooperative planning process, and that wasn't accepted, because other changes were made and that wasn't the wording; 19 dealt with foster parents and the requirement there, and it was determined that it was dealt with in other ways and should not necessarily be included; 87 talked about extended family care agreements, and that was not accepted by the group with respect to how the legislation was providing that in other places; 105 made a required action about alternative dispute resolution and changed a version of what is currently in the act,

which wasn't accepted, because the alternative dispute resolution is a process used when consensus is not available, and the focus here is on consensus.

As well, required action 107 was dealing with whether or not the director and a person were unable to resolve an issue. Again, it was not accepted by the group. Required actions 126, 127, and 128 were requiring the minister to mandate a particular committee to be independent and at arm's length, which was not accepted by the steering committee. I can go into further detail if necessary on that. Required action 131 required that the annual report must be authored by the director. This, of course, has been put in the legislation to require the minister's support and provide an annual report number.

Required action 132 suggested that, in addition to an annual report that covers the whole territory, it must be prepared by the director. That was not accepted, because the director's annual report is also publicly available through the Yukon government website, so there was clarity there.

Required action 7 dealt with partnership, meaning a relationship between an individual First Nation government, community, Yukoners, and Yukon government. It was not accepted, because the steering committee agreed that there is, and should continue to be, mutual respect, trust, and understanding between all of these partners. It is clearly in the preamble that this a commitment by the government, remembering that legislation, in this case, is directing the director of Family and Children's Services to do certain things to protect children in relation to that.

Required action 140 made a recommendation that the director — sorry, a required action — that the director shall offer co-operative planning when the need is for protective intervention; of course, that is dealt with in other places in the legislation.

Required action 120 was also not accepted, because it dealt with the — envisioned a shift from punitive language and action to providing support and preventive intervention in the first response. It dealt with terms like "supervision order" and other terms that were dealt with. It was not accepted that we should be changing the name of a "supervision order" to "support services order". That would erode the intent and the role of that order under the act.

Required action 142 spoke about counting a child's time in the director's temporary custody under section 61, or an interim care order, and it was not accepted, determining that when a child is in interim care, the child's parents retain the custodial rights of the child, and the child is not legally in the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services and should not be considered for calculating that time, appropriately, to make sure that the child's custodial rights — the parents' custodial rights — were intact during that period of time.

I should say that I appreciate that I might run out of time — the collective time we have for answering questions — but I'm happy to rise again.

Required action 144 dealt with — a child can only be subject to a temporary care order under certain circumstances, and the steering committee recommended against counting that time in those cases.

Required action 141 deals with an order for supervision, which must change to, in their recommendation, a support services order. It was not accepted. The steering committee agreed that legislative changes were not required because there are other mechanisms that were happening in the act and the bill brought forward here that would address this.

I have some more information if that is of concern.

Required action 75 indicated that there should not have to be a child protection concern for families to access programs and services that they need to stay together, and this piece of legislation is about child protection concerns. There are other ways in which children and families can have support, and this certainly broadens that. The *Child and Family Services Act* is a child protection piece of legislation designed to protect children from harm or the likelihood of harm. I need to be really clear with respect to this one. This particular required action would expand the opportunity for the director to be involved with children in a way that should not be expanded. The child protection concerns are what trigger the services and the responsibilities of the director, in this case, and, as a result, must be respected.

Required action 119 dealt with whether or not the director believes that a child is in need of protective intervention, and it was not accepted because, as mentioned above, the *Child and Family Services Act* is child protection legislation and it's designed to protect children from harm or the likelihood of harm. In that case, the steering committee agreed that the family in the Yukon required upstream or prevention-based services and programs. However, those programs should not be delivered by a child welfare system if there were not protection concerns but that, of course, that should be limited to the scope of the act.

Required action 42 noted that an adult adoptee must consent to being adopted under section 130, and it suggested that we would change section 130 to add that the adult must be advised of their right to seek independent legal counsel. It was not accepted because there is nothing in the *Child and Family Services Act* that precludes an adult from seeking legal advice prior to an adult adoption, and certainly conversations can be had and recommendations can be made through policy, if appropriate, to make sure that this is the case.

Required action 111 deals with the fact that the committee had heard about guiding principles that often do not make it to the front-line practice. It was not accepted by the steering committee because it was noted that all of the recommendations from the advisory committee must be in the *Child and Family Services Act* and that many of the recommendations could be carried out through other avenues such as regulations. So, it wasn't feasible to enshrine everything in the recommendations, into the *Child and Family Services Act*, but the steering committee agreed to evaluate each and every recommendation, and they did.

I should also make reference to my presentation in second reading that the preamble to this piece of legislation, Bill No. 11, that will change the scope, the practice, and the commitment of the government — Health and Social Services and the director of Family and Children's Services — in the

front and preamble is extraordinary. I will not take this opportunity to read it here again, but I note that I did so, including in my comments during the opening of second reading. I will take the opportunity to do so in Committee if I have the chance because it is extraordinary, and it encompasses the guiding principles, the commitments, in a way that I would say that I have never seen in a piece of legislation — or maybe anyone has ever seen. Certainly, I am not the expert.

Required action 53 dealt with front-line workers to have contact with families, children, and youth to provide supports and services and indicated that they had heard that front-line workers have to obtain consent from a supervisor to provide basic needs and services. This was not accepted because the steering committee agreed that the approval process and financial accountability and services to families all needed to be overhauled — that the act changes were, in fact, doing that and that the commitment will be done and put in policy.

Required action 73 indicated that the committee had heard that Family and Children's Services tends not to investigate certain allegations made by one parent during a separation, as an example. It was not accepted because the steering committee agreed that the *Child and Family Services Act* is child welfare legislation. Of course, if there is a concern about harm or potential concern for child welfare, those investigations are carried out. In this case, there will be an opportunity for the best interests of the child to be considered and for families to be involved.

Required action 88 dealt with parents, foster parents, and extended family, indicating that they must be specifically informed about a change and their right to obtain legal advice. It was not accepted because no changes were planned for the extended family care agreements, as noted, and no decision-making powers or ability to consent will be provided to extended family caregivers or foster caregivers, so that was not accepted by the committee.

I think this is number 26, although I could stand corrected — required action 102 talked about conflicting direction about the duty to report in instances of same-age sexual violence — teenagers seeking support and information after they had been sexually assaulted by a peer. It was not accepted to be included here in this legislative change because the duty to report is, in fact, a legal obligation. It's developed to protect children and youth, and the duty to report is clear. If anyone under the age of 19 is sexually abused or assaulted — or there are concerns of abuse — or is likely to be sexually abused or abused in any way, it must be reported to Family and Children's Services. Service providers in the community are provided with messaging to understand this. A good example would be teachers who might come into that kind of knowledge or have children or youth disclose to them or seek help from them. That was not accepted with respect to expanding or making that more specific.

I think this is now number 26; I apologize. Required action 98 indicated that the committee had heard that communities can and do feel isolated and overworked, and this leads to high turnover, so social workers need to be supported to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue. This was not accepted as a

recommendation that every community should have two social workers, because that is not available to us at the moment, but certainly we accepted the intent that social workers in communities need to be supported and that their work needs to be properly recognized and acknowledged. We have certainly learned through COVID-19 that community health workers, mental wellness workers, and social workers fall into that category and need to be supported throughout their work. Family and Children's Services regularly realigns manager and supervisor positions to provide clinical supervision, case management, and support — and moral support — to regional social workers and all of those individuals.

Because this is the last one, I will add one further comment, which is that I don't disagree with the observations made by the committee in certain circumstances. I think that action has been taken to address all of those. I have worked previously with social workers and Family and Children's Services. I know the stress of the work in the communities, but I also know that, having gone through this process with Bill No. 11, these changes are designed to have that work be properly recognized, to put the children, families, their culture, and their communities at the centre of what action is taken for the protection of children, and that the duty to protect children all remains in this really amazing piece of legislation.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister walking through those. I have a few questions just to confirm things. The minister adequately addressed the 26 that were not included. By virtue of that, can we then assume that the remaining 123 required actions were indeed accepted and will be reflected in the legislation? I would ask — the minister does not need to read through all 123, but simply indicate whether that is the case or not.

Was the determination and the explanation provided by the minister just now a function of the steering committee or a decision that YG made after? My question is: Was it the steering committee that went through those required actions, made the determination, and provided the explanation for why they weren't included in the legislation? So, the question is basically: Was it the steering committee that made that determination?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that I will answer the last question first, which was whether or not it was the steering committee that did this work, and yes, in fact, it was the steering committee that did this work.

I think that I will answer the other specific one in two ways. There were 26 required actions that were not accepted. I just went through all of those. The total is 149. There were 84 others that were accepted as required actions, and that work is happening. There were 39 others — again, of the 149 — where they were accepted in principle and that work is continuing. The work with respect to both of those groups of required actions is ongoing. As I've said, there are working groups being structured and much of that work is policy- and practice-related.

I will answer this another way to say that there were 65 required actions that related to legislative change. For the reasons I've given already, 20 of those were not accepted, but

45 of them were and resulted in direct changes to the *Child and Family Services Act* through Bill No. 11, which is here today.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that answer from the minister. I have to go back and check, but I believe that all adds up. I'll have to give that some thought.

But the reason I asked that question is simply that the committee put in a tremendous amount of work. They interviewed a lot of people involved. There were a lot of sensitive discussions and a lot of emotional content put into that report. I think that it's certainly good to understand how that report has been incorporated into this bill.

Has anyone from the government ever communicated what the minister just communicated to the Legislature, to the former committee — which required actions of their work were accepted in principle or not? Has any sort of communication been provided to the former committee about which of the required actions actually were accepted or not accepted? Those that were not and the 26 that were listed by the minister earlier and the reasoning behind them — have those ever been provided to the former committee either?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can indicate that I have met with the committee that was involved in the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report. I know that the former Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services met with that committee. I can't tell you when, but I know it was during COVID because it was a virtual meeting, but I can't tell you when. I can tell you that I did not go through that process with them.

Certainly, we talked about the commitment that we had made to their work and the work that the steering committee was doing at that time to ultimately result in the acceptance and implementation of their required actions, with the exceptions of the ones that have not been adopted by the CFSA Steering Committee members, of which there are many. It looks like I have 24, all in all — 19 from Yukon First Nations and five from the Yukon government. There were also members from the Council of Yukon First Nations. As members might be aware, that committee was co-chaired, as I mentioned earlier.

Their work was completed. I don't want to speak for them; I won't speak for them. The work by the committee that worked on the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report was extensive — absolutely amazing work — 149 required actions. Their work was truly comprehensive, and they truly turned their minds absolutely to the protection of children in bringing forward these required actions.

We are here to discuss the required actions that were part of this legislation — or Bill No. 11 — bringing this forward. I have committed to, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly — and the Department of Health and Social Services has committed — and Yukon First Nations' cooperation — and they have — again, not speaking for them — committed to doing the work going forward to deal with the others going forward, but we have not presented the required actions, in the way that I have just done here, to the committee that worked on that report.

Mr. Dixon: So, the reason why I ask that is simply that I too have met with the former chair of the committee — last

weekend — and received some input from her about the bill. I know that, in large part, the committee — and I only spoke to the chair, so I can't say for the entire committee, but I'm sure that the committee felt strongly about their work. I believe it would have been nice for them to understand how their work was incorporated into the bill, which aspects were not, which aspects were, and the reasoning behind that. I just wanted to highlight that for the minister.

Further, I know that, earlier this week, the minister's office sent out an invitation for members of that committee to attend the Legislature for this Committee of the Whole. In response, the former chair sent an e-mail to the minister's office, copying me and the Leader of the Third Party. She noted some very positive aspects of the bill. She noted that the bill is — and I'll quote from the letter: "This bill is a fantastic start to the changes that are needed in the Act."

One of the areas, though, that she did ask about was the issue of preventive interventions. I'm wondering if the minister can discuss that. Obviously, the notion of preventive interventions is a prevalent aspect of the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report.

While I appreciate the definitional change that is included in this bill to the definition of "prevention", I wonder if the minister can comment on the overall intent toward making changes to the preventive intervention process and approach that this bill will change in the legislation.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly appreciate hearing from Maureen Caley-Verdonk earlier this week, who I worked with for many years in the Dawson circuit. She was a renowned social worker in the area of child protection. I really appreciated her reaching out. I do also appreciate the perspective that she brings with respect to the preventive changes, but I am happy to answer here how this piece of legislation will support a prevention-based approach to child welfare, as it does.

The amended *Child and Family Services Act* will clarify what "preventive services" means — I mentioned that in my comments earlier — in the context of this child protection-based legislation. I think that we need to focus on the fact that it is child protection-based legislation, but there are areas and opportunities for prevention-based work.

The legislation will focus on how to de-escalate child protection risks and to prevent children in need of protective intervention from coming into the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services. In 2010 when the new legislation came in, I remember being excited that there were opportunities built into that legislation for the focus to be on preventing children from coming into the care of the director. There were many strides at that time and there were changes in approach, but I feel extremely confident and have the honour, as the minister with respect to this piece of legislation — this bill — to now see this go so much further than what was contemplated or available then under that legislation.

The approach of de-escalating child protection matters and preventing children from coming into the protective care of the director of Family and Children's Services is termed as "tertiary prevention services", according to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, where services are targeted to specific

families when a crisis or risks to children have been identified and the purpose is to mitigate the risks of separating children from their families.

This is such a shift in child protection work — I just can't say enough about the importance of this proposed shift. Our proposed legislative amendments built upon the foundation of tertiary preventive and voluntary services that Family and Children's Services introduced back in 2010, which is laid out from sections 10 to 17.

The Yukon's trilateral table on the well-being of Yukon First Nation children and families acknowledged that Yukon First Nations are in the best possible position to deliver primary and secondary child welfare prevention services and determined that funding must flow directly from the Government of Canada to Yukon First Nations and community organizations to deliver primary and secondary prevention services. Primary prevention services are aimed at the community as a whole, and secondary prevention services are delivered when concerns begin to arise and early intervention could help avoid a crisis. Yukon First Nations have the expertise to address the issues within their communities impacting all their children and prevent those issues from turning into child protection concerns.

The proposed legislative amendments respect the Yukon First Nations' right to self-determination and avoid expanding the *Child and Family Services Act* to deliver primary and secondary prevention services. They go beyond that to create room for the broach of child welfare reform that includes Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada.

The newly added purpose clause in this bill clearly states that the *Child and Family Services Act* is meant to provide services and programs to preserve families in order to alleviate the need to separate children from their families.

Programs and services listed under section 10 of the *Child and Family Services Act* now include prenatal services for expectant parents to ensure that children remain with their parents after they are born. This is a significant change to our child welfare legislation, which does not currently allow the director of Family and Children's Services to serve parents, or approach them or assist them, until the child is born.

Section 10 is further expanded to include services to support children learning and practising their languages, their culture, their traditional practices, their customs, and their traditions of their family and their community.

As well, section 10(k) gives the director the legal authority to develop any other programs or services for children in need of protective intervention, and their families, to support the prevention-based approach.

Another proposed amendment is to create a legal obligation for the director of Family and Children's Services where they are required to inform children and families of all prevention-based programs that are available under the *Child and Family Services Act* — again, a significant change.

Agreements with extended family members, under section 14, is one of the most frequently used prevention-based tools available under the current *Child and Family Services Act*. In

addition to all the policy and program changes to create true parity between the supports provided to extended family caregivers and foster caregivers, we propose to increase the maximum length of these agreements to 12 months to give parents more time to work toward family reunification and to reduce the administrative burden on extended family members of renewing these agreements every six months.

This is the prevention-based approach that has been included in Bill No. 11, inside the context of child protection-based legislation. I think they are new initiatives. I think they will support families going forward. Perhaps most importantly, they will support Yukon First Nation communities, governments, and organizations to deliver the primary and the secondary prevention services, remembering that — I think the number is 79 percent, and that may have changed since this statistic I have from December — but somewhere near 79 percent of the children currently in the care of the director are of Yukon First Nation descent.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister addressing the area that I have raised. The reason I went through there and raised that was that the former chair of the committee did feel that there was a missed opportunity to better address preventive interventions, and I wanted to note that. I know that our time is limited, so I will move on from that.

I think that we have clarified the role of the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report and have a clearer understanding of its role in this bill, so I think that I will move on from that. I will shift gears to the Child and Youth Advocate.

Obviously, I had asked a few questions of the minister during Question Period today, so perhaps we can dig into that a little bit more. The Child and Youth Advocate sent a letter to the minister yesterday, which I won't read extensively from, but appended to it was a January 19 letter from the Child and Youth Advocate to the Minister of Health and Social Services. At that time, among other things, the Child and Youth Advocate said — and I will quote from this letter: "Therefore, for the purposes of reviewing this policy issue that raises a substantial question of public interest in respect of how children's rights will be impacted by proposed amendments to the *CFSA*, I once again respectfully request, in accordance with ss.12(1), s.21 and s.23 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the following by February 1, 2022. 1. Draft legislative amendments to the *CFSA*; 2. Records demonstrating consideration of children's rights throughout the *CFSA* Implementation Project, including but not limited to tools such as Child Rights Impact Assessments; 3. Records demonstrating youth participation in the *CFSA* Implementation Project; 4. Records demonstrating inclusion of the Advocate's submission to the *CFSA* Advisory Committee; 5. Documents and materials regarding the *CFSA* Implementation Project, including but not limited to: a. Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee; b. Minutes of the Steering Committee; c. Correspondence and reports produced by the Steering Committee; and d. Current status of the *CFSA* Implementation Project."

Then finally, "6. Recommendations from the Steering Committee for: a. legislative amendments to the *CFSA*; and b.

policy changes to the Family and Children's Services policy manual." Then there is: "7. Updated policy manual for Family and Children's Services."

Can the minister confirm whether or not that material was provided to the Child and Youth Advocate by the date of February 1, as per her January 19, 2022 letter?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I'm happy to respond. Thank you for the question. I can indicate that — I don't have it in my hand, although I have asked for it to be brought to me — the response to the March 17, 2022, letter, I can recall — and I will paraphrase what I have responded to with respect to that letter — was that we had provided everything that we were able to provide, pursuant to the responsibilities that we had with the committee.

I know that earlier the Child and Youth Advocate asked for draft legislation. By that time, we had given draft legislation and were providing it to her office. We did not have it before then, so I just want to make it clear that there was no withholding of draft legislation to the Child and Youth Advocate.

We were pleased that the Child and Youth Advocate brought her resources to review this legislation. The *Child and Family Services Act* legislative process has been, as I outlined several times, government to government between the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, and that was done specifically given the overrepresentation of indigenous children in the child welfare system.

I'm not suggesting for a second that the Child and Youth Advocate does not work with or protect the rights of indigenous children, but this is the approach that was taken with respect to the development of this legislation and the steering committee and more particularly taking into account the work of the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* and the extensive work that was done by that group.

Health and Social Services has appreciated very much the training and support that the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office has facilitated to develop strong capacity for the Government of Yukon to have policy staff work to apply the child rights impact assessment, or what has been referred to here as the "CRIA", and the ability to take that lens on legislation.

But I am going to say here, almost more importantly, on program and policy development is that the way in which these things are practically impacting families and children — it is my understanding that Health and Social Services has committed to involving the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office in appropriate areas during the program policy and practice development process, which is responsive to the practical way in which this legislation, the policies of the department, and the requirements and obligations of the director impact children.

Key stakeholders, including the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office, were provided opportunities during the independent advisory committee's extensive consultation to communicate their concerns and thoughts about the *Child and Family Services Act*. It's my recollection — and I'll check with my advisors here today as to whether or not I have this right,

but I think the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office did present a written document of some 40 pages, which was clearly taken into account with respect to this work.

The last thing I should indicate is that, when I responded to the letter of March 17 — of course, I have not responded to the letter of March 23, which came yesterday — prior to that, my office and the Department of Health and Social Services conferred with the CFSA Steering Committee and indicated that some minutes were being requested of those meetings.

The response that I received was that they believed that some of those minutes contained very sensitive information and they were not happy, or supportive, of those minutes being released at that time — somewhat late in the game — but more importantly, they believed that it protected their process and that the other documents spoke for themselves. So, that is with respect to one specific request. I hope that responds to the question.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to be clear then, it sounds like the minister is making the point that the government did not provide all the information that was requested in the January 19, 2022 letter from the Child and Youth Advocate to the Child and Youth Advocate. At least the draft legislative amendments, I don't believe, were provided, according to what the minister just said, and it sounds like other aspects of what was requested, including the possibility of draft minutes or minutes of meetings, were not included.

Can the minister clarify if some of that documentation was not provided because it was too late in the game to request it? That is what she said, and so I would ask her if she could clarify that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: No, I did not say that is why it was not presented. My response — actually, having seen the letter now, I had extensive discussions with the deputy minister. It came through a response from the deputy minister's office to the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office indicating that we had provided all of the information that we were able to. There was no reason whatsoever that any information was not provided, which is the insinuation, I think.

Let me be clear: We gave the Child and Youth Advocate everything that we were able to give the Child and Youth Advocate in response to her letter in January. If we were not providing information, it was because we were not able to at the time.

Mr. Dixon: So, can the minister tell the Legislature if she feels that the government has met its requirements under the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* to provide information?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the language in the question, but it has nothing to do with my feelings. I want to be clear that my obligation, as a minister of this government, is to respond in the best way possible to all inquiries that come to my office. We had legal advice. We conferred with the steering committee with respect to the types of documents that were being requested.

I should note that, back in January, a really extensive list of documents was requested, and we were provided very few days in which to respond, but we did review all of the requests of the Child and Youth Advocate and provided all of the

documents that we were permitted to provide to her, based on the consultations that I have described.

Mr. Dixon: I'll reword the question and set aside any notion of feelings.

Did the minister meet her obligations under section 23(2) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* to provide the records requested by the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes.

Mr. Dixon: Okay. So, I'll move on to the more recent letter from the Child and Youth Advocate dated yesterday.

In that letter — I'll quote from it briefly: "Second, your Department of Health and Social Services has essentially ignored our formal requests since May 2021 for a draft of Bill No. 11 for the express purpose of conducting our CRIA..." — to use the acronym defined by the minister earlier — "... well in advance of the Bill being tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Specifically, we requested the draft Bill on May 5, 2021, June 30, 2021, July 6, 2021, November 4, 2021, December 8, 2021, and on January 19, 2022. For your ease of reference, I enclose our letter of January 19, 2022 to you, and copied to..." — the Premier — "... which summarizes our repeated requests for a draft of Bill No. 11, as well as our warning that the continued failure of your government to provide the YCAO with the draft of the Bill could result in a delay in enacting the Bill. On the following day, January 20, 2022, I personally met with..." — the Premier — "... to emphasize both the government's legal obligation to provide the draft Bill to the YCAO, as well as the urgency with which we now required the draft Bill to perform a CRIA prior to the tabling of the Bill, which was expected to occur during the spring sitting."

Now, the minister referenced a document prepared by the Child and Youth Advocate. I assume she was referring to the CRIA, because that's roughly 40 pages long and she indicated that it was a 40-page document. Does the minister feel that the Child and Youth Advocate was given sufficient information and time to conduct the child rights impact assessment in a thorough and comprehensive way?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I know the member opposite has sat in government and is well aware of the way in which a process works with respect to a draft piece of legislation.

Let me say that it is in fact the case that the draft legislation is not often finalized until days before the legislation is going to be introduced.

I'm going to respond by saying that when the draft legislation was in a form that was satisfactory — I mean, there have still been a few typo changes and things like that at the end — back in January, we provided a copy to the Child and Youth Advocate for the purpose of her applying a CRIA, which I understand, by virtue of the definition of the CRIA process, should be applied to legislation near finality, not to case notes, draft notes, or those kinds of things ahead of time.

I should also clarify that the 40-page document — the CRIA — that has been presented here in the Legislative Assembly, appropriately by an officer of the Legislative Assembly, is not the document I was speaking to before. It is my understanding that the Child and Youth Advocate presented

— maybe I have the page numbers wrong, but I think it has now been clarified that it is probably near 59 or 58 pages — of her approach, her concerns, and her thoughts with respect to this process to the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* committee, the committee that resulted in that report, and that was quite some time ago. In addition to that, we have the benefit of the CRIA process that has been provided by the Child and Youth Advocate.

I think that answers the question, but I am just checking my notes. I think that does answer the question. I guess, to be really clear, we respect absolutely the process of the Child and Youth Advocate Office. I was an officer of this Legislative Assembly for five years. I completely respect the process of independent officers and their role in activities that take place with respect to this Legislative Assembly. I certainly respect the request made by the Child and Youth Advocate Office and ultimately the information that she gave, inserted, and provided for this process, both at the early stages when the report was being considered and 149 required actions were being developed — during that process — and ultimately now with respect to the matter coming before this Legislative Assembly and her review of the draft legislation, which we provided when we had it.

Mr. Dixon: The question that I had asked was: Was it the minister's understanding that the Child and Youth Advocate was given sufficient time to conduct a thorough and comprehensive child rights impact assessment with the information needed? I will just re-ask that question: Does the minister feel that a sufficient amount of time was given to the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am not an expert in the assessment done by the Child and Youth Advocate, so I won't be able to answer that question.

Mr. Dixon: That is very clear.

Did the child rights impact assessment in any way influence the bill that we see before us?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I think it's really incredibly important to reference the child rights impact assessment, not only the one done by the Child and Youth Advocate, but the one done during this process or the lens used during this process.

I think the question was whether or not the child rights impact assessment — I think the reference is to the one done by the Child and Youth Advocate; am I correct in that? I see nodding heads. So, whether that was considered in relation to Bill No. 11 — it was considered. When it came to us, it was extensively reviewed. The approach we initially took is that the Government of Yukon appreciates that what I have just said is also the position of the department with respect to respect and deference to legislative officers of this Legislative Assembly.

The Government of Yukon appreciates the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office's child rights impact assessment on the proposed legislative amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*. We went through the report done by the Child and Youth Advocate Office point by point. Certainly, we thank the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office for all of her efforts in ensuring that children and youths' rights are protected in this

context and in all contexts. The work that is done by that office is incredibly important.

The recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate do raise important points for consideration, many of which were thoroughly discussed by the *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee. The Government of Yukon position is that the 11 proposed recommendations will, and do, require further conversation through the process of practice and policies that will be developed, but do not require further amendments to the legislation. I'm happy to go through them. I think we'll have an opportunity to do that.

I think we should go back for a second and remind everyone that the independent committee that worked for months and ultimately authored the report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, including 149 recommended actions, had the input of the Child and Youth Advocate with an extensive document, and the consideration of that point of view and expertise was taken into account at that stage of this process.

I should also remind everyone that, upon receipt of the 149 required actions, the steering committee considered each and every one of them individually, one at a time, to determine how they could be included, or should they be included, in the process of developing this bill and that we worked government to government with respect to the development of the ultimate bill that is before you.

Lastly, I would like to say that, while I have great respect for the Child and Youth Advocate Office with respect to the CRIA, or the child rights impact assessment, that was done, the steering committee did use the child rights lens at every step of the process of developing this legislation and in the assessment of each and every one of the required actions.

Lastly, Yukon First Nations were determined and took a position, quite rightly, that they are experts in the care and protection of their children, their families, and their communities and that this must be front and centre in Bill No. 11, and in fact, it is. So, I appreciate the opportunity to address the child rights impact assessment and all that goes with that, because this is about children's rights and it's about children's rights in the context of child protection, and as a result, the child rights lens must be, and was, applied.

Mr. Dixon: On what date did the minister receive the CRIA from the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have a letter in my hand, dated March 10, from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office. I am going to assume that I received this document on March 10, and I can tell you that we met almost immediately with respect to this response from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office. We were keen to make sure that any recommendations that she might have made and her assessment was taken into account and was assessed almost immediately. I can tell you that the team of individuals at the policy part of Health and Social Services have worked tirelessly to assess this.

I appreciate that March 10 is not that long ago, but I can assure you that this had top priority with respect to bringing this bill forward and making sure that we had addressed all of the

concerns, if there were any expressed by the Child and Youth Advocate.

Mr. Dixon: The minister received this report on March 10. Does she recall the day that she tabled this legislation for first reading?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have been advised that this bill was tabled on March 9, but before the member goes there, I am happy to reiterate exactly what process was undertaken when we received the child rights impact assessment from the Child and Youth Advocate Office. We have seen it several times here in this particular legislative Sitting where individuals amended their own motion or their own bill. I certainly would have brought forward amendments if they were necessary. I have to say that the advice and the information that we received from the Child and Youth Advocate Office was excellent.

I can indicate that I was very pleased that we have addressed in this legislation — or will in policy and practice development — each of the things that she mentioned in that assessment report. We have committed not only here but previously to the Child and Youth Advocate that her point of view and the expertise of her office will be involved in the process of policy and practice development.

Mr. Dixon: I hope that the minister can see the problem here, because she just stood not too many minutes ago and told the Legislature that, when they received the CRIA, they extensively reviewed it and that it informed the legislation that we see before us — all the things that were recommended were considered.

But the CRIA was received on March 10 and the minister had already tabled the bill on March 9, so it is completely incongruent that the minister can say that she thoughtfully considered the CRIA prior to the bill being tabled when the CRIA was received after the bill had been tabled.

It is very clear that the CRIA done by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate was an afterthought. It was something that they didn't wait to receive and thoughtfully consider. They got it afterwards and now have reviewed it post facto. It seems difficult for me, and I think for anyone, to understand how the minister can say that the CRIA informed this bill when the CRIA was submitted to the minister the day after she tabled the bill.

We are going to have time to go through some of these recommendations, but ultimately, the Child and Youth Advocate makes a lot of specific and general comments about the legislation. Make no mistake: The Child and Youth Advocate notes that the bill is good, there are good things in here, and it is going to improve things. But the Child and Youth Advocate also notes that there are a few changes that require a second thought.

In the executive summary of the CRIA, the Child and Youth Advocate notes — and I quote: “But there are also a few changes that require a second thought, and still other areas where no changes were proposed but may represent a missed opportunity to meaningfully impact children’s lives. If the enclosed recommendations are considered carefully, this CRIA would represent an opportunity for the government to

implement exemplary and transformational legislation, providing the benchmark for jurisdictions across the country.”

If the minister had simply waited to receive the CRIA and then held the CRIA up against her proposed bill, the minister could have thoughtfully considered extensively — as she said she did, which obviously isn't true — the CRIA prior to tabling it, and then we wouldn't be in the position that we are, where an independent officer of the Legislature is asking for changes to a bill that is on the floor of the Legislature after it has been tabled because her input wasn't considered before it was tabled.

So, I think that this is sort of the nub of the issue and the nub of our concern — that the CRIA and the work of the Child and Youth Advocate wasn't considered here. I know that there was some input earlier on. I know that the Child and Youth Advocate made a submission to the advisory committee back in 2018 or 2019, but ultimately, the minister did not provide a draft bill in time for the CRIA to be completed before the bill was tabled. The minister tabled the bill before the CRIA was even completed and yet has had the gall to stand here and say that they extensively reviewed it and that the CRIA is incorporated in the bill, which obviously makes no sense at all.

My question, I guess, is this: Is the minister willing — she floated the idea herself — to entertain amendments to the bill relative to those clearly advised by the Child and Youth Advocate, which the Child and Youth Advocate clearly thinks would strengthen this bill? Will the minister be putting forward those amendments herself, or would she prefer that someone else do it?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'll just say that the member opposite has quoted me to have said that this was taken into account — that the CRIA was assessed prior to the bill being tabled. I don't believe I said that. What I said was that, when we immediately received it, the work was done. That might be incredulous to the member opposite, but that's what happened. I'm a proponent of accuracy and specific facts with respect to this Legislative Assembly. As a result, I am happy to repeat that this work was done immediately upon having received the child rights impact assessment from the Child and Youth Advocate.

