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BLUES

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Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

NOTE

This document, referred to as the "Blues", is the preliminary issue of the Hansard of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and has not been edited fully. It may be used as a reference only with the understanding that it will be superseded by the final, edited version, entitled "Hansard", at a later time.

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 16, 2023 — 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

Speaker: Before proceeding with Orders of the Day, the Chair would like to note an unfortunate trend that I am seeing in how members are addressing one another and the parties they represent. As I have ruled previously, I would like to remind members that they should address each other by their current titles that they have in the Assembly. Addressing members by their previous positions, such as former minister, for example, or adding modifiers to titles is not in order. Please refrain from doing this in the future.

I would also remind members, when speaking to a point of order, to keep the remarks brief and to the point. Speaking to a point of order is not an opportunity to engage in debate or score political points. Standing Order 22(2) says — and I quote: “The Speaker may permit debate on a point of order or question of privilege before giving a decision but the debate must be strictly relevant to the point of order or question of privilege raised.” If a member fails to keep their remarks brief and to the point, the Chair may, as is the Chair’s call, deliver a ruling without hearing submissions on the point of order.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: With respect to yesterday’s reserved decision on the point of order at the end of the day, I reviewed the Blues and find that there was no point of order.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have quite a few guests here today who are here for our tribute to the 50th anniversary of the Yukon Archives. Please welcome: from the Friends of the Yukon Archives Society, Michael Gates, Diane Chisholm, and Steve Smyth; from the Yukon Council of Archives, Linda Johnson, Yann Herry, and Donna Darbyshire; from the Hidden Histories Society, Peggy D’Orsay; from the Yukon Heritage Resources Board, Jenny Lu; from the Yukon Archives, Lesley Buchan, Kira Quinsey, Kaitlin Normandin, and Elizabeth Walker; and from the Department of Tourism and Culture, Sophie Tremblay-Morissette. Bienvenue à tous.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the 2022 Hall of Innovators Awards

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 2022 Hall of Innovators Awards recipients. The Hall of Innovators Awards honour individuals who are exceptional examples of innovation and leadership. Innovation programs and projects enrich our communities and play an impactful role in the ongoing economic, social, cultural, and technological aspects of life in the Yukon.

Today I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to each of the recipients’ valuable contributions to the lives of Yukoners. I want to acknowledge Angela Drainville, who is creating an empowering environment for young theatre performers in the territory through the Yukon Theatre for Young People, a youth-driven organization providing youth with a stronger voice in theatre productions. I would also like to recognize Shadelle Chambers, who is a true force to be reckoned with, proving essential to the creation and implementation of the Council of Yukon First Nations’ family preservation services. This groundbreaking initiative provides monumental support to Yukon First Nation and Indigenous families. I want to pay tribute to the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship for their innovative approach in balancing traditional and Indigenous knowledge with western sciences to tackle the global climate crisis and build sustainable solutions.

I also want to celebrate the two deserving recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Firstly, there is Jackie Olson, whose innovating leadership has made her a true visionary in the artistic, business, and education communities. She has helped to open the door of possibility for First Nation artists and innovators to take ownership of their crafts and become internationally successful. The second recipient is Bob Sharp. Bob is an innovator and educational leader with an unbridled passion for making the world a better place. Whether he is expanding the classroom into the outdoors or tackling northern food security with his son Andrew, Bob has made it his lifetime mission to take on global issues.

To all these incredible recipients, and on behalf of all Yukoners, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude for the amazing efforts that each of you continue to make and, in your work, inspiring change.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the hard work of the selection committee for the 2022 innovation awards and to extend a warm thank you to NVD and Yukon Brewing for being lead sponsors for the event. It is through innovation that we find new and better paths to achieving our goals. I know that the recipients for the 2022 Hall of Innovators Awards will continue to make the Yukon a better place to live, work, and learn.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the NDP caucus to pay tribute to the third annual Hall of Innovators Awards. On November 24, 2022, there was a ceremony at the Yukon Transportation

Museum to celebrate a group of incredible Yukoners. Together they possess dynamic qualities and skills and have made incredible achievements to benefit our communities.

Bob Sharp was presented with a well-deserved, Lifetime Achievement Award. Bob has inspired a generation of Yukoners with his innovative ways of teaching through experiential learning and mentoring educators. Bob was a teacher to all my children many years ago. He continues his innovative work by creating cold climate greenhouses and providing support for YuKonstruct's makerspace.

Jackie Olson was also presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Jackie is an accomplished artist and champion for the arts and for her community. Her beautiful, contemporary artwork is said to reimagine age-old Yukon practices to produce an inspired new way of creating art. Jackie's artwork is showcased around the world, and the work she does in her hometown of Dawson City continues to help forge a path for future creators like herself.

Angela Drainville was presented with a Notable Innovators Award. Angela, along with a Yukon theatre company, has transformed the performing arts for Yukon youth and her innovative visions for this youth-driven organization that continues to inspire future mentors and leaders. I applaud the work Angela has done and continues to do for our youth and for our community.

Shadelle Chambers was awarded the Notable Innovators Award. Her advocacy for First Nation self-determination has led to incredible achievements over her time with the Council of Yukon First Nations and beyond. Shadelle is credited with being instrumental in the creation and implementation of the Council of Yukon First Nations' family preservation services, which provides crucial services and supports to children and families.

The youth and emerging leaders Notable Innovator Award was presented to the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship. This innovative group is making ground-breaking progress to assess and develop solutions for the complex challenge of climate change here in the north, now and for the future.

Congratulations to the recipients. We are honoured to celebrate you all. Salamats.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Archives 50th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to pay tribute to the 50th anniversary of the Yukon Archives. Preserving the Yukon's documentary heritage is a vital endeavour. Archives tie our communities and families together as a repository for our collective memory.

For 50 years, the Yukon Archives has been safeguarding our story. It all began with the vision of the late Jim Smith. Prior to 1972, the territory did not have a central place to keep historical records. Some records were being lost to fire and flood, and some were being lost to time. Some were being stored far away, and access was challenging. It was time to bring them home.

As Commissioner for the territory, Smith secured commitments from the federal government to return thousands of foundational documents. We passed the *Archives Act* in 1971, and the Yukon's first purpose-built archive opened in December 1972. The Yukon Archives has been entrusted with George Carmacks' application for Claim No. 1 on Bonanza Creek; the 1979 Epp letter that changed governance in the Yukon; a 1989 original, the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, marking a huge milestone in the journey of the Yukon; a treasure trove of photographs, including Tlingit photographer George Johnston; oral histories, diaries, albums, films, maps — donated by so many generous Yukoners — each of them a thread in the tapestry of our territory.

We have come a long way since the initial collection was preserved downtown next to the former Whitehorse Public Library. But no matter how cutting-edge our new buildings, it takes knowledgeable and dedicated people to make it thrive. The Yukon Archives staff and the Friends of the Yukon Archives, who, by the way, are celebrating their 25th anniversary, are caring and dedicated, and approach their work with absolute honour.

If you want a great read on the history of our archives, which is a meta and cool thing to do, check out the Archives' 40th anniversary book, *For the Record*. It is on yukon.ca or, you know, you could go to the Archives.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, the Archives is also hosting an artist-in-residence program. The selected artist will experience and utilize the materials, facilities, and services that the Yukon Archives has to offer, with their final work publicly exhibited. An announcement of the successful candidate is expected next week.

The Yukon Archives is truly a territorial treasure, shared by and benefiting Yukoners, Canadians, and researchers worldwide.

I ask the members of this House to join me in paying tribute to this invaluable Yukon institution. From the early champions to present-day supporters, generous donors, passionate researchers, and incredible staff — congratulations.

Günilschish, shaw nithän, mahsi' cho, merci, thank you for all you do to preserve and protect our heritage. Happy 50th. Joyeux 50^{ème}.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 50th anniversary of the Yukon Archives. Yukon owes so much to Commissioner Jim Smith, who had a vision of creating a place to preserve Yukon history. In 1972, the dream came true, and the Archives was officially opened, attached to this building that we now call the Jim Smith Building.

Whether letters, dossiers, photos, film, video, maps, documents and exhibits, it was all to encompass all manner of items to save our collective memories. Items came forward from citizens, previous Yukoners, and visitors, and all government documents began to be saved and recorded. Ottawa returned many files from their vaults so they could be accessed more easily. Jim Smith donated his own Yukon journey of

personal letters, photos, and film. He was also the founding member of the Friends of the Yukon Archives Society.