When the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services wrote to the Child and Youth Advocate on February 2 with the response and the inclusion of the draft *Child and Family Services Act*, we encouraged her review. We outlined how some of the work had been done previously, and we looked forward to receiving any comments or CRIA or report that may be done. We indicated that February 16, 2022 would have been the date upon which we expected, if possible, to receive it.

The last paragraph says — and I quote: “Again, thank you for your letter. We look forward to receiving any comments you may have by February 16, 2022. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.” It is signed by the deputy minister. Ultimately, we had a very cordial correspondence from the Child and Youth Advocate. I think that letter was dated March 10 — that included the report. I can also indicate that I believe we have an e-mail from a day or two before this that went to — I don't know if it went to the Leader of the Official Opposition. It went to the Leader of the Third Party — just because I recall that. It came to me indicating that

the child rights impact assessment was completed and indicating that the Child and Youth Advocate would be tabling it in the Legislative Assembly. I recall that my response — and, I think, the response from the Leader of the Third Party — was to ask if we could see a copy, thanking her for that, and ultimately we received this letter dated March 10.

I am sorry that this seems incredulous to the member opposite. I have reported here exactly the work that was done by the department. I have reported here extensively the respect that we have for the work done by the Child and Youth Advocate Office, and I have reported extensively on the details and how we worked through each of the points made by the Child and Youth Advocate in the CRIA to make sure that we could consider them in relation to Bill No. 11 and consider them in relation to the policy and practices that will be developed.

Deputy Chair: 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 before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to return to this. I think the nub of my question is simply: Why not just wait to receive the CRIA before tabling the act? The minister knew that the Child and Youth Advocate was doing this work. They had been asking for information for months, maybe more. They knew that there was an interest in conducting the CRIA. Why not simply just wait until the CRIA was done before tabling the bill so that the government could consider the recommendations of the CRIA before the tabling of the bill?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Let me reiterate that the CRIA or the — I'll just make sure I have the acronym correctly. I don't want to mess that up — the child rights impact assessment is a process that is — was, in this case, I understand from the correspondence — completed by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office. If I haven't been clear, it is also a lens by which the steering committee did their work at every step of the way in the development of Bill No. 11.

The process that was determined here is, in fact, groundbreaking. It is work including 14 Yukon First Nations, 12 at the table. The steering committee was co-chaired by the executive director of the Council of Yukon First Nations. In addition to that, the respect for government-to-government relations and the process that was determined on how to achieve Bill No. 11, how to go through 149 required actions of an independent committee that worked for months and months and hundreds of hours to do this must be respected.

The First Nations at the table — I need to talk for a second about the groundbreaking process. Government to government

is something that we've committed to since our election back in 2016. It has resulted in extensive impact and extensive progress with respect to how we work with Yukon First Nations. That was integrated into the process that was used here to address the overrepresentation of Yukon First Nation children in the child protection process, in the child protection world, in the child welfare process.

First Nation governments and First Nation individuals who came to this table are the experts with respect to the care of their children. They had a voice in this process that has not been the case previously with respect to the development of legislation that so intensely affects their communities. The CRIA lens was used throughout the development of this process. We very much appreciate the lens and ultimately the report provided by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, but it is one piece of the puzzle in the process that was developed to use here in getting Bill No. 11 to the floor.

As I have said previously and will reiterate here, each and every one of the recommendations made in the report that was sent to us on March 10, 2022 have been taken into account and considered, and I certainly look forward to discussing them one by one in relation to Bill No. 11.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's comments there. I guess my point is simply this: We, as legislators, are asked to consider these bills to vote on them. When that happens, we seek input from people who have thoughts from their constituents, experts, and others. I know that the minister is informed by the process on the public service side, but when we receive a bill like this and then, within 24 hours, receive a child rights impact assessment like this from the Child and Youth Advocate — who is an independent officer of the Legislature, who we appoint to provide us, as legislators, with advice about issues related to the rights of children — and the independent officer tells us that, while good, this bill could benefit from additional changes and makes specific changes, I think that it is only fair that we consider them. That is the position that we are in.

It sounds like the minister is prepared to do that, so why doesn't the minister give us a bit of that explanation? Why are the amendments proposed by the Child and Youth Advocate not good or not right? Why should they not be considered now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate, I think, whether it is a formal or informal agreement, that the answers during Committee of the Whole will be no longer than eight minutes, but I am happy to sit down when I reach that time, because this will be an intricate answer.

I have been asked about the recommendations of the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate with respect to Bill No. 11 before the Legislative Assembly. While the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate raise important points for consideration, many of which were thoroughly discussed by the *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee, the Government of Yukon does not take the position that any of the 11 proposed recommendations would require further amendments, and I am happy to go through the rationale for that.

Firstly, I will say that eight of the 11 recommendations are already addressed in various ways throughout the existing *Child and Family Services Act's* proposed legislative amendments and the Family and Children's Services policies that either exist now or will be properly addressed to match the legislation, should we have that opportunity.

In working with our partners, it was determined that the three remaining recommendations — I will get to the eight in a moment — would do a number of things that were not contemplated or appropriate in the circumstances.

The first being number 1 — it would actually expand the scope of the *Child and Family Services Act* beyond a child protection focus, which is, of course, the purpose of the act.

Recommendation 3 — I'll call them as numbered in the report — we've taken the position and reviewed the fact that it would blur the legal mandate between Family and Children's Services and the Child and Youth Advocate Office. That's something that we want to protect and not blur. That's number 3.

Number 10, which was one of the recommendations that was not determined to be included here, would or could unintentionally result in colonial child welfare practices that further perpetuate the overrepresentation of indigenous children in care.

I'm happy to note, with respect to recommendation number 1 as referred to in the executive summary, it contemplates the articulation of the rights of children receiving services under the act. The recommendation would expand the purpose of the *Child and Family Services Act* to promote the rights of children generally and capture the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in the guiding principles and ultimately expand the rights of the child in care that are included in section 88 to apply to all children receiving services — and it would move that provision to the beginning of the statutes.

I will come back to that because that's the original recommendation.

The *Child and Family Services Act* is the Yukon's child protection legislation. It has a specific focus. It is primarily designed to protect the health and safety and well-being of children in need of protective intervention. In fact, that's truly its only purpose with the exception of the adoption provisions.

It is not intended to promote the rights of all children in the Yukon and does not affect children who are not in need of protective intervention. If the purpose of the *Child and Family Services Act* is expanded, then the director of Family and Children's Services' legal authority would be expanded as well, and it would result in more children and families — especially indigenous children and families — becoming involved in Yukon's child welfare system. That is in no way the intent — and I am sure that, while we have respected all of the recommendations — and I certainly won't speak for them, other than to say what they are — we must look at the potential consequences.

The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* is referenced in the preamble of the *Child and Family Services Act* to acknowledge that the legislation is meant to be applied within the context of children's rights, but the United Nations'

Convention on the Rights of the Child goes beyond children in need of protective intervention and creates the full range of children's rights. It refers to civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights for governments to uphold for all children. This is incredibly important to do, but not in this piece of legislation. Embedding all of these broader rights in the guiding principles would expand the *Child and Family Services Act* beyond its intended scope.

I really want to emphasize that a reference to the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in the preamble of this piece of legislation is, in fact, that recognition and is so important, which is why it is there. I have made reference to the preamble of this legislation many times throughout the debate, and it is critical. It is also the preamble of a piece of legislation which clearly indicates that all of what comes behind it takes into account all of these provisions and all of these protections and must be read in light of those documents and those — some are pieces of legislation, like the federal piece of legislation respecting Inuit, indigenous, and Métis children.

Section 88 of the *Child and Family Services Act* lists the rights of children in the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services. In that context, the rights of the children are set out in section 88. These are the rights that all children who are in government care are owed, and the director of Family and Children's Services is obligated to uphold these rights in those circumstances because that is what their obligation is, as defined by this legislation.

Children who are not in the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services and who receive services under the *Child and Family Services Act* are in the custody of their parents or guardians. If section 88 is expanded to include children receiving services as well, then the director of Family and Children's Services may infringe on parents' custodial rights by taking action or being required to take action under that section of the act.

Reorganizing the *Child and Family Services Act* to move section 88 to the beginning of the legislation, which is part of that recommendation, would counter the legislative scheme that prioritizes the prevention-based services to children in need of protection, or protective intervention, over the intervention-based approach to bringing children into the custody or care of the director of Family and Children's Services.

I think it's important to note that section 88 exists where it does in the legislation for a specific reason, which is, among other things, that the focus of this new legislation should be on keeping children out of the care of the director — supporting their families, supporting their culture, and supporting their communities to make sure that they are safe and cared for, but not having to be taken into the care of the director.

The second — I guess I will call it "the second" — recommendation in the report from the Child and Youth Advocate from March 10 indicates that we should, or there should be, a requirement to inform children of their rights, including the existence of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and their right to contact the advocate, this recommendation that children receiving services under the *Child and Family Services Act* should be informed of their

rights, the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and how to access the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office.

This is, of course, a good idea. Family and Children's Services' policies already require social workers to explain rights that children receiving services and children in care are all entitled to in child-friendly language, including how they can bring forward any complaints to enforce these rights. Children are provided with pamphlets to describe their rights as children in care and internal complaint procedures that are available to them.

The pamphlet describing how to bring forward a complaint also includes information on how to access the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office and the Office of the Ombudsman. Workers must assist children who want to bring their complaints to the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate or the Ombudsman. These pamphlets and informational material will be updated after the legislative amendments, should they pass this House, to capture the expanded rights, including the right to culturally appropriate advocacy services. Access to advocacy services are also included in one of the proposed service delivery principles, which requires that children and their families be given the support necessary to access advocacy services that meet their needs, including organizations that understand the needs of indigenous people.

Again, I just want to remind everyone that there is now the obligation — or will be in the legislation, hopefully — that First Nations and indigenous organizations be advised whenever one of their members' child, parent, or other parent is involved in the child welfare process. Together with that requirement, the obligation to inform children and families about advocacy services that are available to them, including advocacy services that might be culturally appropriate, is meeting the recommendation made by the Child and Youth Advocate in this context.

The next recommendation involves ensuring that the role of the advocate is incorporated into the *Child and Family Services Act*. The recommendation is to add the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate's functions and powers to the *Child and Family Services Act*.

I note that earlier the member opposite casually described the role of the Child and Youth Advocate as being one to inform this Legislative Assembly in matters like this. Certainly, that's one interpretation, but I have discussed many times with the Child and Youth Advocate, and with the former Child and Youth Advocate when I was also an officer of this Legislative Assembly, about the advocacy role for children and how important that is. I know how important that is to the current Child and Youth Advocate. That is the primary function.

The Child and Youth Advocate's functions and powers are properly and appropriately listed in the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, where they belong. It is the authority for that person to act. It provides the scope, the authority, and the legal mandate of that person to operate and to protect children in this territory. The *Child and Family Services Act* does not provide powers or create legal obligations for the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate; therefore, it would not be appropriate to list

the Child and Youth Advocate's respective functions and powers in that piece of legislation — in the *Child and Family Services Act* when I make reference to that piece of legislation.

Access to advocacy services are already captured in the *Child and Family Services Act* as a key principle. One of the proposed service delivery principles requires that children and families will be supported to access a broad range of advocacy services, as I've noted, and respect the wishes of children and their families to choose their First Nation or culturally appropriate organization to advocate on their behalf. This in no way diminishes the fact that the child and family are required to be told about all advocacy services that might be of assistance to them and, beyond that, to be assisted to access those services if they need that kind of assistance. It certainly goes beyond providing them with an address or phone number should they need to go to an office or need an appointment of some kind.

If the Child and Youth Advocate Office is explicitly listed as an advocacy service in the legislation, it creates the risk that the advocate becomes the default or preferred advocacy service and potentially precludes Yukon First Nations from advocating for their children and their families.

Before I turn to policies, I think it also presents the risk that the Child and Youth Advocate's powers and responsibilities in the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* could be somehow compromised by the fact that they live in another piece of legislation, and the purposes of that legislation, like the *Child and Family Services Act*, would not provide the legal authority for them to act, because that exists in the act — the statutory authority that creates the Child and Youth Advocate position and the Child and Youth Advocate Office.

Family and Children's Services' policies already acknowledge the right of children and their families to access the advocate, as well as the Office of the Ombudsman, and now will require that workers support children and families to access not only those advocacy services, but those that are related to their culture or community.

Recommendation number 4 is to add the child's views and preferences, the sense of time, and the child's need for security and stability as factors in determining the best interests of the child. We absolutely recognize the need for the child's view and preferences to be heard, and we feel that the legislative amendment brought to the floor here — I guess I should say "confident" rather than "feel". We are confident that those reflect the need of the child's views and preferences to be heard.

The child's views and preferences are already one of the factors that must be considered when determining the best interests of the child under section 4(2)(b). The child's — I'm going to quote here: "... the child's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual safety, security and well-being..." and "... the importance to the child of having ongoing relationships with and connections to their parents, siblings, and other extended family members and to their community and culture..." are the two primary factors under the "Best interests of the child".

The federal act respecting First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families, which established the minimum standards for child welfare across the country, requires the

Yukon to use these as the two primary factors for consideration when making decisions related to a child involved with child protection.

I don't think we can say that strongly enough: New federal legislation developed in conjunction and collaboration with First Nations across the country requires that there be minimum standards for child welfare that require these two primary factors for consideration. They are included as the requirements for how to determine — the criteria, if you will — what is in the best interests of the child.

The child's sense of time and developmental capacity are already enshrined in one of the service delivery principles from — I'm going to reference section 3(b).

The child's need for security and stability was removed, which is a part of the recommendation from the Child and Youth Advocate — so, just to address that, the child's need for security and stability was removed because this factor was used in the past to enable the colonial practice of keeping indigenous children with their non-indigenous foster caregivers, instead of reunifying these children with their families or their communities and their cultures. Historically, it was argued that the stability and the attachment that the child had formed with the foster caregiver should not be disrupted by attempting to reunify children with their parents. That is not something that can be tolerated and must be addressed.

I will stop there. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to those further.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's response, but I did want to note very quickly, and I know that it is not enforceable, but members did agree that we would try to keep responses in Committee below eight minutes. The Chair isn't able to intervene at eight minutes. I know that the minister didn't mean to go on, I'm sure, but just for future responses, it would be appreciated.

Based on the minister's response, I think that it is very clear that she is reading from some documentation, so perhaps in the interest of time, it would simply be easier if the minister could just write a letter to me or to members, perhaps, which goes through the 11 amendments that she has suggested. She has been reading them, explaining them one by one, which is appreciated, but I think that, just given the time, it may be easier if the minister were to simply provide the rationale for those in writing so that we could have them in advance of this returning.

I will just move on, because I hope that the minister is all right with that.

I will switch gears to just recognizing that it is almost 5:00 p.m., and we do have the Commissioner coming in a few minutes, and I know that there are others. I did want to switch gears to the IPC, the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Obviously, the minister is very familiar with the letter that was sent to the Premier, to the Leader of the Third Party, and to me.

I would like to start off with: What level of consultation was conducted with the IPC and does the minister have any thoughts on the letter and the recommendation for amendments to this bill that were put forward by the IPC?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: So, the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner reviewed the bill and provided a letter,

as the member has referenced a number of times, sent to the Premier, and to him, and to the Leader of the Third Party. The recommendation included in the letter or the comments included in the letter from Yukon's Information and Privacy Commissioner — again, an officer of this Legislative Assembly — was that the proposed amendments may remove an individual's "right" to access certain personal health information under the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*, or something known as "HIPMA".

I think it's important to note that the current legislation came into effect in 2010. At that time, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* applied to that piece of legislation, of course, and to all pieces of legislation in the territory and activities of government.

Then, following that — and I don't recall the year; somebody will tell me, no doubt — the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* came into effect.

The goal here, with respect to the amendments in Bill No. 11, were to make sure that the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* were both respected in the process and properly referred to in the *Child and Family Services Act*.

I appreciate that the Privacy Commissioner's letter indicated that it may be of concern to her and the effect of accessing personal health information. I can indicate that, immediately upon the Premier indicating to me that this letter had been received, we contacted the Department of Justice, and we had this quickly and thoroughly reviewed, because obviously, this is not what was trying to be achieved here in the draft. We respectfully disagree, or perhaps we — that's strong language, but I don't believe or don't have confidence that the individual's right to access certain personal health information is not affected.

The Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner proposed legislative amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, and those proposed amendments — sorry, let me say it this way: Her opinion that it might remove an individual's right to access personal health information is not the opinion of those who have worked on this matter. I will say it this way: The right of a person to access their personal health information is a fundamental right under the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*. This right is not restricted by the proposed legislative amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*.

There is no conflict between the obligation of a public body under the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* to disclose personal health information when requested by an individual and the director of Family and Children's Services' discretion to disclose information or documents in the director's possession. Let's be clear: There is no conflict between the obligation of the public body to disclose personal health information that is requested by an individual or the director's discretion under the act.

The *Child and Family Services Act* was developed, as I've noted, prior to the HIPMA legislation coming into force — or the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*. There are circumstances where disclosing relevant health information

to the director is essential to a child's well-being. I should note this. These amendments directly respond to required action 125 in the report *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, which states that — and I quote: “Section 180 is silent about the Health Information and Privacy Management Act (“HIPMA”) and the director's ability to disclose and obtain information should be paramount over HIPMA...” — similar to the requirements in ATIPP.

These amendments provide clarity as to how the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* is considered throughout the *Child and Family Services Act* and does not restrict a person's right to access their personal health information. I think that this is absolutely critical. I note that the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* came into being in 2013.

With respect to how the Information and Privacy Commissioner — were they involved in the amendments to section 180? The answer to that is no. We were effecting the opportunity to make sure that HIPMA and ATIPP were both properly reflected in the amendments. The proposed legislative amendments related to the administration of services and service quality and accountability have been reviewed by a number of our legal and subject matter experts and amended to meet confidentiality and privacy standards. Of course, always taking these into account, the proposed legislative amendments ensure that the sensitive information that is in the possession of the director of Family and Children's Services is only disclosed in limited circumstances.

I hope that answer is responsive to the question.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister following the eight-minute informal agreement; I appreciate that.

I just wanted to circle back — I did jump ahead to the IPC, but I did want to conclude my piece on the CRIA. Has the minister responded to the Child and Youth Advocate's CRIA that was tabled here? Has the minister provided that issue-by-issue explanation of why the amendments proposed by the Child and Youth Advocate are not needed at this time?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I will return with that information when we discuss this further. I appreciate also that I didn't respond to the member opposite asking for a written version of the position with respect to those and I will certainly take that under advisement and discuss it with the department. I think that it would be a useful tool.

Mr. Dixon: I agree with the minister that it would indeed be a useful tool, because of course, as we consider this bill, if the minister has a predetermined list of answers to these questions, it would be useful to see them, because when we get into line-by-line debate — we have recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate to make legislative changes or amendments to the bill, and if there is an explanation of why that is not needed or not going to fit within the bill, then it would be useful for legislators to see that explanation in advance of getting into line-by-line debate.

Likewise, I would like to ask if the minister has responded to the IPC — her letter dated March 11. Has that letter been responded to, and can we see that letter?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you again for the question. The letter from the Information and Privacy Commissioner wasn't written to me, so I will determine whether the response has been sent and whether it will be tabled here.

Mr. Dixon: Again, this is another example of a situation where we're advised by an independent officer of the Legislature to make an amendment to a bill on the floor, and if the government has, in this case, a legal opinion that suggests that amendment is not needed, it would be useful for legislators to see it before we potentially table or vote on an amendment.

If there is legal advice that the minister has received on this — I seem to recall that the minister had said that when they first received the letter — when the Premier first received the letter, he shared it with the minister, and the minister immediately went to the Department of Justice and sought advice. If the government is able to share that advice with other legislators, it will obviously help inform how we proceed in terms of line-by-line debate and ultimately in terms of voting on not only the bill, but the line-by-line debate and any potential amendment.

With that, if the minister could just simply indicate whether or not that's going to be possible, I would appreciate that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I've noted, the letter response would not have necessarily been from me. I'm happy to look into it and respond as we proceed in this matter — absolutely.

Mr. Dixon: I apologize to my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, but that's it for me in terms of general debate. I'll pass the floor on to her.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for his thorough questions today, and I'm pleased to be here with all of you to have this conversation. I know my time is very limited today, but that's okay.

First, I just wanted to start by saying that I really believe in the potential that these amendments have for Yukon families but more importantly for children, because we've seen the problems that we've had already. I hope that consensus-based work like this between the department and each Yukon First Nation will be a template for legislation in the future, because I believe this will make things stronger. It's my hope that these changes will create better outcomes for our children.

One thing that my colleague today has done a really good job in, though, is highlighting the concerns that other officers of this Assembly have had as far as being able to see or have input into things that they see as possible problems.

My hope is that, on a go-forward basis, we make sure that we bring together all of the folks we need to make sure that by the time it gets here — instead of spending time going through this — it could have been addressed, understanding, of course, that folks in the policy and drafting all have an experience that we here just don't have. So, that is my pitch for what we do, going into the future, and I think that it is really important.

I think that there are important things to say because there are such huge changes planned in this legislation. There is an expression: “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” I think that one thing that has been highlighted is that such sweeping changes

will require such a huge overhaul — really a shift in philosophy within every level of the department.

A lot of the questions that I have — I will barely scratch the surface today — have to do with how we are going to support the people who are going to do that work in making that shift. What we are really saying is that we are going to do this in a completely different way, and I think that this is really important. But how do we support people who have been doing the work following one piece of legislation as we move toward this new way of doing business? Those are a lot of what my questions are, and there might not be answers to them yet, which is okay too, but I am going to put them out into the universe because I think that it is helpful as we try to figure our way forward.

Looking at this department shift and the importance of what we do on a go-forward basis, what financial resources are going to be devoted to this shift? Have we recognized right now what we are going to need to be able to start making these monumental shifts that this legislation is asking us to do?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very excited to be able to answer this question, but I see that I have two minutes, so let me just start. I will hopefully be able to finish when we come back to this bill.

I think that it is an incredibly important question. We have been doing the work at the Department of Health and Social Services already. This process has been going on for five years. This shift has been contemplated in the possibilities of the world going forward for child welfare for a long time. Obviously, the development of the federal piece of legislation — and opportunities to work with that — brought that to our attention as well. Individuals who work in this area have been hungry for new tools and for new ways to support Yukon children and families — absolutely.

The associated costs for Yukon First Nations, which are going to be certainly an aspect of this — and First Nation youth — it is not expected to require additional resources at this time, but the federal government has committed resources specifically to Yukon First Nations — to First Nations across the territory — in relation to changing the work in the child welfare system. The direction and the support of the trilateral working group on child welfare reform with both Canada and Yukon First Nations — resources have been a top priority. The transitional supports through the legislation are expected to require support for students and for youth. We will support them throughout.

I appreciate that I am out of time, Deputy Chair. I am pleased to speak more specifically to resources and the importance of them in the transition of this piece of legislation and the adoption and operation of Bill No. 11, but seeing the time today, 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

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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, 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.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of the Yukon in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor to grant assent to bills that 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 Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021); Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022); Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022); Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022); Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022; Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

I am happy to announce that, to coincide with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, we have completed our wall of translation. Commissioner of Yukon — Commissaire du Yukon — is now translated into the eight indigenous languages of the Yukon.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone across the territory who has taken part in this endeavour. I invite you to come to Taylor House to view our translation wall, our exhibition for the Platinum Jubilee, and the museum on our second floor. We are back to regular working hours — Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. — after the Easter break.

Thank you, merci, shaw nithän, günilshish, mahsi' cho.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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 5:21 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 24, 2022:

35-1-55

Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act*, letter re (dated March 23, 2022) from Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (Dixon)

35-1-56

Comments about Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, letter re (dated March 11, 2022) from Diane McLeod-McKay, Information and Privacy Commissioner, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition and Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (Dixon)

35-1-57

Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act*, letter re (dated March 17, 2022) from Peter Johnston, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (McPhee)

35-1-58

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy, letter re (dated November 20, 2019) from Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Education to Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance (McPhee)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 56

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, March 28, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 28, 2022 — 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 now proceed with the Order Paper.
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have a lot of guests here today for the tribute for Nicole Edwards. If we could please welcome them — friends and family.

We have Lee Close; we have Nicole's brother, Morgan Edwards; we have Paris Close, Christel Percival, Peter Percival, and Al Pope — who, by the way, just became a great-grandfather — Ross Burnett, Grant Allan, Jessica Hall, Andrea McColeman, Sally Wright, J.P. Pinard, Samantha Salter, Josi Liederwicz, Steve and Ann Gedrose, Elaine Schiman, Matthew Lien, Josh Schwinnson, Dave Brook, Dave Brekke, Claire Ness, Helen O'Connor, Danette Readman, Brian Kitchen, Andre Gagne, Suki Wellman, Annette King, and Bengie Clethro.

If we could welcome them all, please.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I wonder if my colleagues would please help me in welcoming Jan Trim and Dennis Senger, both Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee members.

Thank you for being here today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also like to welcome to the Assembly today Mr. Ben Asquith and Tiffany Eckert-Maret, who are here with Da Daghay Development Corporation. Also with them are Aberdeen Broeren and Desiree Coad-Broeren, who are taking part in the mentorship program with Panache Ventures right now on venture capital, and they are here as part of their mentorship today.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Nicole Edwards

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Today, I stand on behalf of the members of this Legislature, the guests in the gallery, and all Yukoners to remember Nicole Edwards.

Nicole moved to the Yukon in the late 1990s and began to make a difference and inspire Yukoners almost immediately.

I moved to the Yukon at the same time, and within my first week, I met Nicole dancing at live music events. We became friends right away. When I met Nicole, I knew she was an exceptional person. You could feel her warmth, her positiveness, how interesting she was.

Later, I realized that, yes, she is interesting, but she had this amazing way of being interested — interested in whoever she was connecting with. It was this generous gift she had for caring about people and making them feel special.

Let's start with her impact on the music scene. Nicole was one of the territory's best known musicians, releasing six albums. She embraced difference genres of music, a self-proclaimed jazz-blues-folk-rock diva, and sang in English, French, and even Spanish.

In 1998, she was one of the founders of Yukon Women in Music, or YWIM, an organization that continues to support the growth of women musicians at all levels and stages of their artistic development.

In addition to her performances and album releases, Nicole produced a YWIM concert of celebration in 2010 featuring 20 Yukon women musicians and, in 2011, YWIM en français avec l'Association franco-yukonnaise.

The themes of love, peace, and gratitude permeate all of her music, just as they did her life. Her music and spirit were deeply rooted in advocacy, equality, education and justice, and youth.

Throughout Nicole's ongoing musical career and multiple albums, she often highlighted youth in her songs and music videos through themes of well-being, relationships, and activism. She often celebrated contributions by northern youth dancers and vocalists. In 1998, Nicole founded BYTE, Bringing Youth Toward Equality, empowering a generation of Yukon youth to be the change across all of our communities.

In the early 2000s, Nicole was diagnosed with scleroderma, an autoimmune disease. In 2003, her symptoms forced her to leave the youth work she loved, but whenever possible, she continued to mentor youth, including in performance, songwriting, and the music industry.

After Nicole passed away, BYTE made the following statement — and I quote: "We are honoured to announce that we have changed the name of our Leadership Fund to the Nicole Edwards Leadership Fund. This change commemorates the legacy of its founder, Nicole Edwards, by directly supporting Yukon youth to explore their passions, learn new skills, and become leaders in their own way."

The Nicole Edwards Leadership Fund provides opportunities for youth to build their leadership, self-esteem, and confidence, and it aims to connect young people with experiences and resources to help develop their passions, gifts, and identity. In 2016, Nicole's advocacy work for youth earned her a Meritorious Service Medal from the Governor General. Again, I quote: "Nicole Edwards' passion and dedication for empowering youth through music has changed my life. Nicole began working with me when I was 14. She encouraged me to pursue my creative passions and showed me how to use music as a tool to engage my community. Her work has created countless opportunities for myself and other youth to live positive, healthy, and fulfilled lives regardless of their circumstances." That was Daniel Ashley talking about the Governor General award.

Throughout her life, including her illness, Nicole never lost her playfulness and love of life. To that end, I am wearing a

special WonderNED pin today with artwork by Covelle Patterson. Shhh, Mr. Speaker — “WonderNED” is Nicole’s superhero name.

In 2017, Nicole performed a benefit concert that would be her final performance. The next four years were increasingly difficult as her symptoms worsened. Throughout it all, she kept making music. Amazingly, she took her challenging journey and turned it into a gift for Yukoners. She used her music to advocate for empathetic, respectful, trauma-informed, patient-centred care. Her last album, entitled *Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health*, is a set of songs and resources on musical mindful strategies to support us all in whole-self health and emotional well-being, especially through times of trial:

Whether you feel joy or pain

I can love you just the same.

We are here to love, serve, and uplift one another.

Nicole and her husband, Lee Close, made their lovely home and garden in Mount Lorne. On September 8, 2021, Nicole chose to end her struggle with illness in her beautiful garden beneath her two favourite aspens. Today, I stand to remember Nicole Edwards. To quote my friend, Kim Melton, “May you know peace, WonderNED.”

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Nicole Edwards. Like so many, I knew and loved Nicole, but today I wanted to share some words from Helen O’Connor. Helen is first and foremost a mother, a Yukon artist, an educator, a yoga teacher, and, most of all, my family. Helen is my kumare. She is family. Nicole was her long-time best friend. While this will be emotional for Helen, I am happy to be able to share her beautiful thoughts.

These are Helen’s words: “It’s difficult to put into words everything that Nicole Edwards was for me and for so many. She generously shared her love, joy, and enthusiasm for whoever she was with. She offered, and was given, more hugs than I knew was possible. Nicole’s spirit lives on in the people whose lives she touched. She was my friend and neighbour but more like family, an auntie to my kids, a cheerleader to my art, and like a sister — a soul sister — who I could talk to about anything — to laugh and cry through life’s ups and downs. Her talent as a musician has always amazed me. What stands out most is Nicole’s tremendous voice and her capacity to convey so much power and depth of emotion with it. I also loved her creativity and how she could involve the whole community — young and old — in videos and projects. She passionately nurtured and encouraged so many, especially young people, to express themselves. I am so thankful to have had Nicole in my life and thankful for the beauty that she shared through her music and life.”

Thank you, Helen, for allowing me to share your beautiful words and for being here with us today.

Applause

Ms. White: So, with us today in the gallery is Nicole’s husband, Lee Close, along with so many of the musicians she

worked with in her long and distinguished career, as well as friends, who were among the young people she inspired throughout the years.

We acknowledge the community of homeopathic and allopathic medical professionals, neighbours, and friends who helped Nicole to live her last difficult years with a measure of peace and dignity. So, last summer, after a long and courageous battle with scleroderma, Yukon artist and advocate Nicole Edwards left us.

But Nicole was so much more than her illness. Nicole was a lifelong advocate for youth empowerment, women’s equality, and a warrior for the arts. As a high school student back in South River, Ontario, seeing that the school had multiple trophies for football but none for artists, she led a successful campaign to create an arts award. In her teens, her adventurous spirit led her to join Canada World Youth. She spent time on a kibbutz in Israel and travelled throughout Europe.

Nicole’s first work gig after college was to hire young people in a youth in the arts hands-on organizing program and to conduct youth coffee houses, open-stage nights, and workshops.

Moving to the Yukon in 1997, Nicole contributed to developing the Yukon youth strategy and became the first executive director of Bringing Youth Toward Equality. Under Nicole’s leadership, BYTE was, as one of her many protégés put it, the architect of empowering a generation of youth.