The growth of the collection and the need to protect the treasures properly had the Archives move to the University of Yukon. This state-of-the-art facility can now take care of our history very well. One can visit the Archives to explore and learn. The historic collections and family collections are there for all to see — too many to mention, but check out the Tidd collection, the Van Bibber collection, the Roy Minter papers, mining records, and government documents, such as the Epp letter, which changed Yukon's political landscape.

A fun collection, the fiction collection, showcases how the Yukon and the Klondike were portrayed in dime novels and comic books: "... the Yukon was a place where convention was shunned and individual freedom was prized." Some people are not well-known, and many lives go undocumented; however, there is a collection of "In Loving Memory", family pamphlets of loved ones who have passed. As replicating photos and information became easier for everyone, family lineage and stories are shared. There is a strong demand for tracing genealogy as people trace family history of those who worked and lived in the Yukon. There is also a collection of estate files, diaries, and birth and death certificates.

From the first peoples to today, our history is fascinating and forever ongoing. We collect to capture our memories and stories correctly for future generations to understand how we came to be.

If anyone has some interesting Yukon items that are a part of our history and story, please do not hesitate to contact the staff at the Archives to make a donation. They will assess and decide if it is acceptable to be added with your name as the donor.

Go, explore, and learn all things Yukon. A shout-out to all collectors who share their treasures, as I am a collector. Congratulations, and well done.

Applause

Ms. White: It's with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Yukon Archives. The Yukon Historical and Museums Association website describes some of the work done at the Yukon Archives so eloquently, so I'm going to borrow from them: "From love letters to home movies, photographs to handwritten diaries, turn-of-the-century newspapers to modern sound recordings, the Yukon Archives preserves and shares a wealth of original and irreplaceable materials. Here you can find significant document that shed light on almost every aspect of the Yukon experience.

"The Archives is a great place to start your search into that mysterious relative who may have taken part in the Klondike Gold Rush or any other significant event in Yukon history. Staff are always available to help with your search. You can also view one of the rotating exhibits which, touch on virtually every subject and theme related to the Yukon."

Mr. Speaker, from the very big to the very small, archivists and historians have captured, cared for, and shared Yukon history for half a century. We have a real appreciation for the

incredible work that archivists do. They are the keepers of the truth. They keep that information safe, but it is never kept secret.

If you have never been to the Archives, you should go. Plan ahead and ask for a tour, and I guarantee, when they pull out the white cotton gloves, you're about to see something incredible.

So, congratulations on the last 50 years of the preservation and sharing of Yukon stories, and good luck for the next 50.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling two letters, one from me to the head of Elections Yukon, and the response from the head of Elections Yukon to me, regarding Yukon electoral integrity.

Ms. White: I have for tabling today a letter from the Carcross/Tagish First Nation in support of hemodialysis in the 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. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the Yukon Muslim Society's campaign to help individuals impacted by the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria by donating to the Red Cross, as it has done for other emergencies.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon economy

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to speak to the tremendous progress that our government has made to build a strong, resilient territory. Yukon's economy remains strong, with many of our industries continuing to grow, creating job opportunities, and strengthening our reputation as a place to invest.

According to the latest Statistics Canada data released in November 2022, the Yukon led the county in real gross domestic product growth, increasing 10 percent from \$2.667 billion in 2020 to \$2.933 billion in 2021. To provide some context to those numbers, Mr. Speaker, Canada's overall growth rate in 2021 was five percent; the Yukon's was double that.

Let's talk about the Yukon's greatest resource — its people. Our population has continued to grow, reaching over 44,000 in September 2022. We have consistently had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, reaching 3.8 percent in

February 2023. In 2022, the average number of employed Yukoners increased by 1,000 from the previous year. It is also worth noting that our labour force averaged 24,300 — up 600 from the previous year.

These new job opportunities translate to real income potential for Yukoners. Yukon's average weekly earnings increased by 3.4 percent in 2021 compared to 2022. In November 2022, average weekly earnings were up another 2.9 percent compared to the previous year. We know that this is a direct relationship between income and business growth. We know that businesses are the backbone of our economy and the heart of our communities.

Yukon retail sales continue to grow, exceeding \$1 billion in 2022. The vital contributions of Yukon's businesses are imperative to the territory's momentum of the fastest growing economy in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point now to two main industries driving Yukon's GDP growth in 2021: mining at 45.4-percent growth, and construction at 16.8-percent growth.

So, let me speak briefly about the mining industry. The mining industry continues to be a critical driver of Yukon's economy. This means more jobs for people, more money for local businesses, and more partnerships that bring work and training to our communities. Additionally, the growing importance of critical minerals will continue to drive interest in the north and increase our investment attractiveness overall. Our government recognizes the unique opportunities presented by the green energy transition and the necessity of critical minerals. We are confident that this transition will support our economic security and sustainability.

Through our vast investment potential and opportunities for business growth, the rest of the world is focused on Canada's north now more than ever. We heard this loud and clear from our team who were at PDAC just over the last weeks. We will continue to support initiatives that strengthen and diversify our economy. This, combined with our government's actions to make life more affordable, help position the Yukon as an economic leader for decades to come.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to respond to the Premier's statement. While I am pleased to see that we are seeing economic growth, it is important to remember what is driving it. Since the Liberals have been in power, we have seen much of this growth driven by the growth of the public sector and of federal transfer payments.

Here is what local economist Keith Halliday had to say about the government's boasting about our economy — and I quote: "How the eyes must have rolled among our paymasters in Ottawa. The 2023-24 budget forecasts a record delivery by the federal money plane. Claiming to have the 'strongest economy' after this is kind of like being a skijorer who passes skiers puffing along the trails at Mount Mac and shouts 'get in shape!' while being pulled by 1.6 billion federal huskies."

What is even worse about this, Mr. Speaker, is that the unsustainable growth of the public sector is hurting private business. This is exactly what the business community has noticed too. Last year, when they wrote to the Government of

Yukon on February 3, they said this: "This growth in the public sector is seeing employees leaving the private and self-employed sectors to join the public sector in increasing numbers, which has resulted in increased costs for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) to recruit and retain employees in a market that is struggling to attract and retain employees." Those are the words of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce.

The Premier has raised the mining industry. Well, the mining industry — Yukon's number one economic driver — has been hit with a huge number of important issues all at once. They are being asked to respond to changes to their legislation, the PMA and the QMA, resource road regulations, mining intensity targets for emissions, new wetlands policy, and accelerated land use planning — all issues that could affect them negatively and all being thrown at them all at once by this Liberal government.

Many were in attendance during Geoscience when a Yukon government geologist warned that the number of companies and prospectors active in the territory could drop to a 57-year low. This should raise alarm bells for the Premier and his colleagues, as we hope it does.

The numbers the Premier shared today paper over the real-world experiences of businesses and what they are seeing on the ground. The reality is that, at a time when Yukon government should be helping businesses get back on their feet, they have instead been piling on new challenges, red tape, and costs on to their backs. In the words of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce just over a year ago, they described the feeling that the Liberal government was — and I quote: "... kicking us while we are down."

Unfortunately, the change in the top leadership of the Liberal government has not helped, but rather, it seems to have hurt. We have seen bad government policies get worse. Instead of ending rent control, as the Premier promised, he has made it worse by adding on a ban on no-cause evictions. Instead of consulting with the business community about the impact of increasing the minimum wage, the new Premier announced a sudden increase with zero consultation. They are layering on more and more red tape and more and more regulation. Of course, all of this is driving up the cost of doing business. All of that is making Yukon a less and less desirable place to do business.

Here is what the Yukon and Whitehorse chambers of commerce said in a joint letter just last month — and I quote: "We are concerned that this environment of weakening property rights will create a barrier to new private investment into the Territory. As a result, there may be a shift in Yukon businesses and entrepreneurs investing their capital outside of our Territory."

In particular, Liberal policies are hurting the private sector housing industry. Again, from the Whitehorse and Yukon chambers of commerce letter — and I quote: "By creating prohibitive regulations in market housing, governments risk impairing the private sector workforce and discouraging private sector investments that are very much required to increase our local housing supply."

Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the GDP is growing, but for the Premier to suggest that the growth is somehow linked to the policy agenda of the Liberal government is simply farcical and counter to everything that those in the private sector are actually saying. I can only hope that the Premier starts listening to those voices, because he certainly isn't doing so now.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate the rose-coloured glasses with which the Premier has shared his update, I suggest that it may be disconnected from the realities that many are facing. Businesses are cutting back hours, or even closing, as they grapple with staffing issues. When folks are hired from Outside and they get ready to relocate, they struggle to find places to live. Some even leave their jobs to return south.

If things are so very good, why is it that this government is pushing the territory's largest union to the brink of a strike? With widespread staffing shortages and rising costs of living, you would think that the government would be doing everything it could to attract and retain its very own employees.

So, the government's inflation support measures have fallen short as they miss Yukoners across the spectrum, and instead of looking toward the mechanism of the carbon tax rebate to ensure that everyone has access to inflation relief, his government doubled down on electricity rebates, which again, is far from capturing everyone in the Yukon. And when folks talked about the high cost of housing, they are directed to the Canada-Yukon housing benefit program to apply for a rent subsidy, but Mr. Speaker, did you know that a single person living alone only qualifies for a bachelor-sized unit? So, it's great that they can earn up to \$51,480 a year, but if they're in a one-bedroom unit, they are considered over-housed, and therefore, ineligible.

So, I guess the question is: How many bachelor apartments exist in the Yukon? And what about the social assistance rates? We know that, thanks to the confidence and supply agreement secured by the Yukon NDP, starting April 1, social assistance clients will receive an additional \$100 a month until a rate review can finally be done, but even that \$100 doesn't make up the gap between the housing allowance and the actual cost of housing, and the government will start the top-up with the new budget, but starting the top-up right away in February would have meant \$200 more in the pockets of the people in the greatest need.

So, we could talk about the firewood subsidy that is unavailable for those who harvest their own wood, despite the cost of fuel, equipment, and more having been affected by inflation — or we could look toward the pain in our communities of those suffering and ask: Are they reflected in the rosy economic outlook? So, although we appreciate the good words from the Premier, from the ground, life doesn't look or feel more affordable.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our government is committed to supporting local jobs and diversifying our economy. We recognize the challenges that Yukoners are facing in the light, again, of rising inflation. After the words from the Leader of the Official Opposition, I would go back and reflect on the fact

that you can take snippets from newspaper articles, you can twist and turn the notes, but at the end of the day, it is the strongest economy, the lowest unemployment rate, and the best growth in the country. Those are three points that are factual.

We know that when the Leader of the Official Opposition was Minister of Economic Development, we were driven into a recession, and we lost over 1,000 private sector jobs, so, those things stand over the last while. I hear the Leader of the Official Opposition. Look, we are in a different place. We agree with the Third Party that raising the minimum wage was a good thing. Those 887 people who are out there, out of almost 24,000 people, we now are going to be able to see them make \$35,000 a year, and we believe that we can work with the private sector to support that. We believe that putting that money in their hands is a good thing. We believe that money that's in their hands will, again, be spent at local businesses, and they should be in a position to make more money.

I think there were some snippets taken from the comments from the local journalist. There are lots of them that were missed, but I appreciate the cherry-picking.

When it comes to listing businesses — no, I'm not going to just list businesses. These are the people I worked alongside, actually, in the private sector, not just peering over the fence, but actually having to make payroll before, working with private sector, putting joint ventures together, working in mining, working in tourism, working in real estate, so yes, I do understand, because I actually have been there.

I can tell you that the one thing I listened to today in his comments were — which jobs do you want us to cut? Because you continue to go down that road. Is it the health care workers that the Member for Lake Laberge was talking about yesterday? Is it the educators, who we will hear about next week? Is it the nurses? Is it the doctors? Who is it in this organization that you want not to be here?

I can tell you this. When I look —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, tell us, because, I mean, that's really what you're saying.

Again, when I go back — I'll tell you. The 2023-24 main estimates — we've had 5,322 full-time workers in the Government of Yukon. This change reflects a decrease of 89.1 FTEs. So, again, Yukon Party math doesn't add up.

I will just finish with a couple of comments about our budget. The Yukon Medical Association — they say: "See the genuine efforts that the Government of Yukon is putting into improving the health and wellness of Yukoners..." The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said they appreciate the 2023-24 budget delivers stability for small businesses at a time when many are still feeling stressed and uncertain about the future of the economy.

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition praised our child benefit, dental program, investments, in our partnership with the Third Party, and *Putting People First*, which is our road map to improving health and social services.

Yukon RCMP chief superintendent praised our budget, and said — and I quote: "... the courage to see where the needs are in a growing Yukon..."

The Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon said they appreciate our fiscal responsibility and focus on capital projects.

Meanwhile, again, when the Yukon Party was in office, we saw the forecast. We had a decision to make; they didn't want to invest in private sector land development. We heard that yesterday. They did not want to invest in infrastructure, like the Carmacks arena, which we had a chance to celebrate just last week. What we saw was more private sector jobs lost. We turned that around. We are proud of our record, and we will continue to do the good work with the private sector and other organizations here in the Yukon.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Implementation of opposition motions

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion put forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre. We know the Member for Klondike, during his time as Premier, had a pattern of ignoring and dismissing the democratic will of the Legislative Assembly, but we haven't yet seen how this Premier will respond.

So, my question is simple: Does the Premier plan on respecting the clearly expressed will of the Yukon Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand to speak about our government's investment in school infrastructure. I was pleased to have the debate yesterday in the Legislative Assembly and to talk about our aging infrastructure within the territory. We are investing in a new, replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School, which, again, as folks know, was originally built in 1950. The current facility is not able to meet the needs and the future programming of the community.

I think there is a lot of passion on both sides of this debate. We have made some decisions to move that particular school to the Takhini educational reserve. We are really looking forward to that project unfolding. As we progress, we certainly will be hearing more about that.

We have also launched a public engagement to the broader Whitehorse community and partners, which launched on March 15 and will close on May 15. It is a great opportunity for Yukoners to have their voices heard in future capital needs for schools.

Mr. Cathers: This was a question for the Premier, and I would encourage him to answer instead of hiding behind the Education minister.

As I mentioned, the MLA for Klondike, when he was Premier, had a record for ignoring any motion passed by the Assembly that was put forward by someone other than the Liberals. That's not democratic, and it's disrespectful to, not just MLAs, but to the Yukoners who elected them. This Premier has an opportunity to chart a different path. Why is he not willing to respect the will of the democratically elected Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we have launched a public engagement to talk about the future needs of our aging school

facilities. I certainly have never said no to a downtown school. We heard some really great debate here in the House. I have been in receipt of a lot of letters, as has the member opposite from the New Democratic Party — 54. We have answered all those letters and we are really encouraging folks to participate in this engagement, but we certainly will take into consideration what we have heard through that process and the views of all of our partners going forward.

Again, our government is investing in schools. This is during the time that the Yukon Party was in government — they did not invest in any elementary schools. The Whistle Bend school is actually the first in more than two decades to be built. We have some really exciting projects: the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School; Whistle Bend is being built and has been progressing, being built by Yukoners; and we are investing also in Kets'ádań Kù, a reconciliation project with the Kluane First Nation.

Mr. Cathers: Since the last election, the minority Liberal government has ignored multiple motions passed by this Assembly. They ignored the motion that passed calling for removal of carbon tax for home heating fuel, despite financial hardships so many Yukon families are facing. They ignored the motion passed in opposition to the Liberals' gun confiscation program after giving a weak excuse for voting against it, and they have yet to oppose Bill C-21, siding with the Trudeau Liberals instead of representing Yukoners. Now, it seems that they will be ignoring this most recent motion passed by the Assembly.

Why does the Premier not respect the expressed will of the democratically elected Legislative Assembly, and why is he refusing to even answer questions about accountability to this Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It's great when you see the predetermined outcomes of his responses — the Member for Lake Laberge.

The question was simply: Where are we going to go after the motion yesterday? I think if anybody listened to the comments from this side of the House, you would have clearly heard that we know we need a new school. We also know that the population is trending in the downtown core — which could mean that another school should be built in the downtown core. If anybody listened to the media this morning, there was an interview with the member from the Third Party, and it clearly outlined that, yes, we need to build another school for the children who are attending the immersion class. The downtown core children are primarily going to schools either in Riverdale or potentially up in Takhini.

So, how do you maximize the opportunity to ensure that the children who live downtown have an opportunity to walk to school and be close to it? Well, I think the first thing you do is you go out and talk to the individuals who we outlined yesterday in the school communities. It gives the school communities the opportunity to speak with both First Nations and the opportunity to speak with a number of organizations, and that was the commitment that was made.

So, we need a school to replace the school that is aging. Again, this is because of a lack of investment by the previous government — 25 years and not an elementary school.

With that being said, I am always happy to get up and speak to these. Please don't put words in my mouth. We are committed to making sure that schools go where they should be built.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please.

I just want to remind all members that, when a member is speaking during Question Period, please be mindful and respectful. I am having a hard time hearing members have a conversation when there is outside whispering going on. So, please be mindful and respectful when a member is speaking. Thank you.

Question re: Seniors housing

Ms. McLeod: Over the past several days, the Premier has been pointing to a lower number of seniors on the waiting list for housing as evidence that the policy changes that his government is making are having an effect. However, we have recently learned that one reason that the list is getting shorter is because Yukon Housing Corporation's new eligibility rules are bumping seniors off that list. A *Yukon News* article this week outlines a case of two of my constituents — aged 75 and 81 — who were removed from the wait-list for having too many assets. According to the article, they own a truck, a camper, and a 37-year-old trailer. These assets combine for more than the \$100,000 asset cap.

So, can the Premier explain why Yukon Housing Corporation has made these changes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The implementation of community housing is based on a growing recognition across the Yukon that our previous social housing model needs renewal. By concentrating on those with complex support needs in the same buildings and looking to ensure that we bring seniors and others together, this is going to be some of our key work.

Part of the reality is that we are making sure that we invest, as best we can, in housing. The private sector is going to be key to it. We know that the Yukon Party was against that yesterday. We are also going to make sure that we build with non-profits and we build ourselves. But the reality is that demand is immense, and you know what? I have to stand in the House today and ensure that we look after our most vulnerable. We do have individuals out there who have their own homes already. They want to be moving into units that we have built or that we have partnered with, but we have to make sure that the most vulnerable people in our society are looked after first. Yes, that was a decision made by the Yukon Housing Corporation board, but we get beat up all the time in here about an OAG report. Well, those members who listened to the OAG report will know that it said to look after the most vulnerable people in your society.

Again, do you want us to follow the direction of the OAG sometimes or all the time? I would love to hear from the Member for Watson Lake on that.

Ms. McLeod: Last year, the Auditor General recommended that the Yukon Housing Corporation conduct a review of its housing eligibility requirements and its prioritization system to — and I will quote: "... ensure that there is access for those in most need of housing and benefits."

Does the minister believe that the changes that the Yukon Housing Corporation has implemented — and that have seen at least two seniors in my riding bumped off the list — will help with ensuring that Yukon seniors have access to housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think your second question answered your first question.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the Premier for his level of disrespect.

We know that the \$100,000 asset ceiling has always existed, but previously, seniors have been exempt. That changed in December 2022. It's clear that there are at least some cases where this change is not working for Yukon seniors.

Will the minister agree to consult with seniors organizations and housing advocates to determine whether the \$100,000 cap is an appropriate level?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am not trying to be disrespectful. The fact is that, at one point — I appreciate the fact that you are representing your constituents and I think all of us have to do that. But the Member for Watson Lake, in preparing the questions, would have seen that, yes, we are following the Office of the Auditor General report, and the OAG report says that we have to look after our most vulnerable. I won't get into a specific case.

What I can say is that there are individuals who have been on our wait-list for a long time and have homes that they are in. In that case, we are looking to help folks who don't have homes or they need extra supports. When it comes to meeting with seniors, do I think that is something that needs to continually happen? Yes. Do I think that I should be in those meetings as housing minister? Yes.

I spent the summer and spring meeting, in every seniors housing complex, with my team, hearing first-hand throughout the year in all of Whitehorse. I invited every senior to come sit with me in their common space and tell me how I could help to support their work. Yes, I have been doing it. I don't think you have ever seen that from another housing minister. I made sure I sat down. I will continue to listen.

When it comes to the cap of \$100,000, yes, I do understand that there are inflationary pressures. Should we monitor and adapt on that? Yes, we should — if that is not the right number. But right now, we are using one of the highest numbers in the country —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Yukon Housing Corporation response to tenant emergencies

Ms. White: Yukon Housing Corporation is the Yukon's biggest landlord and, as government, you would expect that they would be the gold standard for landlords. Sadly, that isn't true. Just a few weeks ago, a senior living in a Yukon Housing unit called us in desperation. The night before, his neighbour's

fire alarm went off. There was no fire; the alarm was malfunctioning, and his neighbour wasn't home to turn it off.

The first time it happened, the fire department came and silenced the alarm, but just minutes later, it went off again. This time, the fire department told them to call their landlord, and all night long, they called the Yukon Housing after-hours line, and after hours of trying, they finally reached someone. They were told someone would come to help, but no one came. The alarm rang all night, blaring through the building.

We know how hard Yukon Housing staff are working, and how much they care, but the fact is, this government system just isn't designed to be responsive to tenants. Can the Premier explain why, in an emergency, Yukon Housing tenants can be left ignored for so long?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will dig into the case of the situation with the fire alarm. I want to make sure that I get full information from our team and our staff, but I think that the Leader of the Third Party can think about all the cases that have happened in the last number of years when, in her role of advocating for citizens, she reaches out to me. We're in a position to help. I try to do that with every single member of the House as they represent their citizens. In many cases, we are getting back to people as quickly as we possibly can — and very quickly — on a number of issues. We have a tremendous number of clients we deal with and support. It is extremely complex.

Any social housing structure across this country — one of the things that we're doing is building new buildings, appropriate buildings, and investing in capital like we have not seen. We know that there was a gap for many years of investing into seniors housing. There were a couple of complexes built — I have to give credit where credit is due — but overall, there are a lot of structures, and because of those older structures, it is difficult, at times, to make sure that you keep that maintenance to a level, but we are always striving to do that, and adding things, such as security and cameras.

I look forward to question two.

Ms. White: This is just one example of many, and although I appreciate the Premier taking the matter into his own hands and solving the issue, I shouldn't have to call him every time there's an issue in Yukon Housing.

So, this isn't the first time that Yukon Housing has abandoned their tenants in an emergency. Another senior living in Yukon Housing reaching out to us, after months of begging this government, his landlord, for help. This senior is especially vulnerable, living with dementia alone.

For months, this senior was left to live in an apartment infested with bedbugs. Things got so bad that you could see them crawling on the walls. This senior was left for months to be bitten until he was covered in sores. It was truly horrific, and for all those months, the government violated its own policy that requires Yukon Housing to treat pests immediately.

Can the Premier explain why his government left a senior living in such horrific conditions for so many months?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I want to commend our staff and team dealing with these challenges. I would challenge the Third Party, whether you are saying that I am taking on

challenges and fixing those problems — you know the folks who work at Yukon Housing Corporation and there is nobody at Yukon Housing Corporation who is leaving people — I can't remember if you said "weeks and weeks" or "months" — or a senior in a situation like that. There is a process.

I don't think it is appropriate for us to go into one particular client's challenges, but I know from sitting with all of those folks throughout the summer and hearing them, case by case — what we do is that we will go in and get a sample, and if there is a situation concerning bedbugs, we then make sure that we have a process to go in and exterminate. We then go back weeks later. If individuals need help preparing their apartment for that work, we do that supportive work. It is an uncomfortable thing for anyone to have to deal with that. We don't want any clients — I don't want anyone to have to deal with that, whether it is in social housing or people we are supporting through Health and Social Services — to have to deal with that, but it is a reality, and we make sure that we are doing our very best efforts.

But I have to challenge that comment, because it's very salacious the way you have laid it out. But we are not going to be disrespectful to our clients, and we are always trying to remedy the challenges that they have.

Ms. White: So, to be clear, this isn't a criticism of those working on the ground; this is a criticism to the systems that are not responsive. The systems aren't responsive. The systems that you have built are not responsive.

Public housing should set the standard for everyone else. This government should provide safe and comfortable spaces for folks who need it. There are hundreds of tenants in Yukon Housing units — tenants who deserve respect, dignity, and a safe place to call home. But it seems that the government doesn't believe that; instead, they seem to hope that their tenants accept the terrible living conditions in Yukon Housing because they have no other options.