Nicole took her advocacy work with BYTE to the streets and the communities, empowering many young first-time voters to vote. She told them that their voices and experience mattered and that people in our roles should listen. I would like to think that she didn’t just plant a single seed, but she planted an entire forest of change.

Nicole was also an integral part of Yukon Women in Music, encouraging and mentoring young women to sing and perform. For many years, she was a judge for BYTE’s Battle of the Bands and was awarded a service medal for her work and dedication to youth in the music industry.

One of Nicole’s career highlights was when she and the Joy Seekers opened for a Sam Roberts concert celebrating BYTE’s 10th anniversary. She celebrated and shared Roberts’ passion for being engaged with youth. That concert, as you can imagine, was electric. As a songwriter and performer in French, English, and Spanish, you can hear Nicole’s powerful voice in her recorded jazz, folk, and blues albums. You knew you were seeing something special when you caught her at festivals and concerts in collaboration with so many other musicians. She literally rocked our world.

After Nicole was diagnosed with scleroderma, she offered singing for healing and songwriting workshops in her community. As her disease worsened and she felt more vulnerable and institutionalized, Nicole became an outspoken advocate for better resources for patients. With the help of Andrea McColeman and other musician and producer friends, Nicole was able to record *Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health*, offering lyrics, music, and mindfulness lessons for patients and caregivers.

Calling this her “music of ministry from the couch”, Nicole spent her last days and months at her home in Mount Lorne, finding solace in the mountain view and creating fun music videos and songs for mental well-being which comfort, teach and inspire others — still. Her songs as teaching tools are still available in the memorial on her website, nicoleedwardsmusic.com.

Nicole was always keenly aware of and grateful for the generosity and care of the many friends who supported her as her struggle became harder. Ruth Lera was a tireless friend and champion, coordinating volunteers and setting up a Patreon campaign to help cover the high cost of providing caregiving for Nicole at home, beyond what was publicly funded.

Conscious of the fact that many others need more help than what’s available to them from the public system, Nicole advocated for better support for home care services and in-home supports for palliative care patients, even as her own health deteriorated, campaigning for better funding and resources for people with chronic illnesses and mental health challenges.

Nicole wanted to see a mental health board established at Whitehorse General Hospital that offers a facility where patients will be treated with dignity — one where patients would be allowed to remain connected with their family and personal support networks when they are in crisis and where professional staff will be trained in trauma-informed care.

We look forward to seeing her dream become a reality. As her disease worsened, Nicole struggled through pain and sadness. After making the decision for a medically assisted death, she was truly grateful for the professionalism and compassion of the medical team who helped her with that journey.

Nicole’s music touched the lives of many people near and far, and today, when I was coming into the Assembly, it sounded like a celebration was coming from upstairs, and that is exactly what Nicole deserved — a celebration. She taught us how to live joyfully, without fear, and she leaves us with a legacy of music that will continue to inspire, heal, and entertain.

Those of us who knew Nicole appreciate her presence in our lives and will not forget her happiness, love, and care for others. We honour Nicole Edwards for her significant contributions to our community and our lives. We will miss her voice. We will miss her life.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a news article showing the Yukon Party and its leader’s support for rent controls.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling a letter dated March 7, 2002, addressed to the office of the Minister of Health and Social Services from the Child and Youth Advocate.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a letter that I sent to the Minister of Health and Social Services, apologizing for an error that I made that was reflected in Question Period last week.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to make Novavax’s Nuvaxovid COVID-19 vaccine available to people 18 years of age and older upon request.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates the Canadian men’s national soccer team for qualifying to participate in the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow the recommendation of the *Putting People First* report to design and implement a guaranteed annual income pilot in collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and potential funding partners such as the federal government, health and social research programs, and others.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aging in place

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, in 2020, the Yukon government released the *Yukon Aging in Place Action Plan*, which laid out a plan, including 56 recommended actions, to ensure that Yukon seniors and elders can age safely, independently, and with dignity and comfort in their own home or community as long as possible.

Reporting to Yukoners is an important part of our commitment to them. Today we released the first aging in place annual report, which highlights that 80 percent of the actions are now either complete or underway. Some of these completed actions include establishing a seniors advisory committee that acts as a focal point for Yukon’s seniors and elders to collaborate with the Yukon government on matters relating to aging in place. Some of the actions include: the standards and maintenance of high-quality infection control practices in our long-term care homes, which include the development of comprehensive COVID-19 prevention and safety policies; the implementation of the Shine a Light on Dementia program, which provides education and training for caregivers and is currently being offered by Yukon University; the opening of the Wind River Hospice House at the Whistle Bend Place long-term care home that offers hospice palliative care services to

people with progressive, life-limiting illnesses; the launching of the rural end-of-life care funding program that supports Yukoners in rural communities who need end-of-life care services; the public engagement on medical travel that resulted in our government doubling the medical travel subsidy to \$150 per day and made it available on the first day of travel; and lastly, the completion of an internal review of seniors services and adult protection services to ensure that these services continue to be effective and accessible.

Mr. Speaker, although we have made significant progress to help ensure seniors and elders can age comfortably in the territory, there is still plenty of work underway. One example is the recent announcement that Handy Bus services, with support from the Yukon government, are now being offered seven days a week in Whitehorse.

In the year ahead, the action plan will continue to provide a path forward upon which the entire community will work together to promote, protect, and enhance the well-being of Yukon seniors and elders.

Thank you to the committee from Seniors Action Yukon, Council of Yukon First Nations, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, the Yukon Council on Aging, St. Elias Seniors Society, Association of Yukon Communities, and the Association franco-yukonnaise for their contributions.

Through our collaborative work, we will continue to implement the aging-in-place actions and help ensure that seniors and elders can age with the dignity they deserve and stay in their home or community for as long as possible in comfort and safety.

Mr. Cathers: The Yukon Party is, of course, strongly in favour of providing care and support for seniors and elders. This is a big issue for many of our constituents and we hear issues about it regularly.

The government released its *Yukon Aging in Place Action Plan* in 2020, and while some items have been addressed, there is a lot more work to do.

The plan speaks to keeping Yukoners in their home communities, but a lot more needs to be done to realize those goals. Watson Lake residents have been asking this government to meet with seniors and residents to discuss building a continuing care facility in their community. Just this month, my colleague, the MLA for Watson Lake, held a town hall to discuss this issue that was attended by over 40 residents who highlighted the urgent need for these services in that community. Unfortunately, the government has been very resistant to this request so far.

My colleague, the MLA for Kluane, has raised many times that the St. Elias Seniors Society in Haines Junction is wondering when they will be able to return to their meeting place in the seniors facility as promised by this government. Social opportunities are important for seniors' quality of life.

The Yukon Party was proud to begin the planning and construction of the new Whistle Bend Place, which is a 150-bed continuing care facility with the potential for expansion. We know that the facility is nearing capacity. What is the plan once Whistle Bend Place is full? Will the government build

phase 2, which would allocate another 150 beds, or will they be developing a different facility?

I have to remind this House that, in 2015, the now Premier said this about Whistle Bend Place — and I quote: “It’s not too late to put the brakes on this entire project.” It’s fortunate that he didn’t get his wish or the Yukon would have a serious shortage of continuing care rooms now.

Another issue of major concern currently is the lack of health care providers in the Yukon. Over one-fifth of Yukoners are currently without a family doctor, and many are forced to go to the emergency room for basic and routine health care needs. Seniors are negatively impacted by this lack of service, and we urge the minister to do more to address this serious shortage.

Another issue of concern is the major rise in the cost of living. Inflation, increased gas and food prices, and skyrocketing electricity rates and housing prices are making life more difficult for our seniors and elders. Unfortunately, the current budget did not consider inflation or introduce any new measures to alleviate these increased costs on seniors. In fact, the budget actually increased camping fees for seniors, a policy that we are opposed to and are urging the government to reconsider.

The aging-in-place report says that Yukoners should remain independently in their homes for as long as they are able to. The report indicates that there are no retirement or assisted living homes available in the Yukon. Can the minister update us on the development of assisted living for Yukon seniors? There also needs to be support for seniors groups advocating on behalf of seniors. Has the government done anything to support the Golden Age Society’s needs? Also, can the minister provide an update on the government’s work with the Vimy Heritage Housing Society and their supported living housing project? We appreciate the update from the minister, but it is clear that this government needs to do much, much more to help Yukon elders and seniors.

Ms. Blake: Aging in place can mean different things to different seniors and elders. Here in Whitehorse, it might mean being able to downsize and move into seniors housing that is designed and built with seniors in mind. For some, it could mean making renovations to make one’s home more accessible and easier to maintain and live in. For others, it could mean accepting assistance in the home to remain there. These are all great options for seniors or elders in Whitehorse.

For seniors and elders in communities, however, these options are not so readily available. It is true that most communities, including First Nation communities, can access some level of home care or home support. Unfortunately, there are gaps in these services. Not every community has access to seniors housing.

There are wait-lists and few options for downsizing and moving into accessible housing. For seniors and elders requiring more supports than the community can offer, too often, their only solution is to move into continuing care in Whitehorse, leaving their family and their community behind. For many seniors and elders, they have lived in the same

community for their whole lives. To be removed from family, friends, and all that is familiar to them can be heartbreaking and life-shortening. Imagine the elder from Old Crow moving into the new Whistle Bend Place. It is a great facility, but for the elder from Old Crow, it is like landing in the middle of Toronto and being told to make yourself at home — talk about culture shock.

We also need to acknowledge that, when elders from our Yukon communities need to relocate into continuing care, it may be triggering for them as memories from residential schools resurface. Their experiences and traumas associated with residential schools are lifelong. When they relocate to care facilities, some elders with issues such as dementia are retraumatized as they believe that they are back in residential school.

I am thankful, as are the residents of Old Crow, for the seniors housing that will be built. Hopefully, it will keep our elders, our storytellers, our mentors, our knowledge-keepers, and teachers closer to our community and connected to our traditional territory. To lose one elder to care in Whitehorse is like losing a volume out of a set of encyclopedias. Aging in place needs to be a priority for all elders and seniors in Whitehorse and in all Yukon communities.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member from the Third Party. I think the focus of those comments is exactly the focus and the respect that we must bring to our seniors and our elders. At its heart, Mr. Speaker, the *Yukon Aging in Place Action Plan* is about seniors and elders adding life and experiences to years, not just years to life.

Seniors and elders in our community helped shape this territory that we live in today, and they deserve to age in a way where they feel valued, supported, respected, and loved. They deserve to experience their senior years safely, independently, and comfortably in their own home or their own community, regardless of their age, their income level, or their ability levels.

We know that, over the past two years, seniors in the Yukon and across the country have been challenged. They have had to miss community events and family dinners. They have not been able to see their kids or their grandkids and have been separated from their friends and their loved ones, and they may have felt alone or vulnerable or isolated.

But with that, we have all seen and experienced so many Yukoners responding with compassion and kindness. We have seen families go grocery shopping for loved ones or offer to help to run errands or just simply reaching out to say hi and to see if people are okay.

We have also seen a remarkable response for volunteerism from our seniors and elders communities. Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons we are so proud to live in the Yukon. We always have each others' backs and we reach out to those who need it most.

The vision of this plan is to ensure that seniors and elders can continue to feel supported, even in the hardest of times, by our communities. The 56 recommended actions in the plan are grouped into four pillars: living a full and meaningful life;

housing; transportation and programs; and services and infrastructure.

I am proud to say that we have completed 50 percent of the 56 recommended actions with more work underway on the remaining half. Our government has made significant progress to improving health outcomes for seniors. Last December, we announced the expansion of the eligibility for the publicly funded shingles vaccine program to all seniors and elders aged 65 to 79. Earlier this year, the CanAge second annual vaccination report card showed that Yukon earned the most improved overall score out of all Canadian jurisdictions for its adult vaccination program. The CEO of CanAge, Laura Tamblyn Watts, said — and I quote: “The Government of Yukon deserves recognition for taking decisive action to protect seniors this year. The territory not only funded both seniors-specific flu shots and the recommended shingles vaccine, it also significantly improved public education and outreach. Other parts of the country should follow Yukon’s lead on how to attack a problem from multiple angles for maximum impact.”

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we plan to continue to do. I look forward to seeing the remaining actions be completed to improve the quality of life for seniors in the Yukon. I once again thank all of our partners for their work to help create a stronger territory for everyone.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Inclusive and special education

Ms. Van Bibber: On January 3 of this year, Autism Yukon wrote to the Yukon Legislative Assembly to highlight concerns with progress related to the 2019 Auditor General’s Report on Education in Yukon. Autism Yukon highlighted a number of concerns. They said — and I quote: “... the Department of Education has no concrete way of measuring the effectiveness of their approach to inclusive and special education or concrete proof that data-based decisions are being made.”

Can the minister tell us what steps have been taken to improve data collection on the effectiveness of inclusive and special education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question.

I definitely have worked very hard, since coming into my position, on receiving the report on inclusive and special education. I will go back a little bit and talk about the audit of 2019 — very important actions have been taken as a result of this audit — an audit that we take very seriously. The Department of Education participated in the hearings with the Public Accounts Committee in January and provided a number of updates, which I know members of this House are aware of. Since December 2019 when the department last appeared before Public Accounts, we have successfully continued student learning during a global pandemic and have launched several initiatives to address systemic inequities. We launched the universal childcare model. We enhanced early kindergarten

in communities. We have taken many steps that I will continue to build on as we move through —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Van Bibber: Autism Yukon went on in their letter to express concern that the department has developed a work plan in response to the recommendations of the Auditor General related to inclusive and special education, but that they had not been consulted. They said — and I quote: “We have heard that there is a work plan, but have neither been consulted on it or seen it.” While it is clear that Autism Yukon has not been consulted on this work yet, will the minister commit to consulting with Autism Yukon on the development of changes to inclusive and special education going forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: It’s a very important report on our education system, and notably, it’s very similar to the report that was received 10 years before when the Yukon Party was in power. I am really proud of the steps that our Liberal government have taken in receipt of the 2019 audit. We’ve taken very serious steps. We launched a review on inclusive and special education. We’ve created a data-sharing MOU with First Nations, among others.

In terms of specifically as we work forward with the report on inclusive and special education, which I was in receipt of days and weeks after coming into this position, we have taken very serious steps. We have worked with all of our partners, the Yukon First Nations Education Commission, and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education to develop and finalize a work plan and guide our joint response to the review of inclusive and special education and the review on school attendance. At the education summit on November 12, we established a number of communities of inquiry that are working on very specific issues as a result of this review. Again, I will continue to build on my answer.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, another concern that Autism Yukon expressed was in relation to IEPs. They noted that, while not all IEPs were reinstated, those that were still faced resourcing issues. They said — quote: “Many teachers are not familiar with their students’ IEPs and cannot answer questions about how they’re being implemented.” They went on to say that this was — quote: “... the most disappointing change that did not happen.”

What steps is the minister taking to ensure that IEPs are fully reinstated, resourced, and supported?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Part of the work that we are doing right now in response to the review on inclusive and special education — there are a number of working groups. Of course, Autism Yukon and all of our partners are involved in this and welcome to be involved.

We have a number of communities of inquiry. We are co-constructing definitions of inclusive and special education, updating inclusive and special education policies, exploring effective professional development, establishing values and norms for engaging across differences, implementing consistent IEPs, and, I want to say, correcting the work of the previous Yukon Party government in terms of how education plans were put in place and the supports for them. We are creating holistic supports for students and families, aligning

budgets, funding models, and staffing allocations with students’ needs in mind. We are providing outdoor experiential learning as a way of teaching students with learning differences.

This is major work on the part of the Department of Education but with all of our partners. That, I think, is the key part of this. We are working with all education partners in this reform of our school system.

Question re: Individualized education plans

Ms. McLeod: During the Public Accounts Committee hearing on education in January, the Deputy Minister of Education provided numbers regarding the reinstatement of individualized education plans, or IEPs. She said: “... 39 students in learning plans were identified to be reinstated and in fact have been reinstated as IEPs: four 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 the student learning plan; and 10 plans were identified as students who have moved out of the territory or graduated.”

Mr. Speaker, this is 71 total IEPs addressed. However, in December 2020, there were 138 students moved off of IEPs. Can the minister explain the discrepancy between —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand today and talk about the supports that are in place for students under individualized learning plans. Our goal is always to provide students with educational programs that meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential. We are undertaking a review right now of all the services and supports that it provides for inclusive and special education, including the development and delivery of learning plans.

There is currently a community of inquiry that is looking specifically at IEPs as part of the work plan for the review of inclusive and special education. This community has been tasked to update and implement consistent IEP templates, processes, and structures and incorporate student voice and create accountability structures about IEPs. This is a very important learning tool for our children in addressing their needs. We are very committed to, of course, working to improve this and to address the issues that were identified in the review of inclusive and special education.

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. McLeod: Earlier this year, when the deputy minister was asked about additional supports or resources for students on IEPs, her response was — and I quote: “In terms of additional supports for the reinstatement, when changes were made to the IEPs, no changes were made to supports.”

IEPs guarantee that students with special needs receive the supports they require, including educational assistants, occupational therapy, or speech and language supports.

Why has the minister not increased the resources to match the reinstatement of IEPs? When will this happen?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Just to go back in terms of a little bit of background here in terms of the IEPs that the member is talking about, a total of 71 plans were identified as moving to a

different type of plan. Originally, we had 62 IEPs that were found to have changed to student learning plans after the fall of 2019. Nine plans were also identified where the data was not clear about where the plan had changed, so those parents and guardians were contacted as well.

Schools were provided with information about their school with instructions to contact each family. That work has all been completed. We are satisfied that the children who were moved into different plans had an opportunity to move back into an IEP. That is the work that has been completed.

In terms of supports for children under individualized education plans, we are working very hard with our partners. This is a major part of the work that is underway right now under inclusive and special education.

Ms. McLeod: In a December 2020 *Yukon News* story, it was mentioned that the definition of IEPs was changed so that students who remain on these plans won't receive a high school diploma. The president of the Yukon Association of Educational Professionals told the *Yukon News* at the time — quote: "I was greatly disturbed by the changing definition of an IEP and a student learning plan ... They haven't changed the *Education Act*, but what they've changed is policy, how they're interpreting and delivering programming."

Can the minister confirm that the definition was changed at the time, and if so, why was it changed? What are the plans to return to the original definition?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I can tell you that we have not changed the *Education Act*. Work that's underway right now in terms of our review of inclusive and special education — as I've identified, we are working on definitions within inclusive and special education as one of the communities of inquiry. That is work that is underway with a number of our partners and we are looking at it thoroughly in terms of those changes that are anticipated.

In terms of what I would like to say about the services that we provide to students is that we remain absolutely committed to our goal to provide students with educational programs that meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential. Again, we are working with all of our partners in the review of inclusive and special education. This is a massive undertaking. Our goal is to get it right. I'm really happy to see that the Yukon Party is now interested in the health of our education system. They were not for 14 years.

Question re: Social assistance rates

Ms. Blake: On March 28, 2013 — nearly nine years ago from today — former MLA Jan Stick said in this House: "The current regulations established the cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Whitehorse at \$691. Everyone knows this is not even close to the reality of renting in Whitehorse."

Since then, costs have increased rapidly, from food to fuel to housing. Everything is costing more, but the base social assistance rates haven't changed. Apparently, the government still thinks that one can rent a two-bedroom for \$691.

Will the minister tell this House when there will be a public review of the social assistance rates?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I can indicate that the concerns about social assistance and the opportunity to make sure that social services are provided for Yukoners is incredibly important. What I can also indicate is that social assistance rates do increase annually, every year, for the purposes of maintaining the cost of living. I can also indicate is that the social assistance rates here in Yukon are considerably higher than they are in many places. I appreciate that the cost of living is also of concern. Currently, we have the highest rates in Canada.

As I have noted, every November, there is an annual increase according to the cost of living or what is also known as "CPI". During COVID, I can indicate that the caseloads with respect to social assistance here in the territory have dropped, but we expect them to climb in the coming year, and we are always concerned to make sure that the social assistance rates in the territory meet the needs of Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: There is an annual increase based on the consumer price index, but it has not kept up with the current housing crisis or food costs. Social assistance is being provided through the various levels of government across the Yukon. The *Putting People First* report recommended that this government bring together all social assistance delivery agents to create a common vision for the territory. This would lead to a more equitable, more effective, and easier system for everybody to navigate.

Has this government started to collaborate on these programs that are a safety net for so many Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It should be noted that the federal CERB opportunities for Canadians were exempted from social assistance calculations over the last two years, and certainly other federal programs have not been in the past.

With respect to pre-COVID, the information that we have is that caseloads were increasing in line with our population growth here in the territory.

I note that one of the recommendations in *Putting People First* is that we need to look at the three programs that are currently available here in the territory. We have accepted all of the recommendations of *Putting People First* and will be working with the other organizations — the federal government, in particular — to determine how we might best be able to provide assistance in a comprehensive way to Yukoners who require that assistance and that we can make sure that for individuals who are permitted to have social assistance under the Yukon government process, it is also comprehensive and in line with the federal government process.

Ms. Blake: People are struggling and having to choose between paying bills or putting food on the table. Numbers at the food bank continue to rise and more and more people are going without. The *Putting People First* report also recommended that the government design and implement a guaranteed annual income pilot in collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and potential funding partners. If this government is not prepared to review the social assistance rates, will they follow their own report and create a guaranteed annual income?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question and ultimately the concern with respect to all of the benefits that are available to Yukoners. I should return and provide information to Yukoners about the maximum housing benefit under social assistance here in the territory. A single person is eligible for shelter and utilities in the amount of \$1,138 per month. I can also indicate that standard benefits are separate and are provided in addition to housing and utilities.

I should note that, in particular, the government does note the inflation rate and the concerns of the cost of living for Yukoners. Our most recent attempt and program in order to provide Yukoners with some relief is the temporary inflation relief rebate with respect to the \$150 inflation relief rebate to reduce the impacts on rising prices, which will be provided to each Yukoner with electrical services here in the territory — the concept being that more individuals, or the most individuals, will receive assistance through that program.

Question re: Magnetic resonance imaging program

Ms. White: In 2014, the Yukon Hospital Corporation built a temporary facility for the new MRI machine, and in 2015, the new facility with its new MRI officially opened. The Yukon government bragged that the Yukon was the first territory to have an MRI, but for Yukoners, it meant that they could receive a diagnosis without having to travel out-of-territory. A new MRI was supposed to make it easier for family doctors to refer patients for faster diagnosis, but with all the positive points came a negative one; wait times began to grow and grow.

Can the minister tell us how many Yukoners are now accessing the MRI on a yearly basis, and what is the average wait time for an appointment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. Actually, I want to correct the record with respect to the wording of the question. We did at the time — the government, when we announced the MRI and implemented the program — have great expectations that it would serve Yukoners better, and in fact, it has served Yukoners better.

Our government is committed to investing in services and enhancements to ensure accurate and timely access to services at Yukon hospitals. I certainly can speak longer than the few seconds that I have left today to address those kinds of services and the expansion of those services over the last number of years.

I can indicate that currently wait times for patients who require an urgent MRI are less than seven days. The Whitehorse General Hospital endeavours to support semi-urgent cases with access to MRI services as close to 30 days as possible. As of February 28, 2022, semi-urgent cases are being completed within 44 days. I expect that I will be answering more details about this and I look forward to it.

Ms. White: For those of us who were here in 2015, the government definitely bragged about how it was going to improve services for Yukon. So, the MRI wait times are a real issue. One individual contacted us recently, as they have been waiting since June 2021 for an MRI. Even after nine months, the department is still unable to tell them when they can expect

to be called for an appointment, and that is one person among many.

In the meantime, this individual is left in pain and dealing with symptoms that impact daily life. Does the government believe that a nine-month wait for an MRI is an acceptable amount of time to wait?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think what's important for Yukoners to know is that medical services — in particular, we'll discuss MRI services here in the territory — are, in fact, categorized as urgent and non-urgent, and then there are semi-urgent in the middle of those two cases.

What I indicated was that urgent MRIs are happening within around seven days. The Whitehorse hospital endeavours to support semi-urgent cases and access to MRI services as close to 30 days as possible. At this time, the non-urgent MRI cases are being completed within 20 months. As of February 28, there were approximately 1,000 people on the non-urgent MRI wait-list. I can also indicate that, in addition to the opportunities here in the Yukon for MRI testing, we have medical travel options. We have increased the medical travel subsidy — doubled it, in fact — in the last few years and provided that opportunity for individuals to have a subsidy on the first day, rather than on the second day. There are also more locations that are available.

Ms. White: So, that's 1,000 people waiting for an appointment to help them figure out what is going wrong.

So, another individual contacted our office after they were told that the best option to avoid months and months of waiting would be to go to a private MRI provider in Vancouver. Before travel, this option costs about \$3,500. Wait times at this private out-of-territory facility are minimal, and the individual would be able to finally have a diagnosis and hopefully start treatment.

Forcing people toward private clinics for a diagnosis that they should be able to access in the Yukon is unacceptable. If we're not able to offer more appointments here in a timely fashion and the wait times continue to lengthen, is the Government prepared to refer patients outside of the Yukon and cover those costs?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question, absolutely. I certainly understand the concern of Yukoners who are on the non-urgent MRI wait-list, but that is an assessment done by a medical professional with respect to the care that is required.

I certainly know that the Yukon Hospital Corporation has worked diligently to secure a locum technologist as well as an opportunity for our resident technologist to increase the opportunities for MRIs to be performed to reduce the wait-list.

There was an unplanned vacancy of a technologist that contributed to the wait-list increasing, but the MRI program has been back on track and the Yukon Hospital Corporation is currently using a combination of local and casual technologists to ensure that acute and time-sensitive exams are completed in a timely manner.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation is continuing with aggressive recruitment activities for both permanent and short-term staff. The promotion of additional staff is an opportunity. Some jurisdictions have increased the hours that the MRI

operates, and an exploration of those options is always available.

Question re: Inclusive and special education

Mr. Kent: On January 4, 2022, the Yukon Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Association sent a letter to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee in advance of the hearing on the 2019 Auditor General's report on inclusive and special education. In it, they provide a number of recommendations to the Department of Education. One of them is about literacy instruction in the school. Specifically, they question the critical analysis taken to select the current approach over evidence-based practices for literacy and language development.

So, what steps has the minister taken since January to address this specific concern regarding literacy instruction?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I spoke about earlier today on the report of the Auditor General for 2019 and the findings of that report, I note that my department has now appeared twice in the Public Accounts to give updates. This is quite unprecedented. I believe that normally there is a hearing that happens after an Auditor General report, so we were pleased to attend in January to give a further update and also note that there were a number of partners that provided information to Public Accounts. Certainly, our deputy minister attended and gave detailed testimony in that hearing around the work that we are doing at the Department of Education.

We certainly know that we have a lot of work ahead of us. Again, I have to note that I am happy to be doing the work. I am really pleased that the Yukon Party is now interested in addressing the issues in our education system.

Mr. Kent: While we appreciate the remarks from the minister and reading the briefing note, the specific question was about literacy instruction in schools.

Another issue raised by this organization is regarding widening performance gaps because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, they would like a thorough review conducted of literacy and language instruction to address how to close this gap.

So, my question for the minister is: Is the work currently underway or planned to address the widening gaps identified by this organization because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our entire education system certainly has been impacted by COVID-19. We are in fact in the third year of managing through COVID-19. I want to thank our public servants and our teaching staff for the incredible work that they have done to meet the challenges. We are under no disillusion that students have been impacted, that educators have been impacted, and that Yukoners have been impacted by COVID-19. We do have a kindergarten to grade 12 education recovery plan that provides direction to schools to deliver educational programs and support in line with the territorial pandemic recovery effort for the 2021-22 school year by clarifying learning expectations, providing guidance, and identifying and addressing the impact on learning and well-being, including additional information and resources that can support local decision-making and communication.

These are all important plans. We've worked very closely with our educators to ensure that the supports are in place for them and that the challenges are well-understood.

Mr. Kent: I was hoping that the minister could return to the House with answers to the specific questions that I asked regarding this letter that was sent in early January and that has been public for almost three months now.

So, the organization also has concerns with resourcing in Student Support Services. They say — quote: "The Department requires additional FTE allocation for S-LPs in order to provide their specialized services in an equitable manner across the territory."

So, can the minister update us on what action, if any, she has taken with regard to supplementing the speech-language pathologist, or SLP, positions within the Department of Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have spoken a little bit about this today. There are three types of learning plans available in Yukon. Individual learning plans, student learning plans — well, when you talk about SLPs — and I see the member laughing at my answer right now, but I think that it's important for Yukoners to know that there are different types of learning plans in the *Education Act*. The student learning plans, as he is speaking about right now, and behavioural support plans — all learning plans are designed to provide the learning supports that individual students need to be successful in school. Students may need more specific supports, modification, and adaptation in their learning.

One of our communities of inquiry — again, we are going back to correct the work that was not by the Yukon Party in the time that they were in office.

We are looking to update and implement a consistent IEP template process and structure that incorporates student voice and that creates accountability and structures around IEPs.

Back in 2015, the Yukon Party made decisions that we're living with today in terms of how they put supports in place. We're looking to do that correctly.

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

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do have a few brief introductory comments to make — some general and I believe some specifically answering some questions that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin had when we last met here for consideration of the supplementary budget legislative authority being sought for the Department of Highways and Public Works.

I am going to speak about procurement and First Nation procurement. Government procurement is a significant contributor to our economy. During the 2021 fiscal year, the Yukon government spent over \$446 million on government contracts. This is something that affects the daily lives and livelihoods of Yukoners and we take it seriously.

While we ensure value for taxpayers' money, we also know that government spending has impacts beyond the price paid for a good or service. Our spending can provide stability for local companies, grow new businesses, and help make the Yukon's economy more fair and equitable. One of the commitments of this government is to make a public procurement system more accessible by modernizing our practices and exploring innovate methods for evaluating bids and awarding contracts. Over the past year, we have seen major improvements, such as completing the digitization of our tendering system and implementing the new Yukon First Nation procurement policy.

Our efforts in bettering our procurement practices have not gone unnoticed. Last year, our government was a recipient of the achievement of excellence in procurement award — an award from the National Procurement Institute in the United States that recognizes commitment to procurement excellence. The award is given to organizations that can demonstrate excellence in areas like ethics, continuous improvement, organizational structure, education, and training. The Government of Yukon was also on the Indigenomics Institute's "10 to Watch" list for the launch of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. The annual list recognizes leadership in furthering reconciliation, increasing inclusion, and designing business relationships to support the growth of the indigenous

economy. It's great to see this kind of recognition and I applaud the procurement professionals across government for their work.

Although we have taken major steps forward, procurement is not something that stands still. The new policies and programs that we implement will have impacts on how people do business in the Yukon. This will require us to monitor the new methods that we have put in place and adapt as needed. This will also push us to be in constant pursuit of ways that we can improve, innovate, and make government procurement work for all Yukoners.

A great example of doing something differently and innovating to support Yukoners is the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. This policy positions us as a trailblazer in indigenous procurement. When we wrote the policy, we drew on other jurisdictions that have taken similar approaches, but the way this policy was drafted and how we have adapted it to the Yukon context makes it unique. This policy was drafted in complete collaboration with Yukon First Nation governments, beginning with a blank page. Once the policy was drafted, we worked closely with both our Yukon First Nation partners and industry to phase in implementation. Now that the policy is fully implemented, there is a suite of tools available to increase Yukon First Nation participation in our economy.

For example, our annual capital planning meetings — through this policy, we have agreed to meet annually with Yukon First Nation governments to discuss spending plans for capital projects planned with their traditional territory. By sharing our plans for capital spending, we allow Yukon First Nation governments and communities to plan and prepare for upcoming projects.