I will use another senior's own words about this government — and I quote: "The Housing Corporation is one of the worst landlords in the territory." Why is the government leaving Yukon Housing tenants to live in substandard living conditions?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have also sat with people who have looked at us as we sat with our team in seniors housing and said that they can't believe how lucky they are to have an incredible place to live — one of the best places they have ever had in their lives to live. They sit there and they thank the team that's in place at Yukon Housing for providing that quality of life for people. So, yes, I am sure there are different perspectives.

Bedbugs are a nuisance that can affect anyone. While bedbugs are not treated as a health emergency, we treat them seriously. We take preventive measures and have procedures in place to expedite treatment. We conduct monthly bedbug checks in common areas and take steps to mitigate future infestations through unit retrofits. When bedbugs are identified, the staff move quickly to minimize the impact on tenants and on neighbours. From time to time, some of our tenants may be affected by bedbugs. We understand that this is a stressful situation, which I have outlined. When this happens, we work

with our tenants directly to explain our treatment and prevention process.

In 2022, the corporation spent approximately \$50,000 in successful treatments and pre-treatments for 57 units. So, is this a challenge? Absolutely. Are we ensuring that we step up and respectfully treat our clients? Absolutely. That is all I have ever experienced. I think that it is a bit inappropriate to say that we are not treating our clients respectfully.

Question re: Municipal recycling program

Mr. Istchenko: Earlier this week, I asked the Minister of Community Services about the upcoming changes to the operations of Raven Recycling and the impact it would have on recycling services in the Yukon, and the minister said in his response — and I quote: “It is the municipality’s responsibility — garbage and recycling are the municipality’s responsibility in the territory — and that is where this service lies.”

We note that the change in Raven’s operations will occur in the current budget year. So, how much money is the minister investing to support the City of Whitehorse to manage the upcoming closure of Raven Recycling’s public drop-off?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Really, what we are talking about this afternoon, in the broadest terms, is our ability to handle the garbage, the waste, that this territory is producing. Every one of us is producing more and more and more garbage and recycling — the whole bit. So, we are looking for solutions, and that is what we are doing throughout rural Yukon, with the work that my colleague, the Member for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, started before I came into this role, and this is the work that I am continuing.

We want to make sure that we have modern facilities across the territory to handle the amount of garbage that we are producing, and that they are supervised, and that those sites are well-managed. We also want to make sure that we divert recycling from our landfills and into a recycling system that works really, really well. We are seeing that in Watson Lake; we are seeing that in Dawson; and now, with Raven’s decision, we are going to start to see that in Whitehorse, and we are going to work with the City of Whitehorse and with Raven to make sure that we have a robust curbside, or some sort of recycling, system in Whitehorse that will hopefully take over — where Raven has done amazing work for the last 30 years — take over from what they have built and make it better.

Mr. Istchenko: For those listening, I had actually asked the minister how much he was investing to support the City of Whitehorse to manage the upcoming closure of Raven Recycling. So, earlier this week, it was noted by the City of Whitehorse official in local media that the city and the Government of Yukon are working toward a possible development of a municipal blue bin program. This is what the minister said on Tuesday — and I quote: “This is not just about funding; rather, the board is wanting to shift responsibility for collection services away from the not-for-profit and toward the municipality.” So, in Whitehorse, there is currently a popular blue bin service operated by a private sector company. Has the minister included this operator in the consultations about their plans to develop a municipal blue bin program in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I’ll repeat part of my answer from just the other day. This is not about funding. Rather, the board of Raven Recycling is wanting to shift responsibility for collection services away from the not-for-profit and toward the municipality in anticipation of an extended producer responsibility program and a growing population, which is out-pacing the capacity of a small, volunteer-run organization. That’s the position of Raven.

I’ve had two conversations with Raven — one with the City of Whitehorse and one just with Raven itself. They were really excellent conversations with the board of Raven. I’m going to continue to have those conversations. We are going to consult and find out how recycling works in the City of Whitehorse because, quite frankly, at the moment, it’s being run by a not-for-profit agency, and we have to find out how that works.

The Raven Recycling facility is not-for-profit, and so, the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon government, and Raven are going to sit down and dive in to how recycling is handled in the City of Whitehorse. We are going to have this recycling committee working on this problem going forward, so that we have 10 months to come up with a plan that will satisfy Raven’s exit from the whole system and, of course, there are a lot — there’s P&M, there’s Blue Bin Recycling — and they will all be part of the conversation, too.

Mr. Istchenko: In his final response on Tuesday, the minister mentioned the impact on other municipalities, and he said — and I quote: “We, at the Yukon government, are working with our municipalities across the territory. Dawson is going to be moving into the recycling realm in the next couple of months, so we are going to now help Whitehorse to do the exact same thing.” So, can the minister tell us what the impact of these changes in the recycling system will mean for the municipalities in rural communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really appreciate the obvious care and attention that the Member for Klwane is paying to my answers in this House. That is gratifying to know that they are listening.

As far as working on recycling here in rural Yukon, what Raven Recycling is talking about is ending their drop-off program for Whitehorse residents. They are still going to be taking all the recycling from the municipalities that they currently do. Their focus is to make sure that we have a circular recycling system here. They want to make sure — right now, they believe they have taken the drop-off system as far as it can go, and we’re not hitting enough people, from Raven Recycling’s point of view. They think it’s about 30 to 40 percent of the recycling that they are collecting through drop-off. They want that expanded. They want to divert more recycling waste out of the landfill and get it into the proper channels, and they don’t feel they can do that anymore with a drop-off system. So, now they’re asking for us to make the system more robust and so we capture more people.

They feel that a curbside system is the way to go, and that’s what they are asking for. As far as the rest of the recycling waste from the municipalities, that won’t be affected.

Question re: Psychology profession regulation

Ms. Clarke: Access to mental health services in the Yukon continues to be a concern for many Yukoners. One current challenge facing Yukoners is the lack of regulation of psychological services. The minister has previously made commitments about this, so we would like to request an update.

What is the current timeline for the regulation of psychology in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to come back to psychologists and their oversight.

So, we are, as I have said before, committed to developing regulations for psychologists. The department has rolled out a public awareness webpage on how to select a psychologist. This site includes a voluntary list of psychologists practising in the Yukon, indicating who either holds a valid licence in another Canadian jurisdiction or is eligible to do so.

Officials will continue to work on this with the profession in the Yukon over the coming months. Longer term, the department is also leading a comprehensive review of the *Health Professions Act* to support enhanced standards and safety of health care for Yukoners with the aim of improving the overall efficiencies for the regulatory system.

Ms. Clarke: On the Government of Yukon's professional licensing website, there is a section about psychology. It includes a section called "Finding a therapist". It notes that, while there is no official list of psychologists, there is a voluntary list. It is notable that, as of this morning, there were no names on the voluntary list.

Can the minister tell us who is eligible to be included on the voluntary list of psychologists on the Yukon government website?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said in my last response, the voluntary list will indicate who holds either a valid licence in another Canadian jurisdiction or is eligible to do so.

Ms. Clarke: I have previously asked why the minister cannot make an agreement with another jurisdiction like the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have done with Alberta.

In the case of NWT, the government there simply adapted the standards of practice from Alberta and used them as their own. This allowed the NWT to announce that it was regulating psychology last August.

The minister has previously told us that this is not possible in the Yukon because of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. Can the minister explain what provision in the CFTA prevents Yukon from adapting the standards and regulations from another jurisdiction and using them here in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What I will say this afternoon on the floor of the Legislature is that I have met psychologists on several occasions. I understand their concerns. I am working very, very hard to make sure that the psychologists that Yukoners have access to are licensed in other jurisdictions and that the safety of the patients — and safeguarding the reputation of psychologists — is maintained. Those are my goals. I have heard that from the psychologists in the Yukon, and that is the road that we are on — to make sure that Yukoners seeking psychological help are protected and that the profession itself is protected and maintains its stature in society. I am going to

make sure that happens. I am continuing that work, and I am going to continue to do that work until it's done.

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 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

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: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 207: *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Department of Education — *continued*

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the opportunity to continue our conversations on Education in the supplementary estimates here today. I welcome back the officials who were here the last time we had Education on the floor.