While all of the tools are essential for achieving the policy goals, one that I would like to focus on is the Yukon First Nation business registry. The Yukon First Nation business registry hosts a list of Yukon First Nation businesses that have undergone a verification process. The verification process requires Yukon First Nation businesses to submit documents to prove that they meet the definition in the policy. Examples of these documents include: registered name and address, name of the Yukon First Nation with direct or beneficial ownership, names of all directors and officers, name and position of primary contact with the corporation, certificate of status or entity profile from Yukon government's corporate registry, articles of incorporation, unanimous shareholder agreements or bylaws, the shareholder's register, and their business licence.

In addition, for each shareholder that is a Yukon First Nation person, they must provide their Yukon First Nation citizen card, Yukon status card, or a letter from an authorized official of the YFN government. They must also provide a consent form for the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information. If people would like to know more about the process, they can also visit the registry online.

The Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce acts as the registrar of the registry. The chamber both assists Yukon First Nation businesses with the application process and performs the business verifications. As of March 23, 2022, there were 79 Yukon First Nation businesses on the registry. The registry

plays an essential role in administering the policy tools. One of our commitments in the policy is to check the Yukon First Nation business registry before using any invitational tenders. If there are one or more Yukon First Nation businesses that can supply the good or service, we will invite them to the tender.

It is also the foundation of bid value reductions. For those who may not be familiar with this term, bid value reductions are a way to rank bids to reflect the level of Yukon First Nation participation. This means that the greater the participation of Yukon First Nation businesses and Yukon First Nation people, the greater the reduction that will be able to be applied to a bidder's price during the tender evaluation process.

Businesses must be listed on the Yukon First Nation business registry in order for Yukon government to apply bid value reductions on their bids. This ensures that the business has undergone the verification process and that the benefits of bid value reductions are going to Yukon First Nation people. Recently, we saw an example of this in action when we tendered the Macaulay Lodge demolition. A Yukon First Nation business that is on the registry used bid value reductions in their bid and was the successful party on the tender. Without bid value reductions, this company would not have been the successful bidder.

It is great to see the policy benefiting Yukon First Nation businesses. In this case, a Yukon First Nation business won the contract; however, there are also opportunities for all Yukon businesses to benefit from bid value reductions. For example, Yukon businesses can find a verified Yukon First Nation business to work with by using the registry. If a Yukon business subcontracts a Yukon First Nation business or hires Yukon First Nation labour, they can also apply bid value reductions to their bids.

While the registry is extremely useful for Yukon government and local businesses, it also acts as a marketing tool to Outside businesses looking to work in the Yukon.

Recently, Highways and Public Works, Energy, Mines and Resources, and the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce presented about the Yukon First Nation business registry at the Roundup conference. This conference brings together the mineral exploration community to discuss new and innovative trends in the mining industry. The presentation focused on how mining companies can use the registry to hire Yukon First Nation businesses. The presentation was well-attended and reached over 140 industry professionals.

As you can see, Deputy Chair, the registry truly sets the groundwork for many of the policy tools and objectives. Going forward, we will continue to see the registry grow and more businesses using it as a resource. This means that we will start to see the changes that we are hoping for in our economy.

I think it is important to say that this policy is supposed to create change. The entire goal is to enhance the economic outcomes and ultimately the socio-economic outcomes for Yukon First Nation people and businesses in our territory. We cannot achieve this if we do not change the status quo. This is truly in the interest of all Yukoners as there can be no meaningful economic growth in our territory without greater Yukon First Nation participation.

While we expect changes to the market from this policy, we also want to ensure that it remains stable. This means carefully tracking how the market is responding to the policy. We are tracking this through the Monitor and Review Committee. This committee has industry, Yukon First Nation, and Yukon government representatives. They are responsible for analyzing data, monitoring outcomes, and providing recommendations to the Government of Yukon for continuous improvement. The committee meets, at a minimum, every month and is working on their first annual report summarizing the work that they have done to date. This is just the beginning and we have a long journey ahead of us, but this policy is paving the way forward.

I am looking forward to seeing how this policy will benefit all Yukoners in the short and mid term. Those are my introductory comments, Deputy Chair.

Mr. Dixon: I just have a few questions for the minister on a project. I'm interested in the ongoing work in Old Crow. I know that there was a lot of coverage earlier, a few weeks ago, related to the winter road and the delays in the construction of the winter road. I'm wondering if the minister can give us an update on that project — if there have been any change orders as a result of either climate or supply chain or any other issues facing the project and if the minister can give us an update on that project.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I can certainly endeavour to answer some questions with respect to the specific projects, but I have some brief comments and some observations with respect to the Old Crow winter road.

Specifically, as the member opposite and all Members of the Legislative Assembly will know, at the beginning of this process, there certainly were some weather challenges as there was not insubstantial overflow — approximately two or three kilometres outside of the Village of Old Crow — and a number of tractor-trailers were stuck there for a few days. But I can advise that some ingenuity was employed and deployed and the weather conditions improved. Of course, we have no control over the weather, temperature, and water conditions and overflow, but ultimately, Deputy Chair, this became a good news story across the territory.

The Yukon government is making investments to build healthy and vibrant communities. The Yukon government worked in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to organize the construction of a winter road to Old Crow. Construction of the winter road started on January 5, 2022 and was opened to authorized traffic on February 24, 2022. The winter road closed on March 25, 2022 after supporting 67 truckloads into the community. I am subject to being corrected by my officials. I believe the upper-end projection of the winter road for this season was approximately 60 loads, so it exceeded the anticipated maximum ultimately by seven truckloads, so that was good news.

The road facilitated the movement of materials into the community to support infrastructure projects in the coming years. This project is funded through a two-year transfer payment agreement with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government

with the goal of constructing one winter road this year and another next year.

As the members opposite will certainly know, that provides the opportunity to deliver a lot of materials into the community. Given that there hasn't been a winter road, I believe, since around 2014, it will also be the opportunity for the community to have various building materials and work-related detritus, garbage, or other materials make the trip back south on the winter road. Yes, the previous winter road was in the winter of 2013-14.

The use of the road to ship materials and construction supplies will assist with the construction of the tenplex and health and wellness centre project and the elders centre, which is being built by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. Of course, weather conditions are a critical factor in determining if a winter road can be constructed and the length of time that the road will be open. I suppose under the category of "You learn something almost every day in this job" — as former ministers of Highways and Public Works in this Chamber will know, a winter road in the Yukon isn't really a winter road; it is an access route that has been created so that specified loads can go through at specified times. I suppose it is a road of sorts, but obviously, it is not public access.

So, Deputy Chair, this is a good news story that had a tricky start to the story, but the weather was ultimately in the favour of the contractor and in the Vuntut Gwitchin Development Corporation's favour, eventually. And, as I indicated, 67 truckloads were able to be transported prior to the road closing on March 25, 2022, and the upward maximum that had been projected was 60 loads.

I believe, to the specific question with respect to this winter road and with respect to this road — number one, I guess, of two — there have been no change orders.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer. I note that, of course, while I appreciate that it is not a full road, I think it is informally referred to as the "Old Crow winter road" fairly commonly, and so that's why I use that language.

I think that the minister touched on it at the end, so I just wanted to confirm — the contract issued last year was for, I believe, \$44.8 million with Ketza-TSL. Can the minister confirm that there has been no change to that budget at this stage? I believe that he indicated that there were no change orders, so we should be on track to maintain that budget.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: My answer in my prior reply was specific to the contract with respect to the Old Crow winter road. I can either remain on my feet — but I understand that there is now a follow-up question with respect to the specific projects, which would be the tenplex and the health and wellness centre project.

Yes, as of today's date, there are no change orders with respect to the Old Crow health centre and tenplex that are specific to budget. I can certainly provide additional details on other considerations, but with respect to budget, there are currently no change orders with respect to the Old Crow health centre or the tenplex.

Mr. Dixon: I would like the minister to explain that a little bit. So, there have been change orders that don't affect the budget — is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: So far, there has been one change order, and it was a request of the contractor to allow for the prepayment of materials sooner than they would have been sequenced. That coincides with — as I indicated in my previous responses with respect to the winter road — that the contractor was able to deliver more goods through on the road this year as the winter road was open. So, this has so far not resulted in an increase in the budget, but rather allowed for the prepayment of materials to expedite the deployment of materials to take advantage of the conditions on the winter road this late winter-early spring.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister confirm if it was indeed a design/build contract? As such, will further change orders be considered by the government? If so, what is the minister anticipating for changes to the budget overall from the \$44.8 million that he mentioned last year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the Member for Copperbelt North correctly indicated, this is a design/build procurement. There is no current expectation of there being additional requests or additional change orders. The member opposite will, of course, very well know that there is no expectation currently of that occurring. Could it occur? Of course, it could occur. I can certainly provide the House with a detail about how the Department of Highways and Public Works engages in general contract management, should that occur, but I'm sure that the members opposite are generally familiar with that.

As of right now, there are no change orders with respect to the Old Crow health and wellness centre and tenplex. This is a multi-year project. Of course, unexpected circumstances might arise, but right now, there is no expectation that we're spending more money on this project — as of right now.

Mr. Dixon: Has the former Minister of Health and Social Services ever contacted this minister about this project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have not had any conversations with the former Minister of Health and Social Services, the former Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, on this file. I do know that she has been asked to have some sort of — I don't know what defined role as an advisor with Ketza Construction. I am advised that she has reached out to my department, Highways and Public Works.

I have not spoken to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I have always been advised — and have taken this advice on both this contract and all other contracts that are brought to my attention — that it is the Department of Highways and Public Works' contract procurement and contract management team — a very competent team that I have — that is responsible for interpreting clauses, terms, and conditions. I have taken their advice, so I have not spoken to the former Minister of Health and Social Services on this file.

Mr. Dixon: The minister has said that the former minister has contacted his department. I wonder if the minister can explain the nature of the former minister's contact with the department and what they were seeking from the contact with the department.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: So, I just wanted to confirm that the former Minister of Health and Social Services is working with the contractor on governmental relations with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. I have no personal knowledge as to the nature of the communication specifically with Highways and Public Works but for the fact that some, I believe — or I have been told that some of these conversations have taken place and that she has some sort of advisory role.

As I said previously in my response to a prior question from the Member for Copperbelt North, I have the utmost confidence in my contract management team at HPW and have left it with them to manage this contract. I have not had any communication with the former Minister of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Dixon: Is the minister aware if the former minister has contacted any of his Cabinet colleagues on this project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just repeat that I am the minister responsible for the administration of these contracts. I will emphasize again that I have been told — I have been in this position for almost a year now — and I accept the advice of my department that these contracts — and any discussions with respect to the administration of the contracts and any concerns that may arise or any requests that may occur with respect to the contracts, if they are codified within the contracts and their various terms and conditions with respect to modifications or dispute resolution mechanisms — that I will not get involved with respect to that, and I have not.

So, that is my position. It is my responsibility and, once again, I have not spoken to the Minister of Health and Social Services with respect to this contract and, in her position as a private citizen who now hasn't been in her position for some period of time — and I don't want to assume, but she has passed the period during which she would not have been permitted to work and to advocate for a contractor, but that period has passed and she has been retained to advocate. She is now permitted to do so — I assume that she is permitted to do so — but I have kept it abundantly clear and I have not spoken to the former Minister of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Dixon: My question was whether or not the minister was aware, or not, if the former minister had contacted any of his Cabinet colleagues. That was the question I had asked, and so I would appreciate it if the minister could address that question.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have no knowledge of any conversations having taken place between the former Minister of Health and Social Services with any of my Cabinet colleagues with respect to this topic. I wasn't in Cabinet in the 34th, but obviously, they were all colleagues of hers for the better part of four and a half years. I am not monitoring my Cabinet colleagues' social conversations or any incidental conversations which may have occurred. I have no knowledge. I have no knowledge of that. I know I have received no information. I have not spoken to the Minister of Health and Social Services, and I have not discussed this project with her, either directly or indirectly.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's explanation that he is clearly aware of no contact between the former minister and his current Cabinet colleagues with regard to this project.

He did, however, indicate that the former minister has been in touch with the department. Is the minister able to share with us any written overtures that the former minister has made to the department?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, I will follow up with my department and provide whatever communication that is viewed to be disclosable, unless there is any sort of confidentiality or business relationship issues, but I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's commitment to return to the Legislature with any written overtures made by the former minister to the department in respect to this contract, and so I will look forward to seeing that.

The minister also, in his response, was referencing a period of time after which the former minister would be permitted, in his words, to advocate on behalf of the contractor. Can he explain that a little bit? What is his understanding of the period of time that needs to elapse between the election — that period — and when the former minister can, in his words, advocate on behalf of the contractor?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would say somewhat gently, I suppose — but I would imagine the member opposite knows the answer to this question better than me, because I have never been an ex-minister. The member opposite will likely know the answer to this question when he chose not to run again in 2016.

But when I do become an ex-minister, I will talk to our mutual conflicts commissioner, Mr. Jones, and I will know definitively what I am permitted and not permitted to do, but to the best of my knowledge, ministers cannot accept contracts within Yukon until six months have elapsed, as a cool-off period, as per the conflict of interest act for the members and the minister.

In this case, the former minister does not have a contract directly with the Yukon. I'm not certain what position — and I'm not in a position to be providing advice to ex-MLAs. That is clearly within the ambit of the conflicts commissioner.

That's the information that I have, but certainly, when I am no longer in the Assembly, I will ensure that I'm personally very much aware of the rules and will govern myself accordingly, as I'm sure the Member for Copperbelt North governed himself accordingly in November of 2016.

Mr. Dixon: The only reason I'm asking these questions is because the minister brought that up. I don't know why the minister is referring to what he may or not do at a future point when he is no longer a minister. My question was just based on what he had said earlier in Committee.

But I'll move on.

The minister has also said that the former minister is now advocating on behalf of the contractor and, in his words, conducting some government relations. Is the minister aware of whether or not the former minister is registered with the lobbyist registry?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have no knowledge of that question with respect to whether the former Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is registered with the lobbyist registry or not.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer to that question.

The minister has indicated, though, that there has been some correspondence between the former minister and his department. The minister committed to getting that information back to us. I'm wondering who will make the determination of whether or not that correspondence is in any way commercially sensitive or business sensitive, and when will the minister be in a position to provide us with that information?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The responsibility rests with the deputy minister, who will receive the information and the recommendations. In this case, he will make the decision as to what will be released. We will try to comply with that as soon as is practical — as is possible.

Mr. Dixon: Has the department sought any legal advice with regard to their interactions with the former minister?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I'm personally not aware of any legal advice that was sought on this. I think that's probably where it's at.

I mean, there would be some issues with — anyway, I'm not personally aware of any legal advice that has been sought with respect to this matter or with respect to — I guess we're still on the topic of correspondence that may have occurred between the former Minister of Health and Social Services and the Department of Highways and Public Works. I am personally not aware of any legal advice sought with respect to that.

Mr. Dixon: I look forward to the minister providing the information that he has committed to today, and I have no further questions.

Deputy 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

Deputy 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.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,556,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$2,600,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$956,000 agreed to
Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to

Deputy Chair: 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.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress on Bill No. 203.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report progress on Bill No. 203.

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 11: Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022) — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I believe that I was on my feet on Thursday with respect to a question asked by the Leader of the Third Party with respect to how the implementation of Bill No. 11, should it pass this Legislative Assembly, would be maintained or provided — how the funding would be provided for that or how the initiatives going forward would be supported. I'm happy to continue to respond to that question, with my notes, if I might.

I should also welcome back Geri MacDonald and Caitlin Knutson, who are here to support the debate with respect to this important piece of legislation, Bill No. 11.

I believe I was asked, with respect to implementation — and I'm happy to indicate the following information. If this is not where the member opposite was going — I know that we were a bit rushed at the end there — then I'm happy to return to that and answer more questions.

But I can assure the Legislative Assembly and Yukoners that full implementation and operationalization of the amended *Child and Family Services Act* is a priority — a top priority based on all of the comments that I have made earlier about the importance of this work. As I already mentioned, the act is reflective of the significant philosophical shift in the delivery and practice of child protective services.

What I can also indicate is that this shift is not waiting for the amendments that are brought here by Bill No. 11 for that work to have begun, because the shift is required regardless of the legislative amendments and that practice is working its way through the department as we speak. It's important to recognize that the work to support this shift is well underway.

Implementation of these changes is not just beginning; this is a full package.

Over the last five years, Family and Children's Services has worked in partnership with Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and other partners to create the infrastructure to support the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*. This philosophical shift can be attributed to significant changes in practice, implementation of critical initiatives, changes in processes and procedures, and enhanced working relationships with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations. Extensive policy revisions, alignment of current and new resources, and new training have already been established and completed prior to the tabling of this bill.

In many ways, this bill is about ensuring that all of these changes are embedded in the legislation. That is so important so that they are not person-specific or leader-specific and at the risk of change. We have engaged extensively with First Nation partners who are the experts on what First Nation children, youth, and families need, and we have listened, we have learned, and we have taken action together. The philosophical shift in perspective and practice is well underway.

This shift moves us away from a professional-centred system that views social workers and other professionals as the experts to a family-centred system. This shift respects the experiences and the expertise of First Nations and families and that their expertise is strength-based and relationship-focused. It builds and enhances family capacity and places emphasis on children remaining with families where possible and connected to family and extended family, community, and culture and traditions if it is not possible for them to remain with their core family.

Where out-of-home placement is needed, reunification is always the goal. I can assure this House and all Yukoners that this critical work to operationalize this legislation is well underway, and we will continue to expand and enhance our strategies to ensure full implementation of this legislation.

We have scheduled a meeting on April 6 with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to discuss implementation governance structures and next steps.

The implementation-focused committee will provide guidance for draft implementation of policies and practices alongside other reform activities. The details of this committee will be discussed and developed with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

I'm going to stop there. I certainly have some information on how staff will be supported during the implementation of these legislative changes. I'll anticipate that it might be the next question, or it may not, but I will stop there and be happy to address how staff will be supported if that is appropriate.

Ms. White: I do appreciate it.

So, I finished off on Thursday just asking about the financial resources that are going to be devoted to this. The reason for it is that there was part of the answer from Thursday when the minister talked about the cost that could be incurred by First Nations. I'm not concerned about the cost. I just want

to know that we're putting enough resources behind it. I do appreciate those answers.

Just before we get further into my questions today, there was an exchange between the minister and the Leader of the Yukon Party on Thursday when it was asked if the minister was referencing documents in response to the child rights impact assessment and how it appeared that, at the time, the minister was reading a companion document. There was a request by the Leader of the Yukon Party that it either be tabled or if that response could be shared with the Child and Youth Advocate. I just want to start there.

Is it possible to get the response — I guess the companion response — to the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity to address that. I think it is most appropriate — my approach to this process would be to respond to the Child and Youth Advocate's most recent correspondence. That letter is in draft form this morning. I am working through a process for that to be reviewed by my office and ultimately sent to the Child and Youth Advocate Office. It will have appended to it the document that is being referred to, which is the full review in writing and response to the comments and recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate Office to my office in relation to Bill No. 11. As soon as that letter is completed, I am happy to have it tabled here in the Legislative Assembly and provide it to the members opposite. Actually, I think it is going to be copied to both of the leaders of the opposition parties because I think it was initially provided to them as well from the Child and Youth Advocate, as an officer of the Legislative Assembly. I think that's where it was initially written. I have responded to it. It will include that document. I think that's the most appropriate way for that to be provided to the members opposite. Because the letter initially came from the Child and Youth Advocate, it's respectful to answer that letter initially to her and provide copies.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that answer from the minister. It puts us at a disadvantage a bit in trying to move forward. I do hope that the response and letter to the Child and Youth Advocate is forthcoming because then we can leave it behind.

Just an idea, I was just trying to find the reference to documents in Thursday's debate, and there were 64 references to documents, so I didn't get to quite the right spot. I thank the minister for that response — saying that it is coming. I think that will be helpful in our conversations in the Assembly today.

Similar to what my colleague had mentioned last week, I do want to acknowledge that there were concerns that were brought forward. We touched on that a little bit on Thursday. We just had the minister confirm that, once the letter goes out to the Child and Youth Advocate, it will be tabled. I also wanted to know if it was possible that the minister — if any legal advice had been sought to those recommendation changes from the IPC and the Child and Youth Advocate — could share them — either table them in the House or share them with the House Officers so that they come here, and then I'll ask the next questions.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair. A draft letter to the Information and Privacy Commissioner will indicate that we had sought legal advice with respect to the recommendation's clarity suggested by the Information and Privacy Commissioner in her letter to the Premier and to the two leaders of the opposition parties.

I will respond on behalf of the Premier and have drafted that letter, which will include the reference to the fact that this is the information that we have been provided.

There is no formal legal opinion, but if necessary, I can find a brief written version of the advice, but that being said, I will take that under advisement to determine whether that's appropriate to release here, it being advice to the minister. But nonetheless, it is quite simply the position that has been taken by our government, which is that, in fact, it does not — while I appreciate the comments from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the amendments in Bill No. 11 do not infringe on the rights of individuals to obtain information pursuant to the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*.

I should say that both letters to the Child and Youth Advocate and to the Information and Privacy Commissioner will invite them to participate on the implementation working group — the one I have just made reference to. The first invitations will be for our meeting on April 6 and, after that, a determination of what that structure should look like.

Invitations to the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner to participate in the implementation working group and/or be provided with updates on the work of that committee — including review of any appropriate provisions or policies that are developed — will be included in those letters, which is, I think, where we are trying to determine wording broad enough and satisfactory enough to both the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner so that they will fully understand the commitment to their participation in that process and their participation in the development of the policies that are of particular concern to them going forward.

This is important work. It is incredibly important work that we do together. It is incredibly important work that we build the implementation working group structure and work plan with our partners, primarily being the Council of Yukon First Nations and the 14 First Nations here in the territory.

I think I'll just take a moment, because that is such an important part of this process going forward and an important part of this debate before the House. I certainly have no qualms whatsoever about committing to the work going forward with the implementation working group and the participation of the officers of this Legislative Assembly and their expertise and how we can incorporate those into this process.

Deputy Chair, for a long time in this territory, we created laws for Yukon First Nation people, and we worked on pieces of legislation that were done by well-meaning public servants and even by well-meaning government officers, like the Child and Youth Advocate, like the elected members of this Legislative Assembly, but in fact, it wasn't that long ago that laws were written without much Yukon First Nation input at all — or of any kind.

We know that the *Child and Family Services Act* has overwhelming impact on First Nation children and their families, and we know that there was a better way to develop this legislation. So, we took a new approach in amending this legislation — and the review that was not done by the previous government — who refused to be done — truly identified the need for significant changes to existing legislation. That review developed many recommendations.

It was to develop a law that was truly reflective of the needs of the people that it serves. We decided to develop this piece of legislation with Yukon First Nations, not for Yukon First Nations. The steering committee was created and led by two co-chairs, one from Yukon government and one from the Council of Yukon First Nations. All 14 First Nations were invited to participate and 12 had assigned representatives. The committee met for hundreds of hours and reviewed every single recommendation of the report of the advisory committee.

They developed amendments to the existing legislation. The opportunity to bring that to the floor of this Legislative Assembly is, I think, historic and the opportunity to proceed with these amendments. I don't want anyone to take this commentary by me, at this moment, as anything but the commitment that it is and the pride that it is and the work that has gone into bringing Bill No. 11 into this Legislative Assembly.

We absolutely, clearly, and with dedication considered the recommendations that were brought forward by the Child and Youth Advocate Office and by the Information and Privacy Commissioner Office. We have specific answers for each of those. If that's something that I can or should review as part of this debate, I would be happy to do so. We will provide those in writing, as I've indicated.

We will commit that those officers of this Legislative Assembly, for whom I have intense respect, will be invited to participate in the implementation working group going forward to make sure that their concerns live in the policy that will be developed as a result of Bill No. 11 passing this Legislative Assembly.

I am pleased to make that commitment here and will repeat it in writing, should it be necessary, and we will move forward with that commitment, because this is a shift in how we will do child protective services in the future. It is a shift that has been occurring at the Department of Health and Social Services for years, and it is a shift that has brought us a new approach to bringing legislation to this floor.

All questions are welcome, and I'm pleased to answer each and every one of them no matter how long it takes, because the debate of this intense piece of legislation is critical on the floor of this Legislative Assembly and for all Yukoners, and I look forward to that. Please understand that there is no question that any concerns brought forward by officers of this House will be taken into account and will be worked through by the implementation working group.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. This is going to be a fair amount of repetition, but I just want to clarify to make sure that I am clear in my understanding of what the minister has just said. Am I clear in understanding that the minister has

committed to working with the Child and Youth Advocate and the IPC, along with the committee, to work on the implementation — and with CYFN — to address the concerns that were highlighted?

Then, also, did the minister commit to working with both of the same officers who I just mentioned within the implementation committee and the CYFN on policy development and implementation of this act?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't have any trouble repeating that at all. I should indicate that the steering committee sunsets its work with the introduction of Bill No. 11 in this Legislative Assembly, and ultimately, we hope it will sunset its work with the passing of Bill No. 11.

Then, on April 6, the Government of Yukon has invited — no, not on April 6 — previous to now, we have invited the Council of Yukon First Nations and representatives of all Yukon First Nations to attend a meeting on April 6, which will be the beginning of the building of the implementation working group. We will discuss with the participants at that meeting the framework for the implementation working group — how it should operate, how often it should meet, how it will proceed in doing its work — and ultimately, following that initial or maybe more than one initial meeting, others will be invited to participate. My commitment here today is that the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner will be two of the individuals, and/or their offices, who are invited to participate in the implementation working group. And, if they choose not to do that for whatever reason might be up to them, we will commit to providing them with updates on the work that is being done, if they don't want to participate in the actual work, and/or we will commit to a third option or all three of the options, which will be having the opportunity to review appropriate policies that will be put forward by this group for the implementation of Bill No. 11.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that clarification. It is going to be hard for me to misunderstand where we just went, and I just wanted to make sure that we were on the page.

So, now, I will just get back to the questions that I had initially been ready for. So, one of the things that I would like to know is: What training will be offered to on board workers at the department level to ensure that they are aware of their role, responsibilities, and the support that is available to them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Providing supports and resources to staff to support the work within Family and Children's Services and the implementation of this legislation has and continues to be a focus for our department. Over the past five years, we have put in place the following: enhanced training and supports; higher standards of practice; clear expectations and accountability; revised policies and processes which relate to this work; introduced more specialized units and teams; and added support positions to reduce the workload. We have introduced additional mobile social worker positions to support regional service delivery, which is incredibly important work. We have implemented a new case management system. We have a new financial funding model for this area of the department. We have a new file management and record system, and we introduced a new practice framework.

More specifically over the past three years, the Government of Yukon has worked with the Council of Yukon First Nations to redevelop the core training that all Family and Children's Services social workers must complete in order to ensure that the training content includes Yukon — just a moment; I have the wrong page.

So, the core training — is that an acronym? I'm just going to get the actual acronym, not only for Hansard but for members of the House. It's not an acronym, despite the fact that it's typed in capitals here. I'm all about learning new acronyms so I didn't have to learn a new one.

So, the core training is given to all Family and Children's Services social workers. It must be completed in order to ensure that the training content includes Yukon First Nation perspectives. Yukon First Nation staff participate in the delivery of this training and attend the training alongside Family and Children's Services staff, which is new but has been worked on over the past three years — again, looking forward to what will be needed to make sure that we have full understanding and implementation and the commitment to this kind of work.

In 2021, the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations began delivering full-day and on-the-land experiential opportunities for Family and Children's Services staff to increase cultural competency.

I'm just going to stop from my note there to say that I had the opportunity to participate a couple of times in similar training that was given to new teachers and new educational assistants here in the territory — so people who have not necessarily worked here before or some who may have. It is absolutely brilliant — in the short period of time in which the experiential opportunities provide individuals with new points of view, if I can say that, or education in its truest form for understanding Yukon First Nations or at least opening the door to understanding Yukon First Nations, their concerns, and the cultural aspects of their commitments.

In 2021, Family and Children's Services implemented an up-to-date case management system, called the "family case management system", which reduces administrative burden on staff and provides supervisors and managers with more oversight over child welfare service delivery to ensure that the prevention-based approach is applied on the ground.

Family and Children's Services has introduced a dedicated program specialist who will use the family case management system's enhanced data-reporting capabilities to conduct quality assurance analysis and report on our compliance with legislative and policy requirements.

I have, in the past, done work with the Department of Health and Social Services in the capacity of focusing on child welfare matters. This is groundbreaking, in my view. It has not existed before.

Family and Children's Services has a dedicated child welfare practice specialist position that works with managers and supervisors to create strategies to support social workers with interpretation, implementation, and compliance with legislative and policy requirements. A dedicated training coordinator position is in place to support the development and

the delivery of new and ongoing training. This is not something that happens sporadically. In fact, a training coordinator position understands — not the person but the position — shows understanding by Health and Social Services that this training must be ongoing and must be consistent.

A paralegal position was put in place to support social workers with legal processes and enhanced social workers' abilities to be directing their time and working with families and not trying to figure out sections of the act.

A quality assurance position is also now in place to assist and oversee our continuous quality improvement initiatives and to conduct internal audits, monitor compliance, and identify areas for further training and development of staff.

New clinical supervisor training has now been introduced to support supervisors in their critical roles and supporting of staff. Over the last three years, Family and Children's Services has held multiple workplace culture and change workshops for staff to support staff as we move through these changes, recognizing that staff will be asked to do things differently and will be supported in a way they have not been supported in the past to concentrate on their work with families — I will make reference to social workers particularly — and concentrate on that work and not on the case management and not on a number of other things that there will be support for through the reorganization and by the addition of these coordinator positions — these training positions of dedicated individuals who will help support their work.

I also have some information about the shift toward preventive focus, but I will leave that in case that is another question that is coming — but ultimately just focusing on the training part of that question.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. She did a really good job incorporating some of my questions around cultural training and whether or not it was mandatory. From my perspective, as a kid who grew up in the Yukon and didn't learn fully about residential schools until I was working in the department with Corrections, it is a glaring oversight, I think, unfortunately. From my perspective, I would like everyone who works within the public service to have some of the training, whether it was the core training that the minister mentioned or whether it was the training that was offered to new teachers. I think that it actually helps. It actually strengthens the public service.

When there was that mention about new staff — recognizing that there has been some staff who have been within the department for a longer time, are we making sure that others are also caught up and so this training is across the board? I see the minister nodding, so I will just move on to the next section.

With the recognition that, I believe, there are four new positions — the child welfare specialist, the training coordinator, the paralegal, and the child supervisor — if it's training or something similar — can the minister let me know if all of those positions are filled at this point or whether we have some gaps that we need to fill within the department?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Just to confirm — I know that the member opposite noted that I nodded my head, but I can

confirm that the core training is done twice annually. It is required learning and training for individuals who work in this area. Of course, it is required going forward for any new hires, but current staff also are required, as a refresher, to do it twice a year. So, that training is required going forward, as well as for current staff, if I can say it that way. The four positions that have been noted by the Leader of the Third Party are all currently filled, and that is partly because, as I have noted, this shift began three to five years ago. We have had the positions for some time, but they are also in response to the kind of training and support given to staff going forward.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that answer.

So, under the current act, there have been children who have been harmed while in the care of the director, and given that the philosophy of this act is about prevention and support, I just have a couple of questions.

What protocols are in place for when a child is harmed in a situation where the department is in charge? What routes will be taken to treat that harm appropriately? Does the department have a protocol for all adults involved on the department side to apologize directly to a child and a family?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I wonder if I could have some clarification. I understood the apology if harm is done, but I just want to make sure that I understand the premise — the first part of the question — to make sure that we can provide the appropriate answer.