We spent the majority of our time last time talking about the Hidden Valley Elementary School and the supports. I am just hoping that the minister will be able to get us a copy of that response to that open letter. I think that will clarify many of the questions that I had around the vice principal position and the counsellor position that was requested, both on two-year terms, by the school council.

I do want to move to a couple of questions regarding the capital budget in the supplementary estimates. The first one is with respect to the Ross River remediation. The budget shows that there is an additional \$2.337 million added to the \$2 million that was in the main estimates from the 2022-23 budget, bringing it up to \$4.337 million. I am wondering if the

minister can give us an idea on how much has been invested in the Ross River School remediation so far and how much is left to be invested in that project.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Ross River School remediation project — the anticipated total cost — what we are asking for in the supplementary — first, I will start there — for the 2022-23 year is \$2.337 million. That brings the total, including the supplement, for the 2022-23 year to — so, that adds into the \$4.337 million. So, the total anticipated cost is \$6.23 million for the Ross River School remediation.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to be clear. Is that the total cost — because I know that this line item has been included in a number of budgets over the past number of years. I think, even going back to before the last election, when the previous minister was in place. Is this \$6.23 million — that will be the entire cost, historical and going forward, including the \$4.337 million for this year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, the Ross River School remediation project has been an ongoing project. The work that is underway right now — maybe I will just talk a little bit about that. We are currently building a re-leveling system at the school that will mitigate the effects of further permafrost deterioration. We are also building a new modular mechanical room to replace the existing mechanical plant. The heat emitted from the mechanical plant was contributing to the deterioration of the permafrost under the school. Work for both of these projects is currently underway and scheduled to be completed this fiscal year.

On the remediation, to answer this specific question, at this point, that is the total anticipated cost for this type of work with the Ross River remediation.

Mr. Kent: Okay, between now and when we have Education back in the mains, I will take a look back at some of the previous budgets and go from there, and we will revisit it, if possible.

Just one more quick question, then, on the Ross River School remediation: When is it scheduled to be completed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The latest information that I have is that it will be completed in spring of this year, and if there are any further changes or any adjustments to that, we will be certain to let members know.

Mr. Kent: Again, I will circle back on that one when we get back to the mains, because I think there was some money in looking forward — into years out — and I think that was in the briefing documents provided by the department with respect to the mains. So, I will regroup on that with the minister when we are back for mains debate later on in this Sitting.

I do want to ask a question with respect to the Whistle Bend school, which is another project that is in the supplementary estimates from the capital side. So, 2022-23, voted to date was \$25.18 million; the supplementary estimates reduce that by \$2 million. The explanation that we received from the officials at the briefing is that amount — that \$2 million — is a deferral to 2023-24 to reflect updated cash-flow forecast and project timing.

So, I am just looking for some clarification from the minister — if she is able to give us what the overall budget is

for the Whistle Bend Elementary School, and if there has been — what the project timing changes are that are reflected in this reduction in the amount that is in the supplementary estimates.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Whistle Bend school is a key investment, with construction scheduled to be completed during the 2023-24 school year. A total of \$42.8 million is part of the design/build contract, which was awarded to Ketz Construction Corporation. The 2023-24 main estimates include \$20.3 million for construction of the school, with a total capital required budget of \$52.8 million. That would be for the fit-up. Because this is a brand new school, it will include furnishings and other equipment needed for the start-up of a brand new school.

Mr. Kent: The minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe she said that the design/build construction contract was \$42.8 million. Have there been any change orders associated with that, or is that the amount it is — or is this a question better directed to the Minister of Highways and Public Works?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this is a key investment for our government in school infrastructure. The most recent notes that I have from Highways and Public Works is the same as what I have just reported: that the Ketz Construction Corporation contract awarded was for \$42.8 million. The contract amount reflects increased costs for building materials, such as lumber and steel. The design/build contract was a value-driven procurement. Value-driven procurements help ensure that the project brings as much value as possible to the community and territory.

In this case, the winning bidder earned points for their schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation.

I had noted earlier in this Sitting that I had the opportunity to have a first-hand look at the work that is being done at Whistle Bend, and it is coming along very well. The folks who are working on that jobsite are primarily Yukoners, from subcontractors to the main construction staff. It's really a work of pride, and folks took a lot of enjoyment in showing off the work that is happening there. I really look forward to providing opportunities for others in the Legislative Assembly, when the time comes, to come and have a look at the progress that is happening in this new school.

Perhaps if there are other questions regarding any types of changes to the contracts, if that is the primary point of your question, they can be taken up with the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I will follow up with either the Minister of Education or have my colleague follow up with the Minister of Highways and Public Works, as appropriate, on that project.

I do want to touch on a few other items before I either turn it over to the Third Party or we close out Education debate. The first one is with respect to the Child Development Centre and the renovation costs, as well as demolition costs for what was their space over in Riverdale, which was attached to the Department of Education building.

I think we know that the Child Development Centre will be moving into the downtown area on Hanson Street. I am just curious if the minister could give us a sense of how much the renovation costs are for that space they are moving into, when it's expected to be done, and when occupancy for the Child Development Centre will occur?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'll take a little bit of time, probably, to answer this, because it's an important project and key partnership that we have between the — Education, as well as Health and Social Services, work very collaboratively with partners, such as the Child Development Centre, to improve ways to provide the best services and supports for Yukon children and family. We certainly appreciate the work that the Child Development Centre has done and acknowledge the disruption, for sure, as a result of having to move from their previous building.

In terms of funding, in 2022-23, we provided approximately \$3.4 million in operational funding to CDC. In 2023-24, we will provide approximately \$4.3 million in funding. The additional funding will enable the CDC to provide additional supports to Yukon families, address the waiting list, and move forward with their renewal plans.

In terms of the space that they are moving into, the Child Development Centre — and, again, I'll go into a little bit more description of this — is temporarily located out of three spaces on Waterfront Place, Industrial Road, and Alexander Street until their new space is ready. As of December 2022, the CDC had moved from the Copper Ridge Place — I know that was a previous question — and into temporary locations, as I've listed. It is anticipated that the CDC will move into their new space, and I haven't talked very clearly or openly about where the space is, because I really believe that it's their announcement to make and one that will certainly have — we've partnered with them — we will be part of and will ensure that they have their day, because it will be a very celebratory moment for them to get all of their folks back into one location.

So, the total cost of fit-up and furnishings is \$2.685 million. The renovations — the original request was lower than what we have landed on now. The revised request for the renovation is \$2.56 million for the increased space of almost 11,000 square feet of space that they are now renovating. The lease cost for the first three years is just over \$500,000. We are providing this funding to them because, as I have stated, their partnership is really important to Yukon government. They provide a very specific, well-needed, and well-run support for our youngest Yukoners.

The renovation fit-up cost is a one-time expense, whereas the lease cost is an annual expense, and the lease will increase annually at a rate of 2.5 percent, starting in year 4. The original estimates increased due to the construction cost and more space becoming available in the location that they are renovating right now.

Just to recap, in 2022, we provided \$3.4 million in operational funding for CDC, and in 2023-24, we will provide approximately \$4.3 million in funding. We have provided that support of \$2.56 million for the renovation cost of the building.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response and the numbers that she was able to give us here this afternoon. Just, sort of, the second half of that question was with respect to demolition of the previous facility that they occupied in Riverdale, attached to the Department of Education building. Is that planned for the upcoming year? Would it be in the Department of Education budget, or would we find it in the Highways and Public Works budget?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask the member to direct those questions to the Minister of Highways and Public Works during the mains debate.

Mr. Kent: We will do that.

I did want to touch on one of the program areas that the Department of Education is responsible for. This was a question that I had asked the minister during Question Period earlier on in this Sitting with respect to the literacy programming and literacy teachings in our schools.

During that question, I did note that the First Nation School Board was moving away from the literacy programming that they inherited from the department and moving into a new system, which is known as the Science of Reading, which teaches kids to decode new words by sounding them out. In the minister's response, she mentioned that the Department of Education has recently launched a literacy strategy working group to develop culturally responsive literacy programming in schools. This working group will make research- and data-informed recommendations for a Yukon culturally responsive literacy strategy.