I'm not completely sure — if a child is — I don't want to guess. So, if a child is in the care of the director and they are somehow harmed — I just want to hear from the member opposite what her premise is.

Ms. White: That's correct. An example is, a number of years ago, there were young people who were living in group homes under the care of the director. They were locked out. That is harm. We have young people who, at 18, didn't get the supports or the transitional supports that they needed as they aged out of those group homes. That is harm. We have families who have had children apprehended and misplacements after that. That is harm. When I'm talking about harm under the care of the director, it's a wide gamut from very young to — the current act covers and supports young people until 24. We know that the changes will be to 26, but we know that there have been gaps to date. I just want to know. Apologies are really important. How do we make sure that the apologies that are to be made are adequate and appropriate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to answer this question, because I think it is about the core of the work that we are doing here today in debating Bill No. 11.

I want to reiterate that the *Child and Family Services Act* has a disproportionate impact on indigenous people and that this government is establishing a reconciliatory process that has supported amendments to the act in Bill No. 11 and toward long-term child welfare reform. This work is being done across the country with the implementation of the federal legislation with respect to other work that I'm going to make reference to for the moment.

It is important to note that the Truth and Reconciliation calls to actions 1 through 5 speak directly to child welfare and

that this government has been, and continues to, take action on each and every one of those. We are committed to reducing the number of indigenous children in care by working with all governments and, most importantly, with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations. That is call to action 1.

When this government embarked on this reconciliatory work, relationships and trust with the Yukon First Nations with respect to child welfare services were fractured. I certainly remember, and I know many people remember, issues with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, in particular, and the concerns about the government management of child welfare services in conjunction with the approach that the Kwanlin Dün First Nation wanted to take many years ago. Those kinds of conflicts were done and seen over and over.

Child welfare is one of the hardest and most complex, highly sensitive areas of work for all governments. We're talking about the most important aspect of our Yukon communities: the safety and the well-being of our children.

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling number 41 acknowledges that too many First Nation children were unnecessarily apprehended from their parents and their communities and suffered harms — their word, as well as the member opposite's — that included abuse and a loss of language or culture and a loss of attachment to their families. I don't know anybody who can imagine the loss of the attachment of a child to a parent, or to an extended family member or grandparent, and not be truly saddened by the thought of it.

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling number 41 states — and I quote: "It is time for a true paradigm shift in Canada so that we do not repeat history."

Over the last five years, the Government of Yukon has been shifting practices, as I've noted, and will continue to work with the Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada to support long-term reform that will address these structural problems in the child welfare system.

That is what Bill No. 11 is attempting to do — and will do. I have great confidence that it will do. Bill No. 11 is an important step, as it will legislate some of the paradigm shifts, providing more tools to working with families in their communities and requiring that the least disruptive measures be delivered. It requires least disruptive measures. It requires focus on what is in the best interests of the child. It requires access to and consideration of First Nation families' expertise and First Nation communities' expertise.

I want to reiterate again the importance of Bill No. 11 being developed using a process of listening directly to and building understanding with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations. This process has built trust and outlines our government's commitment to a true paradigm shift in the Yukon child welfare system.

I know this is a lot of information, but it's so critical to address the question of the member opposite, because it is about harm. It's about changing the opportunity for those harms to take place or for those harms to have been built into a system that was not responsive and was not putting children first in all of its forms.

The *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee — all members held the humility and the curiosity to learn from one another and to discuss complex situations and to make sound advice by consensus on these legislative amendments. When considering Bill No. 11, please remember that the relationship and the trust was built using this process with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations. The expertise and voice of Yukon First Nations is held throughout the amendments. Any substantive amendment made in this House without Yukon First Nations should be thoughtfully considered, given the impact that this would have on Yukon First Nation children and families. And placing the voice and the perceived expertise of those Yukon First Nations and their expertise above or in, as advice to this government in bringing forward this legislation, was critical.

We continue the work primarily with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations on the implementation of this act, which is why, as I've noted, the invitation has gone to build the implementation working group and the framework of how we will proceed, and then others of course will be invited.

I can turn more specifically — those in general, what we hope to be changes that will address the harm — the examples of harm noted in the question. I have outlined the training and the support for individuals who work in this complex and difficult area. The ongoing positions that have been put in place to support those individuals in this work is a true recognition of reparation and reconciliation.

Listening to First Nations' expertise, coming to the table with those governments and partners, listening and learning will, we hope, build a system going forward that is absolutely child-centred, First Nation expertise-centred in relation to their children and the concept of working for prevention and ultimately, if a child is taken into care, reunification always being on the table, and I can tell you from personal experience, that has not always been the case.

With respect to the harm in the example and the question, I can confirm that there was a true recognition of those incidents being harmful. They are not acceptable by anyone's standards. There have been changes in policies. We have worked particularly around transitions to make sure that youth are supported. Bill No. 11 is more than just changing the age from 24 to 26. It is truly about incorporating into the law the idea that individuals will be consistently supported in a way that has not been done before, not only financially, but supported through their transitions to life on their own or with friends or family. There have been policy changes and realignment of priorities and there have been apologies to youth, because I agree. I can tell you that individuals who work in this area in the department agree that apologies are truly critical to moving forward. Apologies, in my view, are at the end of the line of listening and learning and ultimately speaking about reparations and how to do better and move forward. The examples given by the member opposite, I think, were a number of years ago and I hope that she is asking: "Have we learned? Has the department learned from those experiences and learned a new way to do them?" The answer to that is yes.

If I could just have one moment to see if there is something else that I might be able to add. I do have more information about the transitional services, but I will stop there in case we get to that question eventually.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. To clarify, the minister asked for examples — I could use current examples, but I chose ones that were already publicly available, because I think that it is important not to dredge up other things at this point. I do appreciate the language that was used in talking about the requirements and how the new act will go forward. The reason why I was asking about apologies is making sure that either: (a) there are protocols to say how we deal with apologies; or (b) there are policies in place that say how we deal with apologies. The truth of the matter is that everybody can be tired at different points in time and social workers, front-line service providers are human. So, it is just about making sure that we have stuff put in place so that, instead of a staff member feeling vulnerable about taking ownership of those actions or maybe those words, they are supported in being able to do that. The minister and I agree that it is about listening and finding that path forward, so I just wanted to make sure that we recognize the importance of those apologies.

As a teenager, there were times when my folks and I got into it in a way that was unpleasant. If it wasn't for those apologies, we wouldn't have made it through. It's not going to be any different for any other kid in any other situation, so making sure that it is part of that shift of that culture in the department to allow mistakes to happen, to learn from them, and then to move on.

Moving on — I am going to move on. Can the minister give me a number of how many vacant positions are currently in the department in Family and Children's Services? Are there specific positions? They are all important, but are there specific positions that are vacant that she thinks are good to highlight? I would like to know them.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can indicate that I don't have that number with me. We will ask folks at the department if it can be provided. I am happy to circle back to it if there is another question I can answer in the meantime with respect to vacancies in Family and Children's Services.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. It's when technology is truly a marvel. I have a lot of questions, so there will be no shortage.

What I can highlight for folks who are looking for those numbers right now is: How many full-time social workers are there within the department? Out of those social workers, how many are dedicated to one community and how many are separated within communities? I am looking to know, for example, if there is coverage between two communities with one social worker. I am kind of looking for those numbers. So, just based on the minister's previous answer, I will just leave that in the world right now and hope that someone can get back to me.

When we talk about service delivery, I think it is important to note that, in order to deliver these services and resources to children and their families who are either in the care of the director or being supported by the director in other scenarios,

children and their families need to be consistently looped in with a social worker. I am really lucky in my current position that I have been learning from a social worker. Those skills that a social worker brings to a conversation are really critical. Having a social worker as a resource is vital for any family or any person who is in contact with the department.

Are there any plans to make sure that every community in the Yukon has a devoted full-time social worker?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. All Yukon communities with the exception of Burwash and White River First Nation have social workers assigned with responsibilities to those communities. First of all, I should stop for a second to say that we agree — the member opposite and I and the Department of Health and Social Services — that building a rapport and a relationship between a social worker and a community is critical and the support for children in that community is critical for an individual to build rapport and to build community and to participate in community events and those kinds of things.

All communities have a social worker assigned to do that work with respect to child and family services. The social worker is expected to reside in that community. We have housing for social workers to reside in each of those communities, with the exception of Carcross where there is no housing, so the individual travels to that community to do their work there. I should say that we also have mobile social workers that support — we're still working on getting numbers with respect to vacancies, but of course, social workers, being professionals, have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and making sure that those positions are all filled. I can indicate that the mobile social workers support vacancies if there are some in those communities and/or if an individual needs to be away and those kinds of things. So, we do have mobile social workers to do that support work as well. I'm still waiting on getting some numbers and ultimately those numbers should also deal with the current vacancies. But I think that is all I have to address that last question.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I'm also happy for it to come in a legislative return or it can be an e-mail to — I guess a legislative return is available to everyone, so maybe that's a good way. It doesn't have to be today. I have pages of questions, so we won't run out of time.

I want to better understand what the act means by including children in their case planning. It's fine to invite families and children for collaborative case planning, but what does that really look like? For example, what if a family lives in a community that's different from the child's?

Will the department cover the cost of travel and accommodations and/or lost wages to support the family to attend the case planning for the children in care? Do we want to do that physically, or are we talking about being able to do that remotely? Is the family able to bring their own advocate to these meetings, besides a lawyer?

So, what I want to know is: What does case planning look like? When we say that we want children and their families to be included in it, how do we make that happen? What does that look like?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. The short answer is — I will stay with the short answer. I am looking for a section reference. I might be able to add it in a moment.

But the collaborative planning process is child- and family-led. This is much different from the work that has been done in the past with respect to planning and a case plan going forward. That being said, it will be at the convenience of the individual child and family. So, certainly with the example given, if the family lived in another location but the meeting or planning process was going to happen in Whitehorse, yes, they would absolutely be assisted to attend or there could be virtual options.

They are able to invite anyone — I believe that it is section 7 that says that anyone can be invited. The question about whether or not they can bring their own advocate or any advocate — absolutely. Do they have to be assisted in order to connect with the Child and Youth Advocate? Absolutely. If they want to bring an advocate from their First Nation or from their First Nation support organizations or departments, that is all available and is child- and family-led. I think that this is the critical part of the amendments here.

In section 7, there are a number of changes. There is the replacement of things like the wording “family conference”, given that it was the practice in the past, but this is all about collaborative planning processes. Under section 7, with respect to naming “participants” — “When a family conference or other co-operative planning process...” — of course, that wording will be changed. Section 7(f) refers to “... any other person whose involvement would be of assistance in developing the plan.” Again, this is going back to the concept of being child- and family-led and their preference with respect to that. We can get into more specific wording if necessary, but I think the general question was: Will they be supported to bring people who will assist them in this process? Absolutely. Is the reference to being child- and family-led something that will be supported through the organization of that process? Yes.

Ms. White: I wasn't asking if it would be — because it says in the act over and over again that it will be led by the child and the family. Also, there are many amendments that change it to being collaborative and cooperative.

So, I mean, it's hard to miss those references when you go through it. You can see how that is inspired by systemic change. That was just more of trying to get an idea of what that would look like to make sure that the child and family can be involved. I do think that the last two years have taught us that, in some cases, we can do things both in a hybrid way — both physically and remotely at the same time. I think it's just then making sure that there is an office in the community, if someone is away, that can have it set up with the technology and the support so that a family, or whatever combination of people, can participate.

It's just, what could that look like? The minister doesn't have to give me any more on 7(f), because it's flagged — when we go line by line, just to talk more about what that supports or friend can look like, because that was the language there.

So, in the bill, children have the right to consult with a legal professional for private discussions. I'm curious as to what that

looks like. My hope is, obviously, that the department would pay for that service, but is there a series of lawyers who are prepared to work with children in this aspect? How do we make sure that the child knows that they have that ability to have that conversation? How does that pairing work? How is the cost covered?

I just want a better idea of what happens — for example, it's either triggered by the child themselves or how they are told and what that looks like when they are told that they have access to legal counsel.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question.

There are a number of lawyers in the Yukon Territory who have some speciality in working as child lawyers or lawyers for children, and they are accessed if a child needs legal representation or wishes to have it. I should start by saying that they would learn about that right through work with their social worker. The social workers are required to provide that information to them.

I think that these current amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* will expand a bit on the responsibilities for the department there, because being children- and family-leading through this process might require that children and/or the families might have differing points of view or differing perspectives that might mean that there will be more than one lawyer involved, if necessary. I should indicate that the Department of Health and Social Services would pay for the cost of this legal counsel, if they were wanted and provided for. I will also note that legal representation is one of the recommendations that came from the steering committee for a working group — to do more work on it, including reviewing resources for children, for youth, and for families and whether or not — how that work can be better done. It is also critically important that the advice is provided for in a culturally appropriate way, with recognition of cultural perspectives and the legal work in that context.

Costs, as I've noted, are paid for by the Department of Health and Social Services, and that's whether or not there's a court process. One of the things that Bill No. 11 anticipates is that we will be successful in working with families going forward so that children do not need to come into the care of the director. That doesn't mean that, during that process, they might not need some legal assistance or legal advice or legal interpretations of certain things. Of course, the court process kicks in when a child is brought into the care of the director and there are requirements in that context. Of course, legal representation is available and required then, but we recognize in the amendments to Bill No. 11 and amendments to the act that legal representation might be appropriate and required throughout the process, regardless of whether or not it's a court process and, lastly, that the working group will be looking at legal representation as a way to provide better service.

Ms. White: I thank the minister. That is excellent. It's important, and I'm not surprised that it was a recommendation, so I do appreciate that answer.

Moving on toward existing agreements and current situations for children and youth who may be in care, currently, we know there are a fair number of children under extended

family care agreements and in foster homes. This isn't a criticism; I just want us to acknowledge that is the situation. What is the plan to ensure that, while the act is being operationalized, these young people have equitable access to the resources and services that children in the future will have?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I think it's — I'm going to address it in maybe two ways.

On the regulations, I'm going to talk about the coming-into-force date. I think that this is the way that normally things are transitioned. Regulations are not required to operationalize the proposed legislative amendments — so, Bill No. 11 — to the *Child and Family Services Act*, and at this time, there are no plans to draft new regulations, but policy work has been committed to and that work will begin in earnest on April 6, because we must move forward.

I appreciate that this bill is not likely to be passed by then, but nonetheless, it's important to consider the future work of the Government of Yukon, which will meet, as I've said, in early April to discuss the collective next steps to operationalize the legislative amendments and to determine when this *Child and Family Services Act* amendment should come into force.

Key policies are required to guide and support the Family and Children's Services staff before the amended *Child and Family Services Act* comes into effect. Our goal is to develop a process where the Government of Yukon and the Yukon First Nations collaborate to reach consensus on policy direction that carries out the legislative amendments and remains true to the spirit of the steering committee's recommendations.

It's our intent to have the key policies required to operationalize the amended *Child and Family Services Act* in place as soon as possible and bring the amended *Child and Family Services Act* into force in the coming months. That's the first part of the coming into force. I think the other question was — part of the question was about extended family care agreements and current children in foster care and equitable access to the provisions that will, we hope, improve things going forward.

Case plans are currently required for those children to be reviewed every six months. Part of the transitional process will be to review them on the schedule that currently exists and then amend those case plans going forward — first of all, having the full benefit of the new provisions as they go forward.

With respect to focuses, for instance, on the collaborative planning process and how that new case plan will be developed, over the last several years, we've taken significant steps to support extended family caregivers to ensure that more children in need of out-of-home care remain close to their families and their community and their culture.

In November 2017, we increased financial supports to extended family caregivers to match the funding levels that foster caregivers were receiving. That was a significant change, because there was no real justification for why it should be different, frankly. Then in October 2018, we increased all other supports and services provided to extended family caregivers to match those received by foster caregivers, including access to respite and alternative childcare services.

Then in September 2019, staffing positions were aligned to create a team of support workers for both foster caregivers and extended family caregivers so that those services could be better collaborated. In 2021, we continued along the trajectory by launching the caregiver strategy with the Council of Yukon First Nations to focus on the recruitment and the retention and the training for all caregivers, including extended family caregivers to really support them.

A significant part of this strategy is to work with individual Yukon First Nations to create community-specific initiatives to recruit and train and support indigenous caregivers, because having indigenous caregivers to support this process is absolutely critical to keep children connected to their community.

We're in the process of updating our assessment processes for caregivers to make them culturally sensitive and identify the unique supports that they need within their communities to be supported and to be able to support families.

Finally, our policies and child welfare practices for extended family caregivers will remove caregiver standards and requirements that were not successful or that failed to take into account consideration of the realities of life in rural communities. We are expanding the ability for extended family care providers to provide care for children in care of the director, as previously, placement was limited to foster care or group care. That is a benefit coming forward that will be available to families. I know that the question was about equitable access to these provisions. As I have noted, they will be transitional in nature.

I would just like to focus for a second on youth and section 16. I am not anticipating that this is a future question, but I hope the opportunity is there to focus on youth. Sections 16 and 17 of the *Child and Family Services Act* provide for agreements for support services for youth and agreements for transitional support services respectively and are currently used to assist youth and young adults. The corresponding case plans for these agreements are developed with the youth and often are led by youth through a collaborative planning process. Section 7 of the *Child and Family Services Act* requires that youth are included in these case planning processes and are provided with the opportunity to share their voice and choice in determining their case plans, including case plan goals, programs, and services that are required to achieve those goals where they live.

This is so important for a young adult who is learning to make their way in the world and supporting them through this process in a way that they understand that their voice is heard, that their support people can be brought into this process, and that they will be listened to and heard and supported in a way that doesn't have a black-and-white end date. This planning process can happen earlier. It is so critical to having them transition well and be supported.

The current legislation only lists four types of services that youth who enter into agreements for transitional support services are eligible for. Those are: counselling; independent living skills; education and training supports; and assistance to access education or community resources.

We've heard from youth, the advisory committee, and the steering committee that youth and young adults who leave the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services require additional supports. Accordingly, we amended section 10(2) to include seven additional services that youth and young adults will be eligible for, which include: support for or payment of living expenses; housing supports; youth and family mediation, which is incredibly important; treatment programs; support for or payment of health and dental expenses; support workers; and support for payment of tuition and expenses.

We also heard that youth who live with extended family members for a significant amount of time and cannot be reunited with their parents will require support after they reach the age of 19. The current legislation does not provide the director of Family and Children's Services with the legal authority to support these youth and young adults.

Bill No. 11 amends section 17 of the *Child and Family Services Act* to empower the director to enter into agreements for transitional support services with youth and young adults who spend at least two years with extended family members before they reach the age of 19.

National trends show that youth and young adults returning home following post-secondary education to live with their parents generally remain with their parents into their late 20s. We amended the *Child and Family Services Act* to ensure that we keep step with these national trends and provide support for youth and young adults who have left extended family care, or the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services, until they reach the age of 26 years.

I dare say, in COVID for the last two years, that those statistics might even be more exacerbated for young adults who are living at home or living with parents or extended family members.

We also understand that, in special circumstances, a young adult may need support beyond the age of 26 to reach their case plan goals, such as completing their post-secondary education. The legislative amendments here also provide the director of Family and Children's Services the discretion to continue to provide programs and supports to young adults beyond the age of 26.

I've taken the opportunity to review this because I think — I guess it doesn't matter what I think. What I'm going to say is that these changes alone, in response to what young people need to transition out of care and into their own lives, are so important, and they apply whether or not an individual was in care as a young child or later in life or into their teenage years.

But the responsibility that we have for young people who have been part of a child welfare system that has maybe responded to their needs, and maybe not, in the past is incredibly important, and I'm very proud of the work that has been done here with Yukon First Nations, with the Department of Health and Social Services, and with the Council of Yukon First Nations to not only recognize that these changes need to be made, but to recognize the importance of youth voices and to recognize that these transitions have to be discretionary so that they can be extended beyond the age of 26.

I've worked on situations myself where it was really black and white in the legislation and there was no opportunity for the director to provide services, even though they might be recognized to be beneficial to a particular child or youth, and we are trying to change that now.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. The last time that I was at home in my parents' house, I was 35, and it was between moving out of a rental and purchasing a home. We don't magically mature at 18 and finish everything, and so I do appreciate the discretionary nature of 26. Knowing that we will address things on a case-by-case basis, as required, is really important.

I have a great friend who is a product of the foster care system, and she did her master's actually on kids within the foster care system because, as an adult, she recognizes that she has a really hard time staying in one place. She has a really hard time staying in one place to the point that she is actually doing her PhD on a similar nomadic experience, because that is her experience from growing up in the foster care system. As an adult who now is very educated, she is still affected by her experiences in the foster system.

My next question has to do with data. The reason I use this fantastic friend as an example is that we know — because she has shared it very publicly in her master's thesis and will continue to share it — she was affected by the system. Are there plans to follow children involved with the department after they age out of the system so that we can understand and measure their outcomes against these changes in programs? For example, having a conversation with someone 10 years later is important. Having a conversation with someone as they become a parent is important.

I don't think we can truly track successes of something unless we follow it past when they are within the system. Is there a plan to do that kind of following? I don't want to say "following" because that sounds negative, but is there an intention for the department to walk alongside people as they age out of the system to find out what works and what doesn't work?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question.

This is an interesting area of development of data. There is no current framework at the department for collecting such information and ultimately assessing it, but we certainly recognize that children's experiences — and, more importantly, often those transitioning into adulthood — are critical for understanding how to do all of this work better. I note that there is the quality assurance position that I noted earlier. I think that it is important to note that some of the aspects that they will be looking at will be something that could and should be measured.

There is an organization known as the Child Welfare League of Canada, and they have just done an interjurisdictional scan with the focus of youth leaving the child welfare system and transitioning into adulthood, which is not unlike what has been mentioned by the member opposite. The final report came out in December 2019. The Yukon did participate in that. It is a recognition of the structure of future research in this area. It sounds like the member opposite's

friend is certainly cutting edge with respect to the work that she is doing. It does, of course, look at trends across Canada and what we can learn from youth who are transitioning out of the child welfare system.

I actually believe that this is a critical time for us to be collecting data because of the shift that we have talked about — the transitional shift for how the child welfare system is responding to youth. I should also say that any of the pillars that need to be looked at with respect to collecting such data would be informed by the conversations with Yukon First Nations and will potentially be a topic for the implementation working group, because interrelated supports are the kinds of things that we have been talking about, particularly with respect to youth and how we should gather that going forward.

So, the short answer is not at the moment with respect to collecting such data, but I do — and my folks from the department here certainly recognize the work that is being done and agree that there's a shift, or an opportunity, to collect more data to inform what is recognized as certainly an evolving child welfare system.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. When I say “data”, I don't necessarily mean quantitative. It could be qualitative — like learning from people's experiences, I think, is really important. I will let my friend know that she is on the cutting edge of an emerging thing, which — maybe you'll hear from her in the future.

I do think that's important, as we look to make sure that our intention is hitting. Along that same measure, I want to know what measures — I'm going to try to get this out — what measures are in place, or will be put in place, to ensure that the intent of this bill is honoured? I say this because there are many progressive examples of doing child welfare differently. There is a risk of focusing solely on one aspect. I think there are times, honestly, where children do need to be in a different location. We can't just say the intent of this bill is to make sure that there are no kids in care. I don't think we can ever go that way. So, one of my concerns is that if we focus on just one part of what the intention is, that we miss the other holistic aspects of it, and by missing those holistic aspects, we actually can risk doing harm.

What stop-gaps or what measures have been put in place to make sure that we follow that intention? There is recognition that the words that have been put in this are really important. They have been chosen: “collaborative”, “cooperative” — and there's a long list of words that have been chosen, but each of those words has a legal obligation and a meaning behind it. They haven't just been put in there by happenstance; they are there on purpose. How do we make sure that the overall intent of this bill — recognizing all those things that the minister has said up to this point about the importance of changing how we do child welfare in the territory — how do we make sure that intention is honoured and we don't risk losing our way?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Let me just say that I appreciate the recognition of the holistic approach of this legislation. We all agree that we wish we didn't need this legislation, but, in fact, it does protect children.

We must always look to the initial purpose of any piece of legislation and address it in that context. The purpose of this legislation is to protect children and to direct the operations of Family and Children's Services, pursuant to this legislation.

I just want to say that much of the cooperation and working with the Yukon First Nations will be part of this expertise as it develops, but their expertise in particular, with respect to the protection of children, is realistic. It has a realistic approach. We know this.

They — as governments, as community leaders, as communities — have the same obligation to protect children and will do so. Certainly, part of this going forward is the development of policy that will be critical to support the operationalization of this bill and the new legislation.

We have a quality assurance position, as well as a practice specialist, embedded in the department. It will be critical that the implementation working group build a framework for how we go forward in assessing the work of the department and the cooperation in relation to children and families and build a framework for assessing and monitoring the ongoing success of this piece of legislation going forward, because it is a significant change.

There is a provision for internal audits required annually in the work of the department, and they are required to do an annual report to the minister. There will be training developed and presented to the judiciary and to the members of the legal community who work in this area, or have an interest in this area, that will be to protect the purpose and intent in the court process, should a matter proceed to court, so that the purpose and intent of the legislation is happening at the department level and is happening in the work that is done with families and children and First Nations in relation to the collaborative planning process and is done should a matter enter into the court process.

Building a tool for assessing and ongoing monitoring will be a responsibility of the implementation working group, but recognition that, even prior to that, there is work to be done to make sure that the purpose and intent is communicated through the training that is done for staff and for others involved in this process, including the judiciary and legal counsel, so that the purpose and intent is respected at every level and ultimately assessed and monitored.

Ms. White: I thank the minister today for her willingness to go through a lot of ground, some of which I will repeat as we go through line-by-line debate. I absolutely appreciate having the officials here and that support. Of course, I am grateful for the work that was done behind the scenes to get us to this point. At this point in time, I have no more questions for Committee of the Whole.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King 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: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, and directed me to report progress.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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 5:23 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 28, 2022:

35-1-59

Child Rights Impact Assessment for Proposed Amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, letter re (dated March 7, 2022) from Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (McPhee)

35-1-60

Apology for error during Oral Question Period, letter re (dated March 25, 2022) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (White)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 57

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, March 29, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring 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 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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 29, 2022 — 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

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to welcome a number of individuals who are in the Assembly here with us today for two tributes, one to Total North Communications and the other to Spruce Bog. With us today from Total North Communications are: President Dan Johnson; Karin Steele, who is the longest serving employee there at 25 years; and as well, Kyle Foster.

As well, from the Spruce Bog team, we have a number of individuals: Judy Matechuk, who is the president; Amy LeBlanc, who is the past president; Lois Gillis, who is a past long-time secretary of the organization; Josée Bergeron and Jean-Pierre Bergeron; and Leilah Cross.

Thank you all for coming.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Total North Communications 50th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Total North Communications. Total North Communications recently celebrated 50 years of providing satellite radio and communication services that Yukoners need to stay connected. Total North has played a significant role in the technological development of our territory, bringing the Yukon some of its first radio services.

For many years, Total North was led by legendary Yukoner Gord Duncan. I had the privilege of honouring the late Gord Duncan with the Hall of Innovators Lifetime Achievement Award last year. The Lifetime Achievement Award is selected based on leadership, impact, innovation, and ethics, and Gord is a fantastic example of a well-known innovator who embodied all of these qualities. I am glad that we were able to recognize his legacy in the Hall of Innovators.

Under the current leadership of Total North's President Dan Johnson, the company continues to provide immeasurable benefits to Yukoners and their communities. Today, Total North remains focused on engineering, deploying, and maintaining the north's premier telecommunications equipment for a wide variety of businesses and government clients across the Yukon. Whether you are in Whitehorse or in

the most remote locations in the territory, Total North will keep you connected.

Part of living in the territory is dealing with weather emergencies effectively and Total North employs a pool of technicians who can respond quickly to all of the difficulties that our northern climate presents. This dedication to keeping Yukoners connected is very admirable and cannot be understated. The territories are more connected than ever, and this is largely due to the dedication, expertise, and exceptional service provided by the whole team at Total North.

In closing, I want to once again congratulate Total North Communications on 50 years of success and thank them for their contributions to the territory.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Total North Communications as they celebrate a huge milestone: 50 years providing service in communications and technology across the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and British Columbia.

Total North was founded in 1972 by the late Gord Duncan. What started as a small company of two guys in a corner of the Trans North hangar is now a large, tight-knit family of 24. Dan Johnson is the current owner of Total North Communications — an incredible accomplishment, having gotten his start in the company as a summer student more than a couple of years ago.

Dan strives to maintain the sense of family that has made this organization so successful over the last 50 years. He works to provide an environment for his employees that not only serves as a job, but a place to grow as community leaders, much in the same way that Gord did for Dan and others.

The company continues to thrive, not only keeping up with ever-changing technology, but adapting, creating, and pushing projects to the limit. They continue to find innovative ways to expand technology and connectivity in the communities. I would like to commend and thank the management and staff of Total North for their continued support to all throughout the Yukon.

Total North works with the private sector, the mining community, and all levels of government, providing a vast range of services in communications infrastructure, engineering consultation, installation and service, networking and solutions, and more.

The level of experience and knowledge of the entire team is immense. Their approach to business is commendable. Besides being a business made up of individuals with talent, loyalty, and dedication, Total North continues to thrive on generosity for the community and for the Yukon. They have a long history of community support and, as with many of the incredible Yukon businesses, they show their support through numerous sponsorships of local events, sports teams, educational opportunities for local students, and more.

I would like to recognize the Total North team for continuing to uphold the legacy that Mr. Duncan had bestowed upon the Yukon. To all management and staff, past and present,

congratulations on 50 years of contributions to our community and throughout the north.

Applause

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP are delighted to add our voices to celebrate a 50-year history of connection. Congratulations to Total North Communications on this incredible milestone. I can only imagine the changes you've seen in the last half-century — from the past of rotary phones to today's satellite installations connecting entirely remote camps to the rest of the world. Not only is your on-the-ground service and support world-class, but so are your employees. Your innovation and dedication to rise to any occasion has marked you as an industry leader.

This year, as you celebrate 50 years in business, we celebrate the 50 years of influence that you have had on the north in keeping us connected. Thank you.

Applause

In recognition of Spruce Bog

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Yukon Crafts Society's Spruce Bog craft fairs.

From its humble beginnings in 1975, the Spruce Bog has grown to become a beloved and respected fixture for the Yukon's craftspeople and public alike.

Three Spruce Bogs a year give vendors a chance to showcase their wares and the community an opportunity to gather and interact with friends and makers.

Spruce Bogs have come to help Yukoners mark the season, celebrating spring's arrival, a successful autumn harvest, as well as the Christmas holiday.

We are fortunate here in the Yukon to have so much talent in a broad range of artistic practice. Yukon Crafts Society's Spruce Bogs are an important forum to celebrate the territory's home-based artisans. In creating this platform for creative content and practices, they have also inspired new generations of crafters to find their own medium or carry family traditions forward.

Like all grassroots community events, the Spruce Bogs require resourcefulness, and the Yukon Crafts Society family wears many hats, with all pitching in to lend a hand whenever and however it is needed. One needs to look no further for evidence of this than the adaptations they have made throughout this pandemic to not miss a Spruce Bog beat.

Beginning this Thursday, the Spruce Bog Easter Boutique's 45 artisans will take over the Gold Rush Inn for four days. There will also be a space featuring the fashion arts and design students from Porter Creek Secondary School to test the market for their creations.

I encourage all Yukoners to enliven their spring with the wonderful handcrafted selections and festive atmosphere. Yukon's flourishing arts and crafts community is truly second to none. I am continually moved by the artistic excellence and talent that we have here in the territory. A diverse and dynamic creative and cultural sector speaks to our unique place in the world, our history, and our traditions.