I wanted to explore that working group a little bit with the minister. Is she able to tell us — if she can't tell us what individuals are on it, that's all right, but what groups are represented on the literacy strategy working group, and will their meeting minutes be public, and when did they last meet, and when do they plan to meet again?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Department of Education is very committed to literacy proficiencies for Yukon students. Literacy skills are, of course, a key component of student success. Addressing student literacy needs is very complex, and we support the use of multiple approaches to literacy instruction to address the many factors that influence student literacy outcomes.

Our goal is to use the approach that best suits a student's individual needs. This can include a combination of balanced literacy approaches and structured, evidence-based approaches. We support, and will work with, the First Nation School Board to implement its recently announced literacy plan. Yukon Education uses a number of intervention tools to help close the gap for struggling readers, including Reading Recovery, Wilson Reading System strategies. I know the question is specifically about the new working group. The Department of Education recently created a literacy strategy working group to develop a longer term strategy for developing culturally responsive literacy programs in schools. This working group includes representatives from the Department of Education and Yukon First Nation partners in education, and there are other stakeholders that are working on this. There is also a numeracy working group.

These working groups will ultimately make recommendations for a culturally responsive literacy and numeracy strategy for Yukon that is informed by the best available research and data. I will get back to the member opposite on the specific stakeholders that are part of this group that I know, for sure, include representatives from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. Then, of course, there are Department of Education staff, including educators and administrators — and are actively recruiting right now Yukon First Nation members from specific First Nation governments as well. I will return that information with the specific organizations that are represented on these two working groups. I will return both of those.

Mr. Kent: So, with respect to this moving — I know that the minister is aware of — and I have referenced it a number of times in the Legislature — the letter that was written by the Yukon Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Association to the chair of Public Accounts immediately ahead of the Public Accounts Committee holding a subsequent hearing on the 2019 Auditor General's report.

We have seen the First Nation School Board move away from what they had said — the inherited literacy programs to these new science- or evidence-based instructions. I didn't get a chance to do this in Question Period when I asked, but I did want to quote from a February 17 *Yukon News* article, entitled, "First Nation School Board refurbishes reading rules", with the subtitle, "Changes to how reading is taught will begin next year."

In that article, it says — and I quote: "Last year, the Ontario Human Rights Commission reported that children were being denied their 'right to read' by the school system's ineffective instruction, finding it responsible for the huge demand in disability assessments and reporting one-third of students graduate lacking the literacy levels required to perform in the professional world."

It goes on to say: "It blamed balanced literacy and its hands-off approach for the systemic failure, urging the province to pick up 'evidence-based' phonemic instruction."

It sounds to me like the minister, in Question Period and again today, said that the department will use a multi-faceted approach to literacy, using — I think in Question Period she mentioned Reading Recovery and Wilson. But just to be clear here today, I just want to make sure that some of the newer programs that are being adopted by the First Nation School Board — schools that aren't governed by the First Nation School Board and are still the responsibility of the Department of Education will be able to adapt these new literacy programs as well.

Hon. Ms. McLean: This new working group on literacy and numeracy — we have two of them working right now. The department has launched these two developed culturally responsive literacy programs in schools. This working group will make researched and data-informed recommendations for our culturally responsive literacy strategy. Of course, we will be looking at all forms and methods — I suppose that is probably the best way to describe it. When they are making these recommendations, they will be looking at all of the

various tools that are available to develop the best approach for Yukon schools.

Mr. Kent: I will leave the literacy programming for now and we will probably have some follow-up questions for the minister when we get into the debate on the main estimates later on in the Sitting.

One of the other items that I wanted to ask about is the department's *Yukon Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Pandemic Recovery Plan: Guidelines for Schools during 2022-24 recovery*, and it was published on October 18, 2022. Obviously, it spans a number of budgets. There is some direction in here. It is just a little over a 30-page document, including the appendices. I am wondering if the minister can tell us the amount of resources assigned to the education recovery plan. I have read through it and had a look at it, but is there a specific amount of money attached to this for schools to access so that they can begin the pandemic recovery?

Obviously, many schools and many students were affected, going back to 2020. They never returned to class after spring break that year so I am sure that a portion of the next year was dedicated to catching up from the end of the 2019-20 school year. Then, of course, there were issues right through to last school year, with some schools having to close down because of COVID-19 issues affecting either students or staff, or both.

If the minister doesn't have the number here, I will revisit it when we talk about the mains, but I am just curious if there are any resources assigned to this recovery plan.

Hon. Ms. McLean: A key commitment — we are committed to providing all students with the supports they need for their individual recovery. We recognize that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have not been the same for all students. For some, learning has been lost. For others, mental health and well-being has been negatively impacted. Educators are using this two-year pandemic recovery plan to support learners. The plan focuses on key priorities, including inclusive and special education, mental health and wellness, numeracy, literacy, and core competencies. To understand a student's overall needs, we need to look at them academically, culturally, emotionally and physically. It's important that educators continue to meet learners where they are at and to provide students with tailored supports.

The recovery plan continues work on RISE — reimagining inclusive and special education — implementing recommendations from the 2019 audit, decolonizing the Department of Education, and implementing the safer schools action plan.

As I have stated, the Department of Education recently launched a culturally responsive literacy strategy working group, and as well, the numeracy working group. All of this work will support recovery for Yukon's students.

In 2022-23, we did have an additional \$400,000 for mental health that went into a number of initiatives including the Ready-to-Learn and other specific initiatives under the reimagining inclusive and special education. This year, at the beginning of 2023, we will have an additional support for mental health and wellness for Yukon students in school — an amount of \$500,000. There will be additional mental health

dollars held by the Executive Council Office under youth mental health for additional dollars that can be raised with the Premier — that would be under his control.

Again, reimagining inclusive and special education is a very key initiative. We are working with our partners and stakeholders to reimagine and create schools that are safe and inclusive, that build upon student strengths, and that ensure that every child feels connected and supported to thrive. This includes developing a comprehensive mental health and well-being approach that aligns with the Yukon mental health strategy. The approach will include prevention as well as developmental and clinical responses and will create connections to mental health and well-being activities provided by partners and stakeholders. Since last summer, we have been advancing initiatives in the work plan developed in partnership with the First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education — key initiatives launched this last fall.

I think it's important to — and maybe we get into that here, but there were some additional dollars taken out of that \$400,000 last year and put toward specifically ensuring that we address the backlog of assessments of children. There was \$150,000 that was out toward that, and I can speak a bit more about that if folks would like me to.

A key initiative that was launched in this last fall of 2022 was the 'ready-to-learn-schools' on the ground-breaking work by Dr. Bruce Perry on the neurosequential model. The program is grounded in the understanding that children can only learn when they feel safe and calm. The model trains teachers and staff to be developmentally responsive, to recognize that a child's cognitive age may not always match their emotional, cognitive, or social age. Most importantly, it helps educators understand how trauma and stress impacts brain development functioning and learning. I talk about this often, because I think that it is such a game changer for our students.

As I have said previously, there are a number of schools that are already piloting. It started off at Takhini Elementary, where it was first piloted, and now, this school year, it is moving forward at schools operated by Education and the First Nation School Board, being Jack Hulland Elementary, Grey Mountain Primary, Selkirk Elementary School, St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction, and Nelna Bessie John School in Beaver Creek. We have pre-engagement happening right now with Robert Service School in Dawson City. We are working, actually, with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in under the section 17.7 provisions, to work toward having this considered in their school in their traditional territory. This includes a contract with two professionals; that is part of the \$400,000 that was allocated for last year. We are continuing on this year, and we will continue to make those types of investments.

A lot of the work that we are doing under inclusive and special education — some of it is new dollars. A lot of it is part of our existing budgets, and we are finding the resources, for the most part, from within. So, it is very difficult to — but we can try to break it down more, and we will endeavour to bring back more details around that specific breakdown, in relation to the two-year recovery strategy.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response.

I am going to move on to the 2023 confidence and supply agreement that was signed between the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon NDP caucus.

Section 2.2 deals with education. There are seven different items in there. I think that, in her previous response, the minister mentioned that the additional annual investment of \$1 million for mental health outcomes for youth would reside in the Executive Council Office budget. I just wanted to confirm that with her with respect to that particular commitment in the plan.

One of the other commitments that has a price tag is an additional \$1 million in each of the next three budgets to enhance recruitment and retention of new rural education professionals across the Yukon. Those are the only two items that are costed out.