In paying tribute today to this wonderful event, we pay tribute to all the Spruce Bog members, mentors, organizations, and volunteers, both past and present.

Thank you to the Yukon Crafts Society for helping to keep homemade crafts in the Yukon vital and vibrant. Thank you to the artisan-makers for sharing their knowledge and talents throughout the year.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to this year's Spruce Bog Easter Boutique. In 1975, the need to display and sell local handmade crafts was an idea that morphed into the Yukon Crafts Society. The Spruce Bog County Fair was born and proved to be the answer for artists and crafters to showcase their wares.

Now the fair is locally and fondly known as "Spruce Bog" and is uniquely a Yukon handmade marketplace. For three times a year, it is hosted by this non-profit society — this upcoming spring sale, a one-day sale in November, and then the 16-day Christmas Spruce Bog.

There are rules to be a vendor at Spruce Bog. You must be a paid-up member of the society, for starters, and there is a list of requirements that a vendor must adhere to so they can be on the floor. There are always so many wonderful, colourful, eye-catching booths and displays to see, and it's a wonderful shopping experience.

I'm always impressed with the ideas and talents that we have in our midst. As we continue to stress, shop local, and what better way to support friends and neighbours than by buying their quality handcrafts that are made with care?

Looking for a birthday or anniversary gift? Some new earrings or soap? A tasty dessert or other food item? Well, you may just find what you want at the Spruce Bog and probably a few items you didn't know you really needed. It's also a wonderful place to visit with the vendors and other shoppers as everyone looks at the treasures and essentials. This four-day event, beginning March 31 to April 3, 2022 at the Gold Rush Inn — make sure you stop by and peruse the products for sale.

As was done with the Christmas Spruce Bog market, there again will be a central cashier so that everything is streamlined and handier to check out your purchases. To all the crafters, artisans, and creative folk who work so hard to make this amazing community event a reality, thank you. Knowing how much work goes into organizing such a large-scale show, well done, and we wish you continued success.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Spruce Bog and their Easter Boutique. One of my first memories of Whitehorse is actually of Spruce Bog. At the time, my family lived in Pelly Crossing, and for me, Whitehorse was still the big city. I think it was my mom who took my sister and I into Spruce Bog when we were in town, and I knew right away that I had entered a treasure trove. I remember soaps, quilts, carvings, candles, and baking. I was overwhelmed, but in the best possible way.

I have been many times since then, and it's always an absolute delight and a highlight of the Christmas season. Now, of course, it's a highlight of the spring and fall as well.

The logistics and planning needed to pull something like this together are staggering, especially during a pandemic. I'm sure that it has been no easy feat to keep an indoor community market going in these challenging times, but Spruce Bog's amazing team has made it happen. So, thank you so much to all the organizers and volunteers. I'm sure that you have all had some late nights and busy days, and we appreciate it so much. We can't wait for Thursday, when Yukoners are going to be flooding into the Gold Rush Inn to connect with Yukon artists, crafters, and makers. That's something for us all to celebrate.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a *Whitehorse Star* editorial about confidence and supply agreements that mentions considerable Yukon Party support for such beneficial democratic arrangements in contrast to his federal counterpart, Candice Bergen.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have a legislative return today regarding questions that arose in Committee of the Whole on Vote 3 for Education regarding masking in K to 12 school settings.

I also have for tabling the 2009 Auditor General's report on public schools and advanced education submitted to the Department of Education.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports creating modern learning spaces through investing \$25.2 million in this year's budget toward the construction of the Whistle Bend elementary school.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education, in response to the January 4, 2022 letter from the Yukon Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Association, or YSLPAA, to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, to:

(1) reach out immediately to the YSLPAA to meet and discuss their concerns;

(2) support the use of evidence-based practices for literacy and language development;

(3) provide additional speech-language pathologist FTEs at Student Support Services to be able to provide adequate speech, language, and literacy services;

(4) conduct a thorough review of literacy and language instruction to address how to close widening performance gaps that continue to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

(5) review membership of the community of inquiry.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education, in response to a letter dated January 3, 2022 from Autism Yukon to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, to:

(1) identify what steps have been taken to improve data collection on the effectiveness of inclusive and special education;

(2) commit to consulting with Autism Yukon on the development of changes to inclusive and special education going forward; and

(3) take the necessary steps to ensure that IEPs are fully reinstated, resourced, and supported.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to recognize the concerns regarding Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, raised by the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner by:

(1) meeting with both of these independent officers of the Legislative Assembly to discuss their concerns and the government's response to them; and

(2) seeking their input about whether further amendments are needed to the *Child and Family Services Act*.

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

THAT this House supports the Parliament of Canada's Bill C-216, *An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to enact the Expungement of Certain Drug-related Convictions Act and the National Strategy on Substance Use Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase road safety on the Alaska Highway at Raven's Ridge and Fish Lake Road by:

(1) reducing the speed from 90 kilometres per hour to 70 kilometres per hour; and

(2) providing signage and physical barriers at each end marking the turning lanes.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

White River First Nation community centre

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Today, I rise to speak about the ongoing work to create the White River First Nation community centre in Beaver Creek.

Celebrating all occasions of life is a tradition and fundamental part of the culture of White River First Nation, but unfortunately, as of now, there is nowhere in the community where the White River First Nation citizens can gather in one location to host or celebrate social events. That will soon change.

To begin, I would like to provide a bit of background on the new facility being built this summer. In 2009, the White River First Nation developed its comprehensive community development plan. As a top priority, the First Nation identified the need to do an assessment and feasibility study, along with a business case, to build a new community centre or potlatch house in Beaver Creek. In our 2021 spring budget, we outlined funding for this project that, with the support of the Government of Canada, ensured that the community centre would move forward.

Once funding was allocated, a water licence was applied for. A Yukon environmental and socio-economic assessment was done and the design for the building was completed. Late last June, the construction tender was issued and it was awarded in the fall. Permits are now in place and construction is set to begin this May, with completion aiming for December 2022.

By continuing to work with the White River First Nation, we are all ensuring that this community centre will be built in a way that will meet the needs of the people of the White River First Nation. The new centre will include a main vestibule, a multi-purpose room, a reception waiting area, washrooms, kitchen, and more. The project is currently expected to have a total cost of \$6.2 million, with close to \$3 million funded through the federal government and the remaining \$3.26 million being invested by the Yukon government.

The White River First Nation community centre is one of the many infrastructure projects that we will have underway throughout the territory this year. The Government of Yukon has made a strong commitment to continue to support community infrastructure across the territory and supported that commitment with significant resources. In fact, in the budget of 2022-23, we have set out a plan to invest about \$69 million in community infrastructure projects in and around Yukon communities.

Over the coming months and years, the Department of Community Services will continue to work closely with Yukon First Nations and municipal governments to plan, design, and build community infrastructure projects that suit their needs. These projects provide the core municipal services necessary in our communities, like water, sewer, and roads, along with infrastructure that supports Yukoners living healthy, active, and engaged lives.

I know that the White River First Nation is very much looking forward to welcoming its citizens to the first of many events in its new community centre and I join them in that excitement.

Shaw nithän, mahsi', gūnilschish.

Mr. Istchenko: The Yukon Party is pleased to see some movement on recreational facilities in Beaver Creek. It is

welcome news, since the Liberals have fallen short on support for these communities.

I have been inquiring about the status of a new community centre for Beaver Creek, and in 2017, I wrote a letter to the minister about this. The minister at the time responded that presently Community Services does not have any proposed infrastructure for Beaver Creek in its capital plan.

So, I am happy to have today's details on the construction of the new White River First Nation community centre. It was good to see it in the budget. The existing community club building was a Centennial project that was built in 1967. It has been the focal part of the community gatherings. I have been to many of them, with lots of good times and some sad times. So, I'm happy to have details today on the construction of the new White River First Nation community centre that can focus on the fundamental part of culture for the White River First Nation.

Now, volunteers ran the existing community club for a long time, but unfortunately, the club is now dissolved. Because of the lack of volunteers, the government has now signed an agreement with White River First Nation to run the existing community club; however, there does remain an issue that is of utmost importance to the community. Unfortunately, the pool hasn't been open since 2019, even though the government still maintains the facility. I myself have provided a number of community-oriented solutions to the government, but the pool still remains closed.

One potential solution is having the government run the pool, as the community club had always basically just been the middleman for that. The government always hired the staff and Property Management has always maintained it.

So, a question for the minister: Will the government do this? Is there a timeline for when the pool will reopen? It goes without saying that children love their community pools and it's important to have our community youth participate in swimming instead of other activities that could put them on the wrong path, Mr. Speaker. So, while I know the White River First Nation and the community of Beaver Creek are excited to see new construction on this important project and get it underway, I hope the government will also focus on getting the existing pool reopened.

Thank you and gūnilschish.

Ms. White: I remember my first official trip to Beaver Creek and the traditional territory of the White River First Nation. Folks were so warm and welcoming and they were also apologetic about the state of the community centre, which should have been the heart of the community, but was limping along on borrowed time way back in 2012.

After many delays, we're glad to hear that this project will finally start, as the White River First Nation community has been waiting for this project for well over 10 years. It's exciting to know that this community will finally get the space that they deserve, one where folks can safely gather, cook, celebrate, and recreate.

We look forward to seeing similar projects being built in communities around the territory, and we're hopeful that it

won't take more than a decade from a request from a community to the start of construction for much-needed infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank both the members opposite for their remarks this afternoon.

By investing in community infrastructure, we are investing in the health and well-being of Yukon communities. When my colleagues and I came into office in 2016, we were faced with an infrastructure deficit across the territory. The Yukon Party government struggled to get projects out the door, they went out of their way to erode trust with the local contracting community, and the Leader of the Yukon Party was content to leave federal money on the table.

We have taken a far different approach. Our Liberal government has worked in collaboration with municipalities and First Nation governments to identify priorities and maximize federal funding opportunities. By overhauling and improving procurement in the territory and identifying projects in our five-year capital plans, our government has rebuilt trust with the contracting industry and provided them with greater certainty.

In 2016, under the Yukon Party, the overall capital budget was \$306 million. This hardly compares with our capital budget for 2021, which set aside \$434 million in capital spending, and the 2022-23 surplus budget, which is tabled before this Assembly now and includes a record \$547 million in capital investments, nearly double the capital budget from just five years ago.

What's more, Mr. Speaker, 40 percent of this is recoverable federal funding, as we're seeing in the White River community hall that we just announced. We know that when we invest in Yukoners and Yukon communities, it pays dividends. We create jobs, opportunities, and further grow our economy. In 2020, the Yukon had the strongest GDP growth in the country and was one of only two jurisdictions in the country to see GDP growth during the early years of the pandemic.

Over the last few years, we have continued to have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, and our territory's population is rising steadily as Canadians from across the country and people from around the world make Yukon their new home.

I look forward to more community projects to be built across the Yukon in the coming years. The five-year capital plan highlights a number of projects that are in the works, and I want to thank all our municipality partners across the territory, private investors, contractors, and the Department of Community Services for helping these projects come to life. There is an awful lot of work happening in the territory. We're working very closely with our municipal and First Nation partners, and I look forward to that partnership creating more opportunities for Yukoners in the coming years.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School busing

Mr. Kent: In October 2018, the Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Motion No. 332, which urged the Minister of Education to review school busing safety in the Yukon. That included participating in an assessment of possibly mandating the use of seat belts on school buses. Since that was almost four years ago, I was hoping that the minister could provide an update about what action has been taken in response to that motion.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. Of course, the health and safety of students is always our very first priority. Busing safety is very important. We work with Standard Bus to ensure that students are safe as they journey to our schools each and every day. We certainly have worked on safety procedures for our school buses and continue to work with our partners, particularly the committee that we have that works very closely with the Department of Education on addressing issues that affect busing in our territory.

I have had many conversations as well throughout the territory with our school councils. This has come up many times. We are continuing to work toward ensuring that our systems are safe and effective for our students.

Mr. Kent: I was hoping that the minister would be able to provide a little bit more detail on Motion No. 332, especially since I sent her a letter on February 2, 2022, essentially asking her for an update on what has been done with regard to that motion.

Mr. Speaker, in February 2020, a federal task force on school bus safety released their report. The Yukon did have a representative on the steering committee of that task force. The report that they issued said that jurisdictions, including the Yukon, explored the application of infraction cameras, extended stop arms, exterior 360-degree cameras, and automatic emergency braking.

What action has the government taken to assess the need for each of these new measures recommended by the federal Task Force on School Bus Safety?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise to talk about safety on our school buses. Government of Yukon is part of the national steering committee to identify measures to further improve school bus safety in Canada. The regulations for physical safety requirements on school buses, including school bus seating, are set by the Government of Canada. Yukon school buses are required to meet national standards. All the routes and stops are assessed on an ongoing basis.

Again, we continue to work to ensure that we have safety measures in place — and again, working with our school bus committee. This is an important body that works on behalf of Yukoners.

The Department of Education has been piloting dashboard cameras for buses and evaluating their effectiveness. We work closely with the RCMP to ensure that they pay close attention. I've had many discussions at different safety meetings around this.

Mr. Kent: My questions are specific to the task force report that was made public in February 2020. In that report, it said — and I quote: “... the Task Force submits that consideration be given to adding the following safety features to school buses, and encourages all jurisdictions to explore the application of these measures based on their assessed needs...”

Then the report lists the four measures: infraction cameras, extended stop arms, exterior 360-degree cameras, and automatic emergency braking. Again, as I mentioned previously, there was in fact a Yukon representative on the steering committee of that task force.

So, can the minister confirm what action the government has taken to assess the need for any of these new measures as the federal task force advised two years ago?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you again for the question. I will reiterate, of course, that the health and safety of students is always our very first priority, ensuring that our students are safe as they are being transported to schools. Yes, we did have a Yukon representative on the steering committee to identify measures to further improve school bus safety in Canada, and we have taken steps in Yukon to ensure that we are in compliance with standards and ensuring that students are safe. We continue to always to work with our contractor, Standard Bus, and our school busing committee to address the issues that arise in our school buses and ensuring that our safety measures are complied with.

I will bring further information back to the member opposite on other specific questions asked today.

Question re: Child Development Centre building

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. Last week, we raised the issue of mould causing the closure of the Child Development Centre facility. At the time, we asked the minister what the cost estimates are for remediation or demolition of the existing building. The minister did not answer at that time; however, we have now obtained government documents that indicate that the cost estimate is that this could cost up to \$2 million.

Can the minister tell us if this \$2-million estimate is for remediation or demolition?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. As I indicated in my response last week, the cost estimate for remediation of the mould ranges, depending on whether the building will be demolished or renovated. If renovated, there will be significant additional costs for roof repairs, interior renovations, and building code upgrades. The member opposite will know that the structure is an old structure, and the member opposite has the data indicating that there is a cost estimate.

I do not have that cost estimate, but I can certainly return to the House and advise. At first blush — I won't speculate, but it seems to me that this would not be the cost for a full replacement of the building. As I also indicated in my comments last week, we applaud the Child Development Centre for all the work they do and the flexibility that they have shown over the course of this school year when received with very quick news that they would have to relocate, based upon the unprecedented snow load that occurred on the roof of the

Child Development Centre, involving flooding and the subsequent concerns that were revealed.

Ms. Clarke: This \$2-million cost estimate comes directly from government briefing notes. There is no reference to this \$2 million in the budget or the five-year capital concept. Can the minister tell us why the government has not planned for this, and how will this work be funded if it has not been budgeted for?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: This is still a developing matter where the assessment of the site, as far as my most recent briefing, is still occurring and the decision has not been made as to whether this structure will be fully replaced or demolished, similar to the situation we had at the Macaulay Lodge structure, which ultimately is being confirmed for demolition this summer and which will provide the opportunity for multiple low- or affordable-cost housing units in Riverdale, which obviously is proximate to the downtown core and all amenities.

Similar to Macaulay, there are studies that still have to be done before there will be the determination as to whether this structure can be rehabilitated.

As I also said in my comments last week, there is no particular concern with respect to the Department of Education, because the ventilation unit at the Child Development Centre is separate and distinct from the Department of Education. So, the safety of students and staff who had attended the Child Development Centre is first and foremost, and we are considering our options.

Ms. Clarke: We have also obtained government documents that indicate that it will be at least a year before the government addresses the issues of the existing Child Development Centre facility. To quote directly from those documents — and I quote: “... it would not be possible to complete all required work in time for the Child Development Centre to move in for the 2022-23 school year.”

What is the government's plan to provide a long-term space to the Child Development Centre and when will it be in place?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise today to speak again about the importance of the Child Development Centre and the work that they do in helping families and young children access early learning and therapeutic services.

We continue to work very closely with the Child Development Centre. It's very unfortunate that they had to relocate from their building and we appreciate, of course, their flexibility and ability to move quickly and resume their services, which I think is the most important thing here.

In terms of where we're at right now, we've definitely committed to supporting CDC financially and logistically while they work through these moves, and the department officials are regularly in contact with CDC staff. During the week of March 14, 2022, CDC moved into a vacant wing of Copper Ridge Place until longer term space can be found that works for the entire program. HPW organized that move. Thank you very much to our public servants who are moving quickly.

We, again, are working closely with them to find a permanent space to continue the work that they are doing on behalf of Yukoners.

Question re: Funding for non-governmental organizations

Ms. White: Non-profit and non-governmental organizations across the territory provide essential services and supports for Yukoners — everything from mental health services to help fleeing domestic violence, advocating for disability support, housing, or food. NGOs also provide arts programming, sports and recreation, recycling, and so much more.

Many Yukoners rely on non-profits every day for support or even to help make ends meet, but there has been one concerning trend across all sectors: Funding cycles are becoming shorter and shorter. A three-year government funding agreement is now hard to come by for a lot of NGOs and we are seeing organizations that previously had three-year funding commitments being knocked back to one year. This prevents organizations from planning long-term programming and staff retention becomes more difficult.

Will the government commit to a full review of funding for NGOs and reinstate three-year funding cycles?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I think that it is important just to touch on the fact that we have been ensuring that our NGOs have had appropriate funding after going through the challenges that they did over the last two years. Again, we all know that Yukon's non-profit organizations provide great public benefits in almost every aspect of Yukoners' lives and are integral to building healthy communities.

Just last week, we talked about the fact that we are partnering with Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon to deliver our program for funding to a number of different organizations. Again, I think that just shows that we are committed to working with non-profits and certainly that program was built and directed by leaders in the non-profit sector.

I think that almost everybody on this side of the floor would have different NGOs and non-profits that they would have some level of responsibility for — I am just thinking, as the question was asked today, about whether through Tourism and Culture or through Economic Development. So, I think it is hard to just put a blanket response for every NGO that is out there. I think that what we have tried to do is to make sure that we support NGOs appropriately to understand what their goals and values are and the services that they are providing and, where appropriate, try to give them the most consistent and long-term funding that we can.

I look forward to questions two and three.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for the suggestion. I encourage all ministers to make sure that the NGOs that they represent have adequate funding.

Emergency COVID funding is great for many, but NGOs have been asking for an increase to their core funding for years. They want long term, sustainable funding to be able to continue to support their commitments and clients. When most of an organization's time is being spent applying for small funding

streams in order to keep staff paid and programs running, it's not a good use of their time. It's not allowing them to do the work that's needed.

NGOs should be doing what they do best, which is helping and supporting the community around them. The services they are offering are necessary due to the gaps left by government but without government-level compensation for their staff. They should not be stuck in a never-ending loop of finding and hoping for funds to keep the doors open.

Will the government commit to reviewing all the core funding for all Yukon NGOs so that they can continue to do the important work that they do?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is also important to share with Yukoners the fact that, during the pandemic, over the last two years — again, I'm not trying to divert from the question, but I just want to ensure that people do understand that we do think very highly of NGOs — one of the things we did was that departments worked to get all the transfer payment agreements out to NGOs very quickly and to support them. In many cases, they couldn't deliver on their agreements as it was defined, but we still made sure that those organizations were funded, because we knew that it was a very unique situation.

The advisory group that we have been working with on NGO funding is the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council, which is chaired by Wendy Morrison, who is really a specialist in this field and has looked to really support them. Again, YuKonstruct has identified the Yukon Historical and Museums Association, ElderActive, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Sport Yukon, and others.

I appreciate the member opposite's approach to this, but it is so broad when you think about it. Different organizations that are under that non-profit area do so many different things. In many cases, we have organizations duplicating efforts, so I think that we are going to stay committed to them and continue to support them.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate the minister's assertion, I don't think it leaves many people feeling very confident.

The lobbyist registry was meant to provide transparency to Yukoners about large corporations influencing politics in the Yukon. We know that NGOs and non-profits only need to register if they have spent over 20 hours lobbying or advocating for their organization in one year, supposedly to make it less onerous on them. Unfortunately, what the government implemented has had the opposite effect. Right now, nearly half of the organizations on the lobbyist registry are NGOs and non-profits. More barriers, more requirements, more paperwork, and again, without more funding.

Will the government commit to a review of the *Lobbyists Registration Act* so that it does what it was intended to do: ensure more transparency from paid lobbyists without burdening NGOs?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I hope that, from the end of that question, we are getting from the NDP that they support the lobbyist registration, because it does mean more openness and transparency.

With a couple of different pieces on non-governmental organizations, I do want to mention that in the 2022-23 fiscal year that we're in, the Department of Health and Social Services is providing a 1.75-percent increase to managing the cost to all non-governmental organizations with those transfer payment agreements. This increase aligns with past allocations and with considerations of the negotiations and the discussions that we've had and also understanding the need to increase those budgets based on where we are currently in inflation.

Also, my department, Executive Council Office — we are now in conversations for renewed three-year transfer payments. We're talking increases to all of these organizations. We have increases based upon some of the requests as well. So, these three-year agreements are extremely important, and we are cognizant of those needs, and we can get into the details of those increases at another time.

We also talked today about the Child Development Centre. There is increased funding there as well — \$150,000 for early learning childcare, but also an increase of \$46,000 for communication and project as well.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but just some examples of our government being cognizant —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Moose management

Mr. Istchenko: When we asked about the minister's controversial decision to not accept the clear recommendations of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and impose a permit hunt authorization for moose on the South Canol, the minister said that it was all about helping the moose population recover.

What he failed to recognize though was that restricting licensed hunting in the area will do little to achieve that. Restricting licensed hunting in an area like the South Canol can only serve to put additional pressure on other areas. What is needed is additional measures that will actually help increase moose populations.

So, other than shifting to a permit hunt, what measures is the minister taking to help the moose population in the South Canol area grow?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have spoken to my counterpart in Alaska. I know that there is a regime in Alaska where I am advised that there is predator control — so where wolves and other predators are actively controlled, i.e. killed — and that there is a scientific balance or a fine balance established there for Alaskan hunters — and some of it is actually mandated — so that, in that respect, you will have your moose and caribou population in some sort of — perhaps even artificial — stasis.

There has never been a push in the Yukon for predator control of that nature, with some notable exceptions — probably about 20 years ago where some protestors chained themselves to the gallery.

I'm not sure where — otherwise, we're looking at the aerial surveys —

Speaker: Ten seconds.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you. I'll continue my question. But we are not promoting predator control in the Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not exactly sure what the minister was getting at there. But the problem with the Liberals' approach to wildlife management is that it is solely focused on restricting licensed hunters. When there's an issue with a species in a particular area, they simply restrict or shut down licensed hunting and hope it works. This approach is what the Fish and Wildlife Management Board described in their letter to the minister about the South Canol moose PHA as, and I say — quote — “whack-a-mole” approach. They shut down hunting opportunities in one area and all they achieve is pushing the pressure to other areas.

So, what steps — other than to restrict licensed hunting, like I said in my first questions — is the minister taking to actually help increase the moose population in the South Canol area?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The department relies on our science-based guidelines for management of moose in the Yukon to inform moose management decisions. These guidelines were developed using the data from over 70 previous moose surveys in the Yukon.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm receiving advice from my wildlife biologists and the subject matter experts, and they advise — and I was surprised, but there have been 70 prior moose surveys. So, they combine information garnered from harvesters and First Nation and community partners with results from those scientific surveys so that management decisions are informed by the best and most current available data.

Mr. Speaker, in many cases, new or additional surveys are not necessary to know that there is a sustainability issue in an area. The harvest data that we collect every year gives an excellent view into whether a moose population is being harvested sustainably.

I have provided information, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the aerial surveys that were conducted and the funds that were appropriated for that — in the range of \$700,000 for this year. We are doing that again next year.

So, to the member's question as to what we are doing to ensure sustainability, well, we are getting the data, we are determining the areas of stress, and we are making the best decisions possible based upon the best available data.

Mr. Istchenko: The lack of attention to how this limitation of hunting opportunities will affect the broader issue of moose management in the Yukon is very concerning. As the Fish and Wildlife Management Board said to the minister in their letter — and I quote: “The board's perception is that this will move hunters from the South Canol to other Traditional Territories.” The board concludes that this will actually make the territory-wide moose management concerns worse. It will.

So, I will ask again, as I asked in my previous two: Will the minister stop just resorting to restricting licensed hunters as the only means to address moose management concerns and start taking a broader approach to moose management that

considers measures that will actually help the population of moose?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The decision to vary the recommendation in the South Canol range was approved and relayed to the board because of evidence provided which supports the immediate regulation of harvest to ensure sustainable moose populations in the South Canol moose management unit area. In addition, as I advised previously, a survey conducted in 2013 indicated that to have a sustainable harvest, a total of 15 bulls for both licensed and First Nation hunters could be harvested in any one season.

From 2017 to 2021, licensed harvests alone accounted for between 13 to 19 bulls per year, not including the First Nation harvest. So, while licensed harvests have been relatively consistent for many years, the harvest numbers indicate that it is at a level that is overharvesting the moose population and taking a disproportionate amount of the sustainable harvest.

Surveys are very expensive — between \$100,000 and \$250,000 — and there is a strong rationale to direct our available survey funds to other areas where there are emerging conservation concerns. Therefore, the board did not commit to doing that survey at the time. However, we are committed to doing it this year.

We are open to all suggestions from across the House as to other methods to support moose populations and opportunities for all —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Wildlife harvest allocations

Mr. Hassard: Like many businesses in the territory, Yukon's big game outfitting industry was hit hard by the COVID pandemic. Relying on advance sales of hunts, sometimes a year or two ahead of time, the travel restrictions caused obvious and understandable issues for this industry.

Going forward, it will take several years for this industry to fully get back on its feet and clear up some of the backed-up pre-sold hunts over the course of the last several years. However, the industry is concerned that, as they are still trying to recover from the pandemic, the government is creating uncertainty for the industry by launching a review of the guidelines to establish outfitter quotas.

Can the minister confirm that the Liberal government intends to review these important guidelines?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, the answer is yes. Outfitting — we will be reviewing the guidelines. Outfitting is a valued industry in the Yukon that benefits communities through employment opportunities, the purchase of goods and services, and, in many cases, a donated supply of fresh meat.

The Department of Environment does intend to review and modernize the 25-year-old guidelines to establish outfitter quotas currently used to establish moose, caribou, and sheep quotas. The intent of modernizing the quota process is to align the industry with the wildlife values of Yukoners, bring the process into conformity with the Yukon *Wildlife Act*, and provide a consistent and transparent approach to quota allocation for big game outfitters.

Once we initiate this review process, we intend to seek input from First Nations, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the renewable resources councils, the outfitting industry, and the public. In the interim, Mr. Speaker, during the review process, the department will establish quotas for all outfitters, ensuring alignment with the *Wildlife Act* and providing as much certainty as we can for industry.

Mr. Speaker, I met with the outfitters prior to this Sitting, and I'm certainly prepared to meet with outfitters again in the spring and the summer, but these 25-year-old guidelines are out of date.

Mr. Hassard: Given the nature of the industry, outfitters rely on planning hunts on a multi-year basis and having appropriate flexibility in their allowable harvest from year to year over the term of their quotas. For decades, and without issue, they have been able to do this with multi-year quotas and rollover or evergreen provisions as provided in the outfitter quota guidelines, which give them the certainty to book hunts in advance.

However, now we understand that the Government of Yukon is moving to single-year quotas and eliminating rollover provisions. This makes booking hunts and planning for them almost impossible for this industry.

Why is the government moving away from the established practice of multi-year quotas?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. The member is correct. The Department of Environment received a legal opinion indicating that it is their opinion — or provided to me that we do not have the authority under the Yukon *Wildlife Act* to implement multi-year operating certificates or quotas.

We recognize that this is an issue for industry and also for the department. We have assured the outfitters and the renewable resources councils that, all things being equal, annual quotas will remain at the same levels until we have a new quota process in place.

Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed the history of the allowable harvest quotas in the various concession areas throughout the Yukon. My observation was that they have been relatively consistent and relatively predictable providing — as the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin asserts — that there has been some ability to plan accordingly.

We certainly appreciate the economic opportunities and benefit that outfitters provide to the territory. We'll do the best possible to work and liaise with outfitters to conduct these reviews —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hassard: It's important that the minister understand that the ability for the outfitters to be able to do that planning is vital to their industry.

Reviewing the outfitter quota guidelines and moving to a single-year quota system is tremendously destabilizing for the outfitting industry, not to mention that this comes as the industry is just getting back on its feet from hits it took through the pandemic.

Does the minister acknowledge that making these changes to the fundamental rules of how this industry operates, right as

it is starting to recover, is throwing even more instability at this industry?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have no intention of throwing the Yukon outfitters into any sort of disarray. I can advise that my department is having regular meetings with the Yukon outfitter liaison committee as indicated. I have met with the outfitters previously and am prepared to do so again.

We will be acting in the spirit of transparency and will have future meetings to discuss all related issues.

As I indicated in my quick survey of the quotas that have been established for the various game animals over the concessions in the Yukon, those numbers have been relatively predictable. Of course, there are years where there are areas of stress and those numbers have been adjusted, but the ability of outfitters to plan has still been maintained in my respectful view.

Plainly, the guidelines to establish outfitter quotas are 25 years old. They are out of date. They are not consistent necessarily with First Nation governments and they are not consistent with regional resource council mandates either. They need to be reviewed in a collaborative, transparent manner.

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): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Public Service Commission

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by welcoming our support folks from the Public Service Commission. We have with us today Paul Moore, the Public Service Commissioner, and we also have with us Sasha Gronsdahl, who is our acting director of policy. I thank them for coming today.

When I rose to speak at second reading on the supplementary budget, I talked about the reasons that the Public Service Commission is here. I will ever so briefly just reiterate that, roughly speaking, it is an additional \$2 million that is being appropriated. It is largely for two things: first of all, \$1.34 million which is going to the employee future benefits fund, and also an additional \$630,000 which is going to the workers' compensation payments fund.

I look forward to rising to answer questions from members opposite today in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the minister's opening comments. When it comes to the Public Service Commission, I know that my colleague for Copperbelt North is the critic for this and he has a number of questions. However, we will defer those questions to debate during the main estimates.

So, again, I thank the minister for his comments today and I thank the officials for attending and I will turn it over to my colleague from the Third Party.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for passing over the microphone and I will take advantage right now of this opportunity because, truth be known, by the time we get to the part where I would have the opportunity to ask questions during general debate on the Public Service Commission, I may have four and a half minutes at the end of a day on a Thursday before we clear everything.

So, today, what I want to talk about — which I don't think that it will come as a surprise to the minister — is sexual harassment within the public service and how the Public Service Commission deals with that. I think that what I would like to start with is — I will just ask a question: Is there a policy within the Public Service Commission as to what happens if an individual has been charged and then found guilty of sexual harassment within the public service?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Of course, sexual harassment has a whole spectrum to it, but as the member opposite posed the question — it was: If someone had been investigated and found guilty of sexual harassment, what is our typical recourse? It would certainly be to release those folks. They would be fired.

There is a whole range under our GAM, *General Administration Manual*, which is a set of policies we have around addressing conflict and inappropriate conduct in the workplace. I can answer more questions about that. There is a set of policies that are under there about how we address harassment and sexual harassment and concerns around sexual harassment in the workplace.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. It is a relief to know that when someone is found guilty, they are released.

The next question is: Is there a policy that exists when it comes to rehiring people that the government has released

because of being found guilty of sexual harassment within the public service?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I guess I will begin by saying that I know where some of this questioning is going because I have had some of these questions with the Leader of the Third Party previously. I will talk in generalities, of course, to try to be careful about any specific references.

She will know that I have explained to her in the past that, whenever we hire anybody in the government, we ask for references. We look at their past employment history. We consider things depending on the type of position that they're taking. For example, if they're going to be working with kids, youth, or people who are vulnerable, then we would require certain criminal record checks so that we make sure that the people we are hiring have no history of inappropriate work behaviour or criminal behaviour.

But when it comes to people who have been let go from the government, we do not keep, for example, some sort of blacklist that says that they have been let go. We don't have a policy or a way to be able to keep a history or a list of that person's — if they had, for example, been found guilty of sexual harassment, we don't keep a file on them. What we do is, if someone moves to a position — let's say that someone has been found guilty of sexual harassment and they move on to another workplace, whether it is within the Yukon or not, if we are asked about that person, then we would provide that reference to say that they were dismissed and under what circumstances.

So, that's the way in which we would keep that information there if someone were to reapply.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

Right now, I'm just talking in the "what if" and the "could be". Sexual harassment has become such a hot ticket item in the territory that an individual office is open to support both employees and employers in walking this path. When Yukon government tells me that if someone is found guilty of sexual harassment in the workplace and if they are released because of that, my concern is, if they reapply and they get hired back by Yukon government, what kind of message does that send? What message does that send to victims? If we hire someone back who was found guilty of sexual harassment and who was released by Yukon government, what do we tell that victim when they are hired back by the public service — by Yukon government?

So, I am asking that there be a policy. I am asking that Yukon government maybe work with the sexual harassment office to figure out a way to navigate this, because what do we tell victims if we rehire someone who we fired because of being found guilty of sexual harassment?

I have to say that I'm a bit appalled, to be honest, because there does need to be consequences to actions. But if those consequences aren't lasting or those consequences don't carry on — you can get fired from one job and hired back for another — that should be a concern. It's a concern to me, definitely. Standing here as a woman in a place where I should not have to deal with sexual harassment, that is a concern to me.

So, I hear what the minister said, but I think that leaves a lot of people asking: Well, what's the point? What's the point of coming forward with a complaint? What's the point of putting yourself out there? What's the point of having to relive it? What's the point if the consequences are — we don't know what happens. You can be released from a position, but you can get rehired by Yukon government.

Partially, the reason why I'm bringing this up right now is that there was an article from the March newsletter from the Yukon Employees' Union talking about this.

So, if the minister wants to add a couple more thoughts, I welcome them. But what I really am looking for is: How do we make sure that we have the most supported public service? If we're telling victims that someone can be released from Yukon government and then rehired, what are we telling victims with that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I want to try to point out a few things. When the member opposite stood on her feet and was asking a question, she talked about "if this happens" — if — and then shifted to "when". There was this reference to the Yukon Employees' Union. I, of course, saw the note that the Yukon Employees' Union put out there. I think it is very important to say that we take sexual harassment seriously. I know that the Public Service Commissioner followed up on a situation. I am going to stop there because I know that I'm being pulled into talking about specific situations, which I don't wish to do.

The point is that if — now here I go with "if" — there is someone who is found guilty of sexual harassment, first of all, from the public service perspective, they are let go. I want to be careful because I don't think that all of the information that the Yukon Employees' Union shared is quite correct, but let's leave it there for now. What I can say is that we are working with the Yukon Employees' Union to look at policies around how to make sure that people are protected through the Respectful Workplace Office and our policies around it and how follow-up happens.

At present, we do not keep a blacklist or a list of people with past offences. The way in which that happens is that if someone asks for a reference, then we are able to give a reference and look back at their past employment history. If there is sexual harassment of a nature that is criminal, that moves on to the RCMP and is dealt with there.

I wasn't entirely sure, when the Leader of the Third Party was asking the questions, if we were talking about the Respectful Workplace Office or if we were talking about the sexualized assault response team, but if there is assault, then that is criminal in nature and the advice is to go over there. In my very first response, I did talk about a range of things — some sexual harassment is assault and some is not. I think that where the Public Service Commission works on it is where it is not criminal in nature. Anything criminal would be referred to the RCMP.

The member opposite asked the question about how people can be supported and how they would work to bring forward their concerns. I think that the Respectful Workplace Office has a strong track record of working to support public servants and

to do that in a way to make sure that they are supporting them so that they have a workplace that is safe for all. I think that they have worked hard to that end, and I think that this is one of the ways in which we take sexual harassment seriously.

I think that there was an issue that happened recently, and when the member opposite and the union drew it to our attention — I know that the Public Service Commissioner addressed it right away. What I can say is that the individual being referenced no longer works for the Yukon government. I know that the Public Service Commissioner addressed this directly. I will leave that there.

Again, I am happy to talk about ways in which we work to support public servants and make sure that their workplace is safe, but I will also do my best to try to stay away from this specific example.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am asking about policies. Yes, there was a specific example. I am not talking about the specific example. I am asking about department policies. A policy is a road map on how you deal with these situations — currently or into the future. I want to know about the policies. I would hope that policies within the Public Service Commission exist. I would hope that the policy exists that someone could be let go, released from employment — found guilty and released. I want to know what the policy is about what happens if someone who has been released by Yukon government reappears.

I'm not talking about a specific case. I want to know what the policy is. I want to know how, from the present time into the future, we deal with this. When I'm asking about the policy, I'm just trying to get an idea of how we collectively deal with this. The Public Service Commission offers support to departments. My thinking of how it is — if it was a pyramid, the Public Service Commission is the one that is disseminating that information out to departments — the policies on how we do this.

So, what I'm trying to figure out right now is: If a policy exists, what is it? If a policy doesn't exist, is there an interest in developing one or getting the professional support to have one developed so that it makes sense within the public service? Again, when we talk about Yukon government, we're talking about thousands of employees. This is a very distinct possibility — present or into the future. I just wondered about policies.

I'm going to hand it back to the minister because I want us to be on the same topic.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Sure. I know that we're talking about policies, but I also know that the member opposite referenced the Yukon Employees' Union. There is a reason that this comes before us at this moment.

I have already stated that, yes, there is a policy around the respectful workplace and sexual harassment, and it's found under the *General Administration Manual*. I would be happy to dig it out, although I suspect that, in my very first letter back to the member opposite, I probably was given that reference and probably gave it across, but I'll check to make sure.

I can also say that it isn't just about response; we also work on the front of prevention. For example, there's training, there's coaching, and there's mediation. There are a lot of levels at

which we work through the Respectful Workplace Office. I think the member opposite's suggestion that the Public Service Commission is an essential agency that supports all other departments — that is a very fair point. I think it's also important to note, as I've already stated, that we are working with the Yukon Employees' Union to identify if there are ways to improve this. That is also correct. In terms of how the policy works, those are the ways in which it's active right now.

I can advise that the policy from the *General Administration Manual* is policy 3.47. It's all about a respectful workplace. I won't read it into the record, but I will make sure that it's available for all members.

So, yes, I agree with the member opposite that we should work to have a respectful workplace and that we should work with our unions to review that and to work to keep it effective for public servants.

I'm happy to answer further questions.

Ms. White: Thank you to the minister. The minister talked about hiring, and he talked about how you would ask for references. So, is there a policy for a Yukon government employee — for example, a manager, administrator, or anyone who would be asked for a reference — is there a requirement for that disclosure?

When we were talking about it before and the minister said that they have hiring policies and you contact the previous employer and ask for references — so, is there a requirement internally — a policy within Yukon government from the Public Service Commission — about how those references are given? For example, what's included and what's not included?

Again, I'm talking very specifically around the issues of sexual harassment.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will have to look into the HR policies specifically to see what there is specifically around this. What I can say is that it is considered best practice from a human resources perspective that, when you are asked to provide a history or a reference about an employee, you would provide all relevant and pertinent information, including if there are workplace digressions or things like that. That would all be what is appropriate.

There is a *General Administration Manual* policy 3.25, which talks about security clearances, so that would outline when departments may conduct security checks, especially if the person is going to be working in the vulnerable sector. So, there are times when it is explicit. I would have to look back or ask the Public Service Commission to look back through our human resources training in areas where this would be outlined as a professional practice.

What I'm sharing with the House today is that the appropriate practice for human resource departments or groups is that, when they are asked for references, they give a full account of the information that would be relevant for the history of a person applying for a position.

There are also manuals that would be there within those human resource departments, such as staffing manuals where there would be guidance on reference checks.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. The office that I was referring to was actually opened by the Yukon Legal

Services Society, jointly funded by Justice Canada, and it is specifically to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace. In the same breath, I know that the Human Rights Commission came out with an entire manual on sexual harassment in the workplace.

I guess what I'm urging right now is — I think that this is a topic that we collectively need to look at — the minister as the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. This is just about putting in best practice. What I am looking for is: How do we make sure that the mistakes of the past don't happen again in the future?

It is about developing policies that are responsive when things go wrong or being able to head them off before that point. This is not an easy topic of conversation for anybody — for me, for the minister, for the witnesses who are here — but it is an important one because what we talk about here can help shape how we do develop those policies into the future and how we can look at addressing those things.

I appreciate that it probably came off as highly critical, but mostly, I just want to make sure that, if I have the privilege of being here in five years' time, I am not having the same conversation — that the minister can come back and say: "Here are these great policies that we have put in place that have been created with the support of people who are professionals in this, and this is how we are making sure that the public service is as strong and as supported as it can be."

This is the only topic of conversation that I wanted to tackle today. So, with that, I thank the minister and his officials for the time because when we get to general debate — and I will allow the minister to keep going, but my point is that this was my opportunity because, when we get to the budget, I actually have questions about that as well.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I want to thank the member for her important questions on an important topic. I want to say that I know that the Public Service Commission is working with the Yukon Employees' Union to review and revise how these policies can be improved or strengthened to make sure that our workplace is safe.

Originally when I was answering the questions, I was thinking about offices within the government itself. I thank her for mentioning the Yukon Legal Services Society. I know that, for example, the Public Service Commission works very often with the Yukon Human Rights Commission. I will check into the work that the Yukon Legal Services Society does and seek their feedback with respect to this work. I know that these are important questions. I understand that it is complex.

All labour law is complex, but it's critically important. So, I appreciate the questions. I thank the commission for the work that they have been doing around this issue. I think it is good that they're working with the Yukon Employees' Union, and I will check to make sure that they are availing themselves of the opportunity to work with other groups like the Human Rights Commission and the Legal Services Society.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission?

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 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, 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 10, Public Service Commission, 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 \$1,970,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,970,000 agreed to

Public Service Commission agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I move that you report progress on Bill No. 203.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report progress on Bill No. 203.

Motion agreed to

Chair: Committee of the Whole is continuing general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Do members wish to take a brief 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.

Bill No. 11: Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022) — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to return to this. We, I believe, are approaching the tail end of general debate now, and before we conclude general debate, I want make a few notes.

So, earlier today, I noted that the minister had responded to both the Child and Youth Advocate, as well as the Information and Privacy Commissioner, by letter. The minister

also shared those letters with me and the Third Party, and I would like to express my appreciation to the minister for that.

The answers in the document that was provided to the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner were very helpful. It was a request that I had made last week and so, like I said, I would express my appreciation to the minister for including me and the Third Party on those letters so that we can see them.

Those came in a few hours ago, and so I confess to having not thoroughly gone through them. I scanned through the appendix to the letter to the Child and Youth Advocate, and I noted that the minister provided an explanation, a rationale, and a response to the suggestions from the Child and Youth Advocate. In the case of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the minister provided a letter that addressed the concerns raised by the IPC.

So, prior to receiving those, we had contemplated the idea or the possibility of amendments to the bill, but noting that the minister has responded to those independent officers of the Legislature now, we feel that amendments probably are not the best course of action, and so we will be willing to proceed through clause-by-clause debate and hopefully pass this bill today or at least pass it through Committee today.

I did want to note that we haven't had the opportunity to hear back from either of the independent officers of the Legislature about their response to the minister's letters, so we don't know whether or not those independent officers will actually have further input or will agree with the minister about the need to provide further amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*.

What I would ask is that, going forward, I hope that the minister is willing to meet with those independent officers of the Legislature to consider their input and their response to her letters of today and entertain at least the possibility of further amendments, if necessary, further in the future; that could be perhaps this fall or later, depending on the need or depending on those discussions between those independent officers of the Legislature and the minister.

I do want to conclude my comments by indicating that it would have been more helpful if those discussions had happened prior to the tabling of the bill and if the input from the Child and Youth Advocate, in particular, could have been considered prior to the tabling of the bill. That would have been more helpful in expediting this process and debate, but such is the way it happened. We can move on.

With that, I won't have any further questions in clause-by-clause debate, although it's possible that my colleagues either in the Third Party or here may, but I wanted to note for the minister and others that we will not be pursuing amendments to the bill today. While there are some outstanding questions about the response from those independent officers, I think that everyone agrees that the bill is an improvement on the legislation, that it is a good step forward and should be passed by the Legislature, not just in Committee today, but at third reading at a date of the choosing of the government.

With that, I will conclude my comments in general debate and look forward to seeing the passage of the bill through Committee today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I just want to clarify a couple of things — presented with this opportunity to do so. I do appreciate the comments from the other side and the support for Bill No. 11 going forward.

I just wanted to clarify, based on some of the comments about timing with respect to the amendments suggested by the Child and Youth Advocate. The correspondence shows clearly that the Child and Youth Advocate intended to file her report, including her recommendations, with the Legislative Assembly on the same day as we tabled the bill, and so there would not have been the opportunity to discuss those. We weren't provided with them. I think that we did get an e-mail, not unlike the Council of Yukon First Nations, indicating that the Child and Youth Advocate wanted to table her report — sorry, I said “file” and I meant the word “table” — at the same time that the bill was being tabled. When asked when that was, I think that I have already noted that the Leader of the Third Party and I both responded, asking if we could see a copy of that report, and then it was tabled on the same day that the government tabled the bill here in the Legislative Assembly.

Which is all fine, but I don't want there to be this misperception that somehow the government, or the Department of Health and Social Services, could have considered her comments and recommendations prior to that, because it clearly indicates in the letter that I tabled here in the Legislative Assembly yesterday that it was her intention to file those things on the same day, again, which is a fine process.

I want to reiterate the commitment that the Child and Youth Advocate — I think it's clear in the letter that I provided to the opposition today that the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner will both be invited to participate in the implementation working group once the structure of that group is in fact determined.

The first meeting of that group with Health and Social Services — the Council of Yukon First Nations and the First Nation governments have been invited to attend that first meeting on April 6 — if I have that date correct — and at that point, if the Child and Youth Advocate or the Information and Privacy Commissioner — either of those two individuals — are not able to participate — certainly they can participate however they choose with respect to that group, but if they're not able to participate, they will be provided with updates. We'll work with them to provide those updates in a useful way from the committee, and also, they will be afforded the opportunity to review and comment and provide input on appropriate policies or provisions that are developed as a result of implementing the result of that committee's work in order to implement Bill No. 11 ultimately — hopefully, the new *Child and Family Services Act* with amendments.

Lastly, I think I will just take this opportunity to note that on March 17, the Council of Yukon First Nations wrote to me in my role as Minister of Health and Social Services. I won't read the entire letter; I believe it has been tabled in this debate.

But I just wanted to reiterate their commitment as well — two points, really. I am paraphrasing, but the report from the Child and Youth Advocate was reviewed by the Council of Yukon First Nations.

They indicate that — I'm quoting now from the second paragraph: "This report informed the development..." — sorry, they were initially talking — just back up for a second and say — quoting from the third paragraph: "The Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office advised CYFN..." — which is the Council of Yukon First Nations — "... by email message on March 11, 2022, that she is recommending a package of revisions to Bill 11 be tabled in the Legislative Assembly to compliment Bill No. 11. While CYFN appreciates the matters raised by the Child and Youth Advocate, we are concerned that these proposed provisions would only serve to delay the timely enactment of Bill 11. CYFN and YFN would have to undertake additional reviews and analysis of the proposed revisions since there was no consultation or engagement with the CYFN or YFN during the development of the Child and Youth Advocate's proposed revisions. Therefore, we do not support any such revision to Bill 11."

It goes on in the fourth paragraph to say — and I quote: "CYFN is prepared to commit to work with the Child and Youth Advocate and Government of Yukon to review the issues raised in the proposed revisions and, where appropriate, implement them in policies and procedures and identify future changes to the act. We look forward to establishing a relationship with the Child and Youth Advocate to work collaboratively with respect to matters that affect Indigenous children."

It goes on to close the letter.

I think this is an excellent step forward on behalf of those who work in the child welfare arena. I think it is very respectful of the relationship — the government-to-government relationship — and the government-to-government process that was enacted for the purpose of proceeding with developing Bill No. 11 and changes that are remarkable to the child welfare system here in the territory, as well as the concept of progress in relation to having this kind of legislation developed in a partnership with Yukon First Nations, as we know that it primarily affects Yukon First Nation children, and their impact on this process has been significant. They will continue to be partners as we proceed with the implementation of Bill No. 11.

I am, as I've said, very proud of the work of the department. Geri MacDonald and Caitlyn Knutson are with me here again today in the Legislative Assembly. They see the culmination of so many hundreds of hours of work, collaboration, and cooperation and a really significant shift in how child protection work and child welfare systems must respond to the needs of children and families, and they will focus on children, youth, and families going forward.

I appreciate the opportunity to address those last few issues. Thank you.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 11, *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*?

Seeing none, we will proceed tfo clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Ms. White: I think that this is an important one — where it rewrites the preamble of the *Child and Family Services Act* — so I would like to give the minister an opportunity to just highlight some of those changes. This is what changes how child welfare will happen in the territory, so does the minister have any points for the preamble?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I reviewed the amendments to the preamble or part 2 of Bill No. 11, which will replace the preamble in the *Child and Family Services Act* with the following references. I did highlight them in the second reading address to the Legislative Assembly, but they are unprecedented in my view. I have not done the cross-jurisdictional scan, but I am sure others who have worked on this project have, but it is certainly not something that I have seen in over 30 years of working with legislation.

The preamble in Bill No. 11 indicates that: "Every child is entitled to personal safety, health and well-being..." It indicates that: "Children are dependent on their families for their safety and guidance and as a result, the well-being of children is promoted by supporting the integrity of families..." It indicates that: "Every child's family is unique and has value, integrity and dignity..." These are remarkable statements with respect to a child welfare system.

It indicates that: "Members of society and communities share a responsibility to promote the healthy development and well-being of their children..." It makes references to the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. This is a critical reference because the following references are the lenses upon which this legislation is measured and must be reviewed.

It also makes reference to Canada having passed *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families*, which sets out the principles that are applicable on a national level to the provision of child and family services in relation to indigenous children. It is groundbreaking work that has been considered here, and we have measured our legislation against such laws for Canada.

Government of Yukon, it also notes, will continue to work with Yukon First Nations to fulfill commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

It makes reference to the fact that the Government of Yukon is committed to implementing the recommendations outlined in *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy*.

It also makes reference to the fact that the Government of Yukon is committed to reconciliation and to honouring the spirit and intent of the final and self-government agreements. The Government of Yukon has acknowledged in this preamble the legacy of the Indian residential school system, the ongoing systemic barriers and racism, and the ongoing intergenerational trauma and harm to indigenous people and individuals that

must be considered when looking at child welfare policies and practices.

It also affirms the Yukon government's commitment to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children involved in the child welfare system and acknowledges that a child's connection to their cultural, racial, and linguistic heritage — the importance of those — and that the Yukon government is committed to supporting and strengthening those connections.

This act has been developed through the combined efforts of the representatives of the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, as well as groups and organizations with an interest in the welfare of children. I daresay that this is an integral part of our child welfare system going forward, but it will be, I believe, a precedent and a benchmark for other jurisdictions to review.

Anybody who has concerns that this is somewhat repetitive or unnecessary only had to be in the conversation or at the table with the steering committee that did the work on this matter to know how important it was — that, for each and every one of them, all of these references be included in the preamble. I appreciate the opportunity to review them here because they are integral to how this process will work, and they are the security for our Yukon First Nation youth, children, and families to know that their rights are first and foremost in relation to these child protection provisions and the laws of this jurisdiction.

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Ms. White: In section 3, we're talking about the changing of definitions. My question actually has to go around the replacement of (e). So, (e) in the existing legislation says: "... a person with whom a child resides and who stands in place of the child's mother or father..."

Sorry, Deputy Chair, the definition of "parent" is the section that I'm in.

It's being replaced with "... but does not include a director or a person with whom a child is placed by a director or an adoption agency and who, by agreement with the director or administrator of the adoption agency, has assumed responsibility for the care of the child..."

I'm just looking for clarification for that. So, it is section 3 and it is (d) and it's replacing (e).

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The definition of "parent" included — this is a clarification; again, we're looking at 3(d). The definition of "parent" does not include anyone who either a director or an adoption agency has placed the child with. Just for clarification, those are temporary situations and they don't become — those individuals do not have parental status. Foster caregivers or extended family caregivers and those who want to be adoptive parents, but the adoption order has not been finalized yet, are not considered "parents" under the act. This further ensures that those who are providing care to a child on behalf of a director or an adoptive agency do not have custodial rights to the child. So, it's just a clarification and appropriately put in the "Definitions" section.

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Ms. White: In clause 5, the first question I had was around "Guiding principles". "Guiding principles" in the original act is being replaced by a whole new section of guiding principles.

Particularly, what I want to know is — so, under guiding principle 2(d) in the amendment, it says: "... it is essential to the well-being of a child that the languages, cultures, practices, customs, traditions and ceremonies of, and knowledge held by, the child's family and community are passed on to them and that they are able to learn about and practice them..."

So, one of the questions I wanted to ask is — during Committee of the Whole, we talked about how it wouldn't matter what culture the child came from. So, if the minister can just elaborate or just restate it. So, it's being sure that, for example, if a small person was Hungarian and there were those cultural practices, that they would also be respected in the same way, for example, if a child was indigenous.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm happy to do that. I make reference to section 5(d), I think it is. But just before I do that, I would just like to correct something I said earlier. I misspoke with respect to the dates. I just wanted to clarify that Bill No. 11 before the Legislative Assembly was tabled here in the Legislative Assembly on March 9, and the report from the Child and Youth Advocate came to this House on March 10. That's the information I have. I didn't have them in front of me to check the dates, but I just wanted to clarify that situation.

With respect to section 5(d), the amendment here highlights the importance of a child being able to learn, engage, and practice their language, their culture, their practices, and their customs, traditions and ceremonies, and knowledge shared by family and community.

Again, as we've spoken about, trying to keep a child as close to their family as possible, the steering committee recommended that a principle here should capture the importance of cultural continuity and the importance of a positive cultural identity. So, recognizing that, it is not in this section related to any particular culture. If a child was of a culture other than an indigenous culture, for instance, that connection would be just as important to the family traditions and to the language there.

Children of all different backgrounds will be supported to maintain connection to their culture. So, it is a general statement but incredibly important. The government will be funding all cultural plans and cultural connection activities for all children living in out-of-home care.

So, that's the importance of connecting that section as a guiding principle here in Bill No. 11.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

The next section that is removed and then replaced is the "Service delivery principles". On 3(b), it says: "... in making decisions about the provision of programs and services, a child's sense of time and developmental capacity are to be taken into account..." So, could the minister expand on that clause, please?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to make sure that I have it correct — 3(b) “in making decisions about...” Those are the first words. Thank you.

This provision removes the idea of — and I quote: “... providing services and taking any other actions under this act...” That was what was removed. The steering committee recommended that to happen so that the child’s sense of time must be considered when planning and delivering services. So, in the wording that currently exists in the act, it doesn’t make reference to that concept, and here it will, noting that a child’s sense of time and developmental capacity are to be taken into account — must be taken into account — when considering the planning and delivery of services. That is incredibly important, of course, when we are dealing with children of all ages. It is an important factor, especially if you are dealing with toddlers, infants, or then again, older children. The entrenchment of this concept here is a “must” and a “shall”, and it is required to be taken into account in planning services for a child.

Ms. White: In clause (d), it just talks about how a child and their family must be informed of the services that are available to them and encouraged to participate in the decisions that affect them. We touched a bit about this in Committee of the Whole. We talked about how a child would have access to a lawyer, and we have talked about the importance of letting a child know about the Child and Youth Advocate.

So, can the minister just recap on how a child and a family are informed of the services that are accessible to them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to address clause 3(d), which makes reference to a child and their family being informed of services. This amendment outlines the importance of a child and their family being informed of services and being encouraged to participate in decision-making processes. The steering committee recommended that children and families must be informed of services available to them and involved in how those services are delivered to them, so it’s a two-part concept. Ultimately, with respect to the changes in policy, it will result in children, at the very first point of contact — being social workers — being required to advise them of services — advocacy services and others — to support them. They will be required to be referenced to the Child and Youth Advocate, to the Ombudsman, and to the Information and Privacy Commissioner if there are issues. They will also be required to be advised of age-appropriate supports for them, including reference to their First Nation, a First Nation support, or a First Nation governing support.

I note that the Council of Yukon First Nations has a family preservation team that is working at their organization. That might be considered to be an advocacy group or an advocacy service.

I should also note that this goes hand in hand with other changes that are here in Bill No. 11 that require a child’s First Nation and each of the First Nations of the child’s parents to be informed of the situation and to be involved in the collaborative planning process and the opportunity to do that. Of course, they must be supported through that process. They may need assistance to reach those advocacy services. They may need assistance to know about them in the first place and, ultimately,

how those services can be delivered to them and how they will be in touch with those organizations.

So, 3(d) is a bit of a small paragraph, but I think that it has an incredibly broad application. It goes hand in hand with the opportunity for First Nations to become involved at the very first instance and stay involved in the collaborative planning process.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I was trying to figure out the best way to communicate what I was looking at. I recognize, I think, that the minister probably has a more comprehensive note than I have, but for anyone who may be trying to follow along at home, I am going through the bill that was tabled. I can even say the page numbers to maybe help us out. I apologize; I recognize that it is challenging and I have my highlighted copy.

I am on page 11 of the proposed bill — 3(g). It says: “... all reasonable efforts must be made to provide a child and members of their family an opportunity to seek a timely review of the decisions made under this Act that affect them.” I just want to know how that will work.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for making that specific reference to the sections. I think we’re looking at similar documents, but our page numbers don’t necessarily match. We’ll go with the member opposite’s page numbers.

We’re looking at 3(g) now. This amendment outlines that it is imperative for children and family members to have an opportunity to seek timely review of decisions made under this act that affect them. What you can’t necessarily see here is that the steering committee recommended that the words “should be” be replaced here with the words “must be”, which they are in this amendment.

In the current act, this reference would be that children and family members have the opportunity to — I just want to get the wording: “... all reasonable efforts should be made to provide a child and members of their family an opportunity to seek a timely review of the decisions...”

The words — the amendment requires that to be “must”, which is imperative. It is an obligation on the director of Family and Children’s Services. It is an obligation on those individuals working with families under this process.

Certainly, there is a formal complaint process, and this will be one of the things — the current policies, with respect to the operation of this section in the current *Child and Family Services Act*, will be reviewed and updated to match this process. But the most significant change here is an imperative — a requirement — that the director act in this way.

I think part of the question was: How would that be done? There are many processes through which this development of collaborative planning, working with children, making sure that reunification is a priority, and making sure that their culture, language, and families are included and respected. In all of the activities that occur under this piece of legislation in relation to a child, the director must provide the child and the family with the opportunity to seek timely review of decisions.

I know that this isn’t the place for anecdotes, but I appreciate this to a great extent because certainly one of the

problems in the former child welfare system — as we've talked about, it's shifting and progressing — was that the child, youth, and family were not at the centre of the collaborative planning process and were not at the centre of decisions that were being made, and then having timely reviews of those decisions — and it might be a small decision about a visit or it might be a large decision about reunification planning or something that's more overwhelming. Complaints have been that there has not been the opportunity to make sure that reviews of those decisions and ultimately the collaboration together were working. This is yet another statement about how that will be required here.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. The next section that's changed is "Best interests of the child". I'm looking at that. I'll just say that it's 4. Within that, in 4(2), it says: "All other relevant factors must be considered in determining the best interests of a child, including..." — and this is the next one I have the question on, so 4(2)(a) — "... the attachment and emotional ties between the child and significant individuals in the child's life..."

The reason why I highlight that is that there are lots of stories that exist of how important a foster family becomes in a young person's life, especially if that foster family is the initial caregiver from the very beginning. So, what I wanted to know is: When we talk about that attachment and those emotional ties, does that include foster caregivers? Does that include other people who may have been assigned by the director?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I really appreciate this question because this is one of the sections where, under 4(2)(a), there is actually no change. I mean that this section is here because there is a change in (b), (c) and (d) of that, but I think that it is still an incredibly important question. The attachment and emotional ties between a child and significant individuals in a child's life would include foster care parents. I say that with a small caveat.

First of all, just let me say further that this section in particular has been amended to add consideration of the child's ability to express their view and their preferences, which is also critical. It has also been amended to reflect the holistic representation of wellness, replacing the word "cognitive" with the word "mental" and including spiritual needs of a child, which were not included before, and including the need to account for a child's age and development when making this consideration. Lastly, in (d), it adds the words "of a child" to clarify this consideration — (d) now reads: "... the cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual upbringing and heritage of the child..." So, that is the focus.

I just want to return for a second to foster parents, because they play an absolutely critical role in providing support to children who require at-home care as a result of child protection concerns. Foster parents do have a right to apply to the judge for party status under section 48(2) of the act or to be present at a hearing and to make submissions to a judge under section 49(1) of the act, as a person significant to the child. We know, as in the preamble to the question or into the question, the idea that they play a significant role and can be primary caregivers in some circumstances. However, foster parents are not provided party status automatically under the act because the

goal is to reunify a child with their biological parents or extended family.

Automatically including every foster parent as a party to the proceedings might disrupt that process to reunify a child with their family, but this is, of course, contextual. It will be based on specific case-by-case assessments and collaborative planning.

Foster parents are now referred to as "community caregivers" in the Health and Social Services policy and practice manuals — in their policies — and a child and their family, including extended family, lead the collaborative planning processes. Community caregivers, which include foster parents, are invited while identified as necessary and in the best interests of the child in those cases.

Health and Social Services will be working with the community caregivers, including all foster parents, to support them as best as possible in understanding this revision. This shift is a move toward hearing the voices of Yukon First Nations and the implementation of their child- and family-led processes.

I hope that this is the additional information that is of assistance in answering this question. The short answer is yes, it does include foster parents, but noting that the focus here of the entire piece of legislation is the reunification — of course, when possible. If we have a situation where it is not possible, we are still looking for cultural connections and extended family as priorities.

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Clause 6 agreed to

On Clause 7

Ms. White: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I was just so keen on making sure that I had the chance for this.

There are two things that I would just highlight here because there are so many word changes as we go on. I just really want to highlight the importance of changing the words "cooperative" to "collaborative". Also, in the entire legislation, "shall" is being replaced with the expression "must". I am highlighting this in clause 7 because this is the first time where we start to see how it is no longer cooperative planning, but it is collaborative planning. It is not that you "shall" do it; you "must" do it.

So, I think it is indicative of the change that we see throughout, but I just wanted to highlight that, if the minister has anything she wants to add. I just wanted to make sure that I mentioned it, but I'm going to skip over a lot of the "musts" and "shalls" and collaborations as we move on.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that reference and pointing that out. It is incredibly integral to how this work will change going forward — those small word changes.

I know we've had some — certainly upstairs — had some recent conversations, and I know other folks have too, with legislative drafters, about "shall" versus "must". A legislative drafter will say that "shall" and "must" require the same action. However, the steering committee, in their work with our partners going forward in their collaborative work, wanted as much certainty as possible, and so the words were properly and

appropriately changed to “must” to require action on behalf of the department and the director in relation to child protection matters. I think these are all improvements.

Clause 7 agreed to

On Clause 8

Ms. White: So, the next section — so clause 8 is amending section 7, which is talking about participants. So, I’m looking on page 14 of the act that was tabled. I’m going into any person — so, it’s saying that paragraph (f) is going to be replaced or — sorry — (e) is saying that paragraph (f) is going to be replaced, and this is really where I’m going. Paragraph (f) is going to be replaced with: “... any person that a person referred to in paragraphs (a) to (e) considers would be of assistance in developing the plan including a friend or support person.”

So, that would be included in the collaborative process. So, could the minister just expand or give me some examples on who might fall within that?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This amendment clarifies that all individuals who are invited to a collaborative planning process can be — can indicate — sorry — that process can indicate other people whom they see as being supportive or important to providing support during a collaborative planning process. By enabling any participant to bring a support person, the act provides children and families with more flexibility to include their support network in the planning process. The choice is theirs. I think that’s incredibly important.

As examples, I can see a youth involved in this process wanting a friend. It might be a child of a certain age who wants grandma to come or a special auntie. It could be that individuals who support the family or others in other ways, whether it’s through a church or through a support group or through their First Nation or through a community group or friends or family. It widely says all individuals for a reason.

There are two important factors here: “All” is pretty broad, and it is at the direction or the invitation of the individual who wants that support.

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Clause 10

Clause 10 agreed to

On Clause 11

Ms. White: Just when the House got into the groove of clearing and carrying lines — I warned them: I have a lot of questions, and when possible, I will jump lines.

Clause 11 is talking about section 10. Section 10 is being amended and replaced. That is services and programs. On page 16, on (1.02), there is a long list of services that are going to be offered or available, which I think are really important and I’m not focused on those, but what I want to talk about is (1.02): “To the extent that a prenatal service is a preventive service consistent with what will likely be in the best interests of a child after they are born, the provision of that service is to be given priority over other support services.”

Deputy Chair, I feel like this is a really important clause, but I maybe don’t fully understand it, which is why I’m seeking

clarification. We know that prenatal health for both the person giving birth and the baby is really important. So, maybe if the minister can expand on (1.02).

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have different page numbers, so it’s taking me a moment. I think that I have the right place: (1.02). This provision provides clarity that the intent of prenatal services are preventive in relation to what is in the best interest of a child after they are born — and their family. These services are voluntary. It is here to clarify the context in which the director of Family and Children’s Services can deliver prenatal services to expectant persons and the goal of such services. It is a change and hasn’t been available before. It is a broadening of that opportunity for the director to assist and for those to be preventive in nature.

So, (1.02) states: “To the extent that a prenatal service is a preventive service consistent with what will likely be in the best interests of a child after they are born...” — so there is an assessment there, of course — “... the provision of that service is to be given priority over other support services.” The rationale here is to clarify the context in which the director can act.

Ms. White: Just to expand on that a bit, in an ever-changing world, for example, does this mean that an expectant parent could get fast-tracked for treatment for alcohol or drug treatment, that they would have support? It is not a prenatal program per se, but it is definitely a preventive measure for possible harm to the child. Has that been entertained at all or would that be something that would fall underneath (1.02)?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. This is a remarkable change from the current legislation. The director of Family and Children’s Services had no ability to provide services to an expectant parent prior to the proposed changes here in Bill No. 11. The director’s authority became available or actionable upon the birth of a child, so this is exactly as ascribed in the question. It is preventive. Can we provide services prior to a child being born to prevent what might be risky situations and ultimately prevent a child from being separated from a parent?

In this act, services and supports to expectant parents who may be at risk of becoming involved with child protective services after a baby is born — these types of services and agreements are voluntary and defined as a “preventive” service. So, that is incredibly important to know — that a parent could become involved in this opportunity on a voluntary basis. These new agreements will focus on preventive supports for expectant parents and infants who are at risk of becoming involved with protective services and assisting with preventing separation of an infant and a parent.

The federal act — I made reference to it earlier — respecting First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families establishes a minimum standard for the delivery of child and family services, and this federal act includes a similar prenatal service provision and there is interest to align our territorial act with that piece of legislation. It is forward-looking and also understands that one of the problems, for many years, has been that the director is simply not able to provide those kinds of services ahead of the birth of a child.

We are working trilaterally with Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Government of Canada to implement this prenatal service provision.

So, it is not yet determined whether it will be child protective services or the director of Family and Children's Services social workers who will be involved. It may be other service providers who will be able to do this. We are working trilaterally to develop regional options to support at-risk expectant people and to prevent child protection involvement and/or separation of parent and child after birth to the greatest extent possible. That is a long way to say, yes, in your example, it could include treatment services or fast-tracking for treatment services for an expectant person.

I wanted to take a moment to explain the structure of this because it is related to the federal legislation and it is a trilateral conversation that's happening. It is certainly not previously seen in our legislation — support for expectant parents.

Ms. White: The next section — so, section 2, under services and programs — is transitional services or services to support youth provided under this division. We're amending that, and we're adding additional supports, which I think is fantastic.

So, I want to talk about (k), because (k) says, "... support for or payment of tuition expenses."

The reason why I want to focus on that one is that I just want to make sure that it's inclusive of everything. If a young person was a theatre kid and they wanted to participate in a program specific for that, would it cover what they needed it to? If someone was going into a science stream, would it cover the cost of labs, textbooks, and all those things?

I just want to make sure that, as a young person is transitioning out and they are reaching for that continuing education — or, for example, they could attend the environmental monitoring program up at the Yukon University that has a really hard time accessing education funding. I just want to know that a young person can access the full spectrum of funding that they would need for post-secondary education.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will try to be less extensive in my answer but still answer the question. The support in (k) — support for payment of tuition or expenses — is not restricted in any way. The changes here to this section were for the purpose of expanding the list of services that the director of Family and Children's Services can deliver to youth who are transitioning into independent living. These are some of the supports that a youth or young adult might identify or have need for.

It includes a list that might include these kinds of expenses, but it is not restricted to this and none of the ones named here are restrictive in any way.

Deputy Chair: 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 clause-by-clause debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*.

Is there any further debate on clause 11?

Clause 11 agreed to

On Clause 12

Ms. White: I was just saying no to my colleague who was ready to speed us along.

So, in section 12, we are talking about adding points after the existing legislation of section 10, which is services and programs. This new part talks about the obligation to inform of programs and services, and 10.01 says: "A director must inform a child who is in need of protective intervention, and their parents, of the programs and services that are available under this Division and encourage the child and their parents to participate in decisions respecting the provision and delivery of those programs and services." My question to that is: How?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The steering committee recommended that the director of Family and Children's Services must inform children and families of the programs and services that they are entitled to. While this is already listed as a service delivery principle, it is now also listed with this amendment as a legal obligation of the director.

The advisory committee's required action 75 stated that workers should be informed of services available to maintain the integrity of the family unit. The steering committee recommended going beyond that and directly informing children and their parents of what voluntary preventive services are available for them. As well, this is consistent with the advisory committee's required action 60, which requires that the youth and young adults be informed of services that are available to them.

The question about that is how. This will be a continual obligation, so this will be a requirement at the initial point of contact. It will be a requirement during the collaborative planning process, and it will include the obligation to inform and assist with advocates if they are necessary, required, or available or of interest to the family or the child. This will be an ongoing obligation. The inclusion of it here as a legal obligation of the director is to entrench it in the law. The policies could well be developed to say the "how" — to make sure that there are examples there in the policy — but it is not included here in Bill No. 11 because it all has to be read together as a piece of legislation. It is an obligation that is ongoing and among the obligations and requirements of the director under the law.

Ms. White: I appreciate that clarification. Just under 10.01, it says, "Protective intervention required for services". Under 10.02(2), it says, "For greater certainty, a person may, on their own initiative, request that a director provide them with programs or services under this Division and a director may provide services in respect of a child if the director believes the child is in need of protective intervention."

I guess I am looking for clarification. Part of my concern is that someone would have to ask for support as opposed to that support already existing.

So, if the minister could just walk me through 10.02(2).

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm happy to do that, but I think it needs to be read in context, because this is an opportunity for — let me say it this way: Section 10.02(2) clarifies that any person may request the director provide services to them, and the director may do so without a report under section 22, which is the duty to report or information from a peace officer suggestive of a child protection concern.

This provision supports circumstances where a person voluntarily requests the director to offer preventive support services and the director will need to assess whether the support and services may de-escalate risk of a current situation or prevent further child protection risks. So, this is an opportunity for some preventive services.

Generally, depending on how in the context a matter comes to the attention of the director, it will be a person requesting that the director provide those services, but it could be that it comes to their attention in some other way that would allow them to reach out to an individual, but this is only — I want to make sure I understand that the question is that the person has to ask — yes, that's what this talks about in this, but it wouldn't prevent the director from approaching someone, if they knew of a situation, and it has to be read in context with 10.01, of course, which is the obligation on the director to inform a child who is in need of protective intervention, but they would have to know about that child. Those things all come together.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that clarification. I have just flipped the page and it's 10.03(1). This next section actually talks about prenatal services that may be provided. The reason why I want to focus on this again is I think it's really important. We have the prenatal services mentioned in 10.03(1), but then again, just below this, there is a section that says: "Agreements for prenatal services". The reason I want to highlight this is that I actually know a situation right now where this would be really beneficial for an expectant parent who is trying very, very hard — so having the support. One question I just want to ask right now about the prenatal is that — understanding that when we pass this act, there will be a certain amount of time, I imagine, before it comes into force — but will some of these things that are being talked about in the future be available to people right now — knowing that we're transitioning toward this new act?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to emphasize these changes.

This amendment — so, 10.03(1)(a) and (b), and it goes on to speak about 10.04, which I'll encompass here.

This amendment clarifies that in these circumstances working with expectant parents, supports and services are offered to reduce the likelihood of a child being taken in — being in need of protective intervention at the time of their birth or to prevent separation of the child and the parent. We spoke earlier about that.

This clarifies the goal of prenatal services and further restricts prenatal services to child welfare in order to avoid

expanding the scope of this act. The provision recognizes that a person receiving transitional support services may not be in need, nor do they require need of protective intervention to access transitional support services.

Transitional support services — so this is 10.03(1)(b) — are used for youth transitioning out of care of the director or for extended family care. So, those are all in that section.

Section 10.04 notes that this provision provides the authority for the director to offer services without a formal agreement outlined in division 2, because we talked earlier about how they would need to be voluntary and there would be need to be agreement — division 2 being family support services and agreements. This provides flexibility to the director to provide support in a timely manner or in circumstances when an agreement is not necessary — like in an emergency or for short-term arrangements before a plan of care has been drafted — and it enables a director to deliver one-time support to a family in those circumstances.

The question about whether to not these prenatal services could be provided in the same way before the act comes into force, before changes in Bill No. 11 are adopted — unfortunately, the answer to that is no, because the current legislation authorizes the director to provide services only upon the birth of a child, but I can indicate that there is a prenatal working group that is planning, gathering information on prenatal services available in the territory, looking to identify gaps in those services and how those could be filled and how these services can be and will be provided to expectant parents under these provisions when Bill No. 11 becomes the law and the changes to the *Child and Family Services Act* are made.

Clause 12 agreed to

On Clause 13

Ms. White: Clause 13 says that section 12 will be repealed in the existing act. Section 12 is actually about special needs agreements. One of the reasons I'm highlighting this one is that I would like to have the minister explain why this section was removed and the justification for that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This amendment removes "special needs agreements" from division 2 of the act. This change recognizes that there is no difference between a child with a disability needing protective intervention and any other child needing protective intervention. They would both be provided with supports that are based on their individual case plans, developed through a collaborative planning process with all of the individuals available to them, as we discussed earlier.

Children with a disability who do not have a need for protective intervention may access services through Disability Services and the Social Supports branch of Health and Social Services, so they wouldn't be captured by this legislation. And this removes the outdated term "special needs" from the act, and families and children with disabilities are not forced to enter the child welfare system to receive services.

Clause 13 agreed to

On Clause 14

Clause 14 agreed to

On Clause 15

Clause 15 agreed to

On Clause 16

Ms. White: Clause 16 talks about section 17 and 18 in the act. Section 17 is “Agreements for transitional support services” and section 18 is “Transitional case plan”. The first question that I have will be about 17(1)(d), and this is just because this highlights the first place where we actually talk about the age change. The existing act talks about being age 24, and what we are doing is that we are changing it to age 26, which I think is really important. But more than that, when we were talking in Committee of the Whole about this, the minister talked about how this is a different way of looking at supporting people as they transition out and how 26 wasn’t a hard stop, and depending on situations, we might go on. I think that this is a real opportunity for the minister then to reconfirm the importance of changing this age from 24 to 26 but, more than that, the changing spirit of what this means.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This amendment broadens the age, as noted in the question, of eligibility from the age of 24 to 26, and this is voluntary. The youth can elect to remain involved but can come back for services prior to their 26th birthday. Expanding the age up to 26 will better support youth in their transitions out of care. This also aligns with the recent agreement in principle between Canada and the national indigenous organizations outlining transitional support for youth who have been in care up to the age of 26.

This direction will support child welfare reform work with both Canada and with Yukon First Nations. I can also note that the amendment allows youth to have services beyond the age of 26. I am looking at 16(3). That part of the amendment speaks about going beyond the 26th birthday. This amendment provides the director, under the act, the ability to enter into an agreement for transitional support services with a person after they turn 26 years of age in exceptional circumstances where additional support is needed to reach the goals that have been outlined in the transitional case plan, such as continuing their education or if they are already enrolled in a program, a trades program, or post-secondary. It also gives the director the ability to fill in any gaps in disability services for a young person that the social supports disability services program is unable to meet.

This will be an important opportunity, and it will be at the discretion of the director and cannot be delegated to other Family and Children’s Services staff. It is the director’s decision because of the exceptional circumstances, but the proposed legislative amendments go beyond simply increasing the eligibility criteria for agreements for support services from what is now 24 years to 26 years of age. In fact, the proposed legislative amendments really expand the existing support network for youth and for young adults who were previously in care. It creates a support network for youth and young adults who were previously in extended family care agreements and had no access to transitional support services after they reached the age of 19.

All of these amendments are so critically important, but this is one that I know has been a gap. It is so important for child welfare processes, procedures, policies, and the law to adapt and to understand that transitioning out of care and into

your own life as an adult is and must be supported in a way that we have not done in the past. Transitional support services are eligible for counselling or for independent living skills and training, for educational training supports, and to assist in accessing education or community resources — again, all in the context of having the support of your First Nation and extended family.

We also heard that youth who live with extended family members for a significant amount of time and cannot be reunited with their parents do require transitional support as well. The current legislation does not provide the director of Family and Children’s Services with the legal authority to support these young adults and these youth, and we have amended section 17 of the *Child and Family Services Act* to empower the director to enter into agreements for transitional supports with those youth and young adults who spend at least two years with extended family members before they reach the age of 19 — again, a significant change. This has not been available before.

Lastly, I will say that national trends show that youth and young adults who do return home following post-secondary education live with their parents — I think there was a reference to this yesterday — or they generally remain with their parents well into their 20s. We amended the *Child and Family Services Act* here to ensure that we keep step with these national trends and provide support for young adults who have left extended family care agreements or the custody of the director. Those services can be provided until they are 26 years of age.

We also understand, in special circumstances, that a young adult might need support beyond the age of 26 because of their particular case plan goals and that is available as an option for the director under the new legislation. It’s incredibly important to support our young people.

Clause 16 agreed to

On Clause 17

Ms. White: So, clause 17 is talking about section 21, or part 3, so it’s protection of children. Section 21 specifically talks about when protective intervention is needed. So, there are some changes in here that I think kind of represent language — the differences where we’re identifying language in current times, including references to “emotional harm”.

We talk about “demonstrate significant anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive behaviour”, and it goes on. Can the minister tell me, or share with us, how some of these definitions or these clauses were chosen?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The member opposite is absolutely correct. This amendment, along with sections 21(3) and 21(4), clarifies what is “emotional harm” in great detail to provide guidance to the director under the act. This is intended to prevent those operating under the act from using their subjective interpretation as to what constitutes emotional harm. We can all imagine the detailed conversation that must have taken place to arrive at this provision and a forward-looking provision. The advisory committee’s required action 117 stated that “emotional harm” must be defined because it is not defined in the current act and has resulted in subjective assumptions and interpretations. The steering committee agreed with that work.

“Emotional harm” is a term that leaves considerable room for subjective interpretation and application in child welfare practice. Historically, social workers interpreted “emotional harm” from a western perspective, using their subjective biases, which labelled the effects of poverty, inadequate housing, and substance misuse related to intergenerational trauma as child protection concerns.

In 2010, “neglect” was removed as a ground for protective intervention from the *Child and Family Services Act*, which is now the current act, to prevent social workers from misinterpreting poverty and other socioeconomic conditions as child maltreatment. The proposed legislative amendments here in Bill No. 11 comprehensively define “emotional harm” and identify the specific conditions that social workers must prove to establish emotional harm.

When selecting a definition for “emotional harm”, we referred to how it was defined and applied throughout the country. Other Canadian jurisdictions refer to inappropriate criticism, threats, and humiliation as a cause of emotional harm in their respective definitions. When interpreting “inappropriate criticism” or “humiliation”, we will refer to best practices from jurisdictions with similar definitions to guide our practice.

But this change is an attempt to define as best we can, without the subjective approach, and it is a result of the extensive work with Yukon First Nation families and Yukon First Nation governments for the purposes of having a definition in this legislation that would not adversely impact their children.

Clause 17 agreed to

On Clause 18

Clause 18 agreed to

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem clauses 19 through 44 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 19 through 44 of Bill No. 11 read and agreed to

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 clauses 19 through 44 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 19 to 44 deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 45

Ms. White: In clause 45, we are talking about amending section 48, and 48 is under division 4, which is the “Application for protective intervention order”, and this is talking about the parties. So, ultimately, I am trying to get us back to that. In line 45 of what we are working on, 45(2), it says: “The following subsection is added after subsection 48(1)...” and it says “(1.01)”, so it’s talking about “... does not apply if, under an adoption order that has been made in respect of the child, the

birth parent does not have any parental rights or responsibilities with respect to the child...” And so, I am just looking for clarification or explanation or help in interpreting that line.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This amendment clarifies that a birth parent does not have the right to be a party to an application for a protective intervention hearing if the child has been adopted. The rationale here is that it respects the transfer of custodial rights through adoption orders and an end to the relationship between a biological parent and their child.

This is contextual, of course. It doesn’t prohibit somebody from seeking an opportunity to be involved if there were a process, and they could seek that authority from a court, but it does not give them the right to be a party to that situation.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on clause 45?

Clause 45 agreed to

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem clauses 46 through 67 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 46 through 67 of Bill No. 11 read and agreed to

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 clauses 46 through 67 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 46 to 67 deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 68

Ms. White: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I appreciate you bearing with me as I muddle my way through.

Clause 68 is actually adding things under the powers and role of a director’s application. This is talking about orders to produce a document or a thing. I was just wondering if the minister could walk us through the changes to section 73 of the act.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to be clear. I so appreciate the opportunity to skip certain sections if there are no questions about them. I understood the motion to be that we would go to 67, but I also understand that the question that is being asked is in relation to the amendments that are brought forward under section 72. I think we need to deal with 68, 69, 70, and 71. I want to make sure that I have this correctly because that is what my document shows.

Deputy Chair: We are now on debate of clause 68.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I understand the question to be about line 68, so my section numbers may not match. Let’s go forward and I can respond to the question.

In the amendments to section 73, they do in fact add section 73.01. This amendment allows the director, under the act, to apply for a court order to get access to documents or records — for example, audio recordings or perhaps video recordings or others that would be considered records that a director requires to carry out their duties. The intent is to provide the director

with a mechanism to apply for and to access records that are held by third parties that might be related to a child protection concern, especially if the third party is not a public body as would be defined under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Under section 26(3), a director, under the act, can apply to a court to obtain information from a third party, but this is limited to the child protection investigations. Once a child protection investigation is complete, a director may require additional information to conduct assessments on the child or to determine who should be allowed to contact or to visit the child or be involved in the processes, et cetera. Currently, a director has no way to access information that a third party may have after the investigation is complete. Under the act, a director has the right only to information that is in the custody or control of a public body as defined under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. This will not change this — sorry — that they have the ability to access that information that's being held by a public body, but this would be access to information that is not being another third party.

The advisory committee required action 124 asked that the legislation be amended to provide the director of Family and Children's Services with the ability to obtain information from third parties who are not subject to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* in order for the director to carry out their duties.

So, I just want to emphasize two things here. One is that access to information and protection of privacy, of course, only regulates the behaviour and provides access to information being held by public bodies and not individuals or other organizations. So, that's the first issue that's trying to be addressed here.

The second is that this is a court order application or an application to a court and their authority to review whether or not this information is necessary. This new section provides a mechanism for the director to proceed to court and to ask for that authority.

Clause 68 agreed to

On Clause 69

Clause 69 agreed to

On Clause 70

Clause 70 agreed to

On Clause 71

Ms. White: I apologize to the minister for the complication before. I was trying to make sure that I could tie it back to the original. In this one, clause 71 is amending section 79 of the existing act, and that is probably where I confused not only you, but me as well, so I apologize for that.

This time, we're talking about amended section 79 in the existing act, and it talks about adjournments and interim orders. This is important because we're talking about how, if things are possible — I want to go into (2)(a), which says: "... whether an adjournment would promote family reunification by providing the parents with time to access treatment, secure housing or otherwise take action that would allow the child to return to them..."

The reason why I wanted to get into this section is that I think this identifies that the more we can support a family, the more we can support a child. My understanding is that, if a court proceeding was ongoing — if there could be a pause in that, it would allow, for example, access to treatment, support in accessing housing, and things like that — so, if the minister can talk about the changes that are going to happen in section 79, maybe with a focus on adjournment and why we might choose that route.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, I can provide some context in this circumstance. I don't want to get this wrong, but in relation to the requirements of the current legislation, there are provisions that restrict this kind of consideration — or certainly don't provide for it. I'll just say it that way.

The amendment here lists out the factors that a judge must take into account before they grant an adjournment, and then the judge must take into account — if they are granting an adjournment — if granting that adjournment will give the parents time to access what they need to create safety for their child.

Entrenching this in the legislation is also very new. The judge must take into account the effect that the adjournments will have delaying the child from returning to their family, and the judge must take into account what the adjournment will do to the child's access to their community and to their culture, and the child's access to their community and their culture is an important principle that is emphasized throughout the act and is now entrenched here.

The current act only requires the judge to consider the "interests of the child having an early disposition of the matter" and the "child's sense of time" when granting adjournment.

So, that's the current legislation. These amendments provide a new list of factors that emphasize family reunification and connection to community and to culture. These factors require a judge to think about the child within the context of their family and how the adjournments will impact the child's return to their family.

This amendment is based on advisory committee required action 134 and asks that the child's access to parents should not be limited.

This, again, having worked on previous pieces of legislation, is really groundbreaking in that it gives judicial authority for them to make their decisions, but it indicates the kinds of things that are critical to take into account when determining these kinds of delays.

Sometimes to delay would be the most beneficial thing for everyone, including the child and the family in respect to their ability for reunification or their chances at a successful reunification. Other times, it will be taken into account — details of how the child's experience of that and always, as noted, that access or visits with parents and connection to family and culture are important aspects of all of those decisions. But this certainly does give guidance to courts.

Clause 71 agreed to

On Clause 72

Clause 72 agreed to

On Clause 73

Clause 73 agreed to

On Clause 74

Clause 74 agreed to

On Clause 75

Clause 75 agreed to

On Clause 76

Ms. White: Clause 76 deals with section 89, and section 89 is about placement of a child. It's of note that this entire section has been removed and replaced. I just want to highlight that first, because I know that what is being taken from and what is being changed is also a real part of how we're changing the spirit behind this piece of legislation.

So, one of the things that I did really want to focus on was the importance of this section. Instead of me asking questions specifically about it, maybe the minister just wants to touch on what these changes mean to the placement of a child.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This amendment really modernizes the language in the act and shifts away — there are a couple of different focuses here — from the term “residential facility” that is similar to the term “residential school”. This was clearly of concern.

This amendment allows the director, under the act, to place a child with either an extended family member or someone else living in the child's community on a short-term basis — for example, 72 hours — until immediate safety concerns in the child's home are addressed and the child can return to their home — so in situations when that looks short-lived and support can be provided. The intent is to prevent bringing children from rural communities into Whitehorse when there is an emergency in the child's home, but to keep a child within the community while the director works with the parents or family to create safety. The child is less likely to experience the trauma of being removed from their loved ones and their community.

This amendment is consistent with the advisory committee's required action 96, which asks for the director of Family and Children's Services to place children in need of emergency placements with community members. The current act requires the director to bring a child into a foster home or a group home — more flexibility, more availability, and more emphasis on the child remaining in the community.

I can comment on (3), which allows the director to place a child in temporary custody with an extended family member. The intent here is to keep children with their families and in their communities, even if the child cannot live in their home for a short or perhaps longer period of time. I think that I will stop there.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. Also in this section, we talk about the importance of sibling placement, which I think is really important, but it also acknowledges that sometimes that might not be possible.

When we look at this — and I do think that there is a real importance of trying to keep kids in communities, because that is important. But in some cases, it's not as easy as all that. Is the department working with communities to identify safe homes, or is the department working with communities to, for example, acquire a home that can be supported?

I think about the role of communities. If we talk about things at the end of a highway or in fly-in-only communities, what work is happening with the department and communities to make sure that we have safe spots identified within the communities so that children do not need to leave?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Certainly, the government understands that we have to support and invest in caregivers in the community to create places of safety for children so that they can stay close to their families and their communities and their cultures.

The proposed legislative amendments give the director of Family and Children's Services the ability to place children in care with extended family care members, as I have noted, but it also is only the latest step in our journey to keep children with their communities. Over the last few years, we have been making headway in increasing supports to extended family caregivers. We are developing a caregiver strategy that will focus on the ability for us to recruit, retain, train, and support caregivers to ensure that children who are needing out-of-home care can remain close to their families and their communities and their culture. One of the core tenets of this strategy is to work with individual Yukon First Nations to develop initiatives that are specifically designed for their communities. We're looking at community-based resources.

It is incredibly important also to recognize that, because of the way that Bill No. 11 was developed in government-to-government conversations and First Nation governments and communities at the table, they too recognize and have committed to the tenets which are to keep children as close to home as possible and their opportunities to expand their own community-based resources with the purpose of keeping children close to home, and their commitment to do that is obvious here.

Clause 76 agreed to

On Clause 77

Clause 77 agreed to

On Clause 78

Clause 78 agreed to

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem clauses 79 through 120 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 79 through 120 in Bill No. 11 read and agreed to

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 clauses 79 through 120 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 79 through 120 deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 121

Ms. White: This is referencing changes to section 165 in the act. Section 165 is “Facilities and services for children”. So,

one thing that we see with this amendment — the first definition will be: “The Minister may, for children who are in the care or custody of a director, establish, operate and provide 24/7 facilities or homes, being places where the children reside and are provided with all-day care and supports.” I believe that this is in an effort to remove the institutional language that was there before, but maybe if the minister wants to talk a bit about how that aligns with the other parts that we are working on changing.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Line 121 does, as noted in the question, amend subsection 165(1). The amendment authorizes the director to establish, operate, and provide 24/7 facilities or homes for children who are in the care or custody of the director. This is in reference to “residential facilities” and to “foster homes” having been removed from this section. The amendment therefore does not limit the type of 24/7 facility or home that can be authorized or operated under this act.

The previous words included in that section restricted the types of 24/7 facilities that could be operated. This will provide flexibility to the director and could include something like a — I think there was a reference earlier in a question to a facility in a community, for instance, a house or a home of some kind that provides 24/7 care for children who are in need of the care or custody of the director. So, there is the provision there that it provides more flexibility and doesn’t restrict the types and removes language that was dated, I’ll say.

Clause 121 agreed to

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem clauses 122 through 133 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 122 through 133 in Bill No. 11 read and agreed to

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 clauses 122 through 133 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 122 to 133 deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 134

Clause 134 agreed to

On Clause 135

Clause 135 agreed to

On Clause 136

Clause 136 agreed to

On Clause 137

Mr. Cathers: This clause was one that I believe had been recommended for changes in the letter from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The minister earlier in debate made reference to having sought a legal opinion regarding the request made by the Information and Privacy

Commissioner. Would she agree to share that legal opinion with members?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can indicate that the entirety of the legal opinion provided is included in the letter that was sent to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. In answer to a previous question, I have indicated that I could review the short — very short — memo that was provided to me. I guess I want to say “e-mail” that was provided to me with respect to this, but the entirety of that opinion is included in the letter dated March 28 to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, a copy of which was provided to the Leader of the Official Opposition and to the Leader of the Third Party.

Clause 137 agreed to

On Clause 138

Clause 138 agreed to

On Clause 139

Clause 139 agreed to

On Clause 140

Clause 140 agreed to

On Clause 141

Clause 141 agreed to

On Clause 142

Ms. White: I am just going to put out that it is so much easier to debate legislation that doesn’t exist when there are 87 pages of it than legislation that we’re amending with 87 pages of amendments. For anyone listening along, it is challenging and probably comical at times, based on my ups and downs.

This is talking about an annual report. Clause 142 is changing section 187, which is talking about the “Annual Report”. I think that this is important. Yesterday, in Committee of the Whole, some of what we were talking about was the importance of data collection. One of the things that I had highlighted about my hopes that we follow young people as they go through the system, out the other side of the system, and continue on hopefully with successful lives is that this becomes part of how we understand doing the work.

My hope is that the annual report has that strong commitment to data collection and sharing. Does the minister maybe have anything to share about what this annual report will look like?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am not sure I can say much about what it will look like, but I can indicate what the requirements are in this new act or what will be in this new legislation. The amendment here outlines that the annual report must be made publicly available on the Government of Yukon website. This is consistent with advisory committee required action 52, which states that the data on preventive intervention must be collected, evaluated, and reported publicly. To comply with that action, of course, that would need to be part of the annual report. The amendment includes a list of data that is required to be collected and included in the annual report. These amendments provide direction on what must be contained therein. The information is specific to the number of children who have received services under this act and the number of children receiving “intervention services”. That is referenced in section 142(5) of the act, not the lines.

There is also an obligation to share how many of these children are indigenous and who are members of a Yukon First Nation. The rationale there is that it is consistent with advisory committee required action 52, which states that the data on preventive intervention must be collected, evaluated, and reported publicly. This is also consistent with required action 51, which lists data points that must be reported, based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. I am very pleased that these will be included in the new legislation.

Clause 142 agreed to

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem clauses 143 through 151 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 143 through 151 of Bill No. 11 read and agreed to

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 clauses 143 through 151 of Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 143 through 151 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, without amendment.

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: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, 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.

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 legislative return was tabled March 29, 2022:

35-1-40

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — masking in schools (McLean)