Recognizing, of course, that the minister probably won't have the numbers with her here today, I am hoping that, when we return to Education debate in the main estimates, she will perhaps be able to provide us with a cost estimate for the remaining commitments in the 2023 CASA, as well as a timeline for implementation of those initiatives with respect to Education. Obviously, there are a number of other initiatives in here, but I am focusing on the policy initiatives around Education. If the minister has those numbers and the schedule now, that would be great, but if she doesn't, I am just looking for a commitment that she will have them when we return to the Education debate in the main estimates, and if we don't get a chance, if she could provide that to us in writing.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The 2023 confidence and supply agreement sets out the new relationship between the Yukon Liberal caucus and the Yukon New Democratic Party caucus, founded on the principle of good faith and no surprises, in order to improve the lives of Yukoners. The opposition New Democratic Party shares the Yukon government's desire to improve Yukon's education system, and to this end, the new confidence and supply agreement contains several specific actions for Department of Education and identifies funding commitments over the next three budgets.

These actions include support for recruitment and retention of rural education professionals; increased allocation of educational assistants, learning assistants, and teachers; service standard of six months from the time of referral for completed psychoeducational assessments; providing a one-year training plan for educational assistants and teachers on call; and create dedicated wellness counsellors, or a similar position.

Some of this work is already underway, under reimagining inclusive and special education initiatives. The Department of Education is reaching out to organizations — we have already done that — directly involved in work around these commitments to initiate broader conversations. Letters have been sent out to Autism Yukon, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and Yukon Association of Education Professionals with regard to the commitment to provide a one-year training plan program for educational assistants and teachers on call.

In terms of — again, this involves a number of stakeholders and partners who we are working with to really fully form the approaches here. One of the key areas — as I have talked about already today — but we, of course, take the mental wellness of students seriously, particularly as we move forward from the pandemic, and we are continually assessing the needs of students. The Department of Education is developing a comprehensive mental health and wellness approach. This is an important part of the overall work we are doing to reimagine inclusive and special education. Our mental health and wellness approach will include prevention and promotion of positive mental health, as well as intervention supports and responses, in and out of school.

The approach will be developmentally and culturally responsive. It will align with the Yukon mental health strategy and be guided by the recommendations from the Yukon Youth Calls to Action from the 2022 Yukon Youth Summit, which brings forward important perspectives from youth on supports that work for them.

I will note, in that work that's happening, the youth are working toward a summit for the third week in April. I met with them recently. They are talking about their whole-of-Yukon strategy, which is very similar to how the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls strategy was done. They expect to have a draft of that strategy to bring to youth at the summit and will bring more insight into further calls to action. We are striving, of course, to create stronger connections to mental health and well-being supports and resources provided in communities by partners and stakeholders in the schools.

The department is also looking, as part of the CASA, based on what we hear from our schools — we're working to create wellness positions, or something similar to wellness coordinators. We are not sure, yet, what that will look like. I think every school will be quite unique. This is a key commitment, as part of the CASA, and in alignment with what we are doing in inclusive and special education to meet the mental health needs of students.

We know for sure that it requires flexibility and diversity in approach, including raising awareness of how to support mental well-being for all students. We are looking at approaches from inclusive and culturally appropriate programs to target services for acute mental health challenges, including clinical counselors. Clinical counselling support is really important; however, it is only one aspect of the comprehensive mental health approach we take in schools.

In terms of the specific numbers and timelines, again, we are working very closely with our partners on the responses here and ensuring that we are hearing all the voices that need to be heard.

One of the areas where we have had a lot of focus on is the formal assessments. We are developing criteria around prioritizing assessments and ensuring students' learning needs are being addressed. The length of time to perform an assessment is dependent on the complexity, of course, of the student's needs, the nature of the assessment needs, and the schedule of professionals administering the assessment.

If an assessment is needed, we will make sure that it is done within the six months. If this work cannot be done by the department, we will be contracting this work out or will reimburse parents for the assessments done privately. In 2022, we have allocated \$150,000 to outsource additional assessments. We have contracts in place to do this work.

Again, I can return with more information — or I am sure, as the session progresses or we get into the mains, we will be able to talk more about some of the details, and perhaps we will have more details when we get to that debate.

Mr. Kent: Yes, when we get further on into the session and into the mains debate, I will go through these items one by one, and hopefully get a better idea on the costs to implement them and when they will be implemented.

I just wanted to conclude my questioning here today with a constituency question with respect to the soccer field at Golden Horn Elementary School. The school is located just outside of Whitehorse city limits. It is in my riding, but the attendance area serves students in Copperbelt South, which is my riding, as well as the riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. The challenge with the soccer field is that the school is on water delivery. There is no well there, and it's in very bad shape. There is little to no grass on it, and it's essentially not usable for the school community. It would be an asset, as well, for the broader communities, not only my riding, but as well, as I mentioned, for the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

I did flag this at the briefing with the officials the other day, but I am just hopeful that perhaps the minister or senior officials — I know that some of the capital works folks have been out to talk to the school council and administration about it, but I'm hoping that, as we approach spring here, maybe in May, or even before school ends in June, the minister or her senior officials could go out and take a look. It will give a better idea of what kind of shape that field is in, and hopefully, from there, work with the school council, administration, and others in the broader community to take a look at how to make it a more serviceable field for the students and the residents who live in and around Golden Horn.

So this isn't looking for a specific commitment other than to go out and take a look and see for themselves how poor it is and then, perhaps, come up with some sort of a timeline to repair or rehabilitate that field so that it's usable by the students and the broader community. With that, I thank the officials and the minister for her time here, and that concludes my questions.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for bringing that question forward and we are certainly aware. We will continue to work with the school council and Highways and Public Works, of course, on this matter, and I will personally commit to going out to have a look at the field along with the deputy minister, and, of course, we will continue to work with the school council and the school community.

Ms. White: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and welcome to the officials, of course — and the opportunity to talk to the minister about the supplementary budget. I just wanted to go back to part of the conversation that was held on March 14 when my colleague was asking about Hidden Valley school and

supports, and the minister indicated that a learning assistance teacher with a specific focus on autism is supporting program planning, IEP inclusion within the school community, and ongoing communications. So, I was hoping that the minister could expand on that. From my understanding, Hidden Valley has a neurodiversity room that has been very successful with the support of that learning assistance teacher.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Going back to the audit of 2019 — I go back there often because it's part of my daily work and, really, addressing the needs that were pointed out — and, of course, also the report on the review on inclusive and special education and also the review on the situation at Hidden Valley, which led to the safer schools action plan.

There is certainly a growing need for specialized programming support to students with autism spectrum across the territory. We are continuing with the efforts to put the right types of supports in place. The autism specialist is an itinerant teacher for autism who is responsible for determining the direct needs of all Yukon educators for further professional development in the area of support for students on the autism spectrum.

As part of our direct supports to the Hidden Valley community — I am changing back and forth between notes. Sorry, folks. This is something I did speak about in the most recent discussion around Hidden Valley.

The additional learning assistance teacher, with a specific focus on neurodiversity, is supporting program planning, IEPs inclusion with the school community, and ongoing communication, of course, with families. This is an additional support that is located at Hidden Valley, with a specific focus on autism. Yes, I have been out to Hidden Valley and have had a chance to look at the room that they have constructed there under that guidance, along with Autism Yukon as well, using their expertise to design a space that works. As I have indicated, I have had some discussions with families that have their children at Hidden Valley, and they have told me that their child is doing much better this year, and I am so relieved to hear those direct stories. We also, under the safer schools action plan, have put in place a parent advisory committee.

That is one of the actions that we had committed to in that action plan, and we have had the committee work directly with us on these types of approaches in schools. We still have more work, of course, to be done, but this is a commitment and additional support that is made available right now to Hidden Valley.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that.

Just to follow up on something that was just said. She said that it was made available right now. What I want to know is if the program that has been started at Hidden Valley, with that learning assistance teacher supporting the neurodiversity room, will be continued. I want to know that it is not just a pilot project — that it is going to be embedded into the school community and that they will have access to that specific teacher for that specific program — or the specific position for that specific program.

Hon. Ms. McLean: This specific resource that is now at Hidden Valley will remain.

Referring back to the other larger program around the teacher who would move around in schools — it is still a project that is underway. We will continue to work toward that broader program for Yukon.

It goes back, I think, to all of the work that we are doing to reimagine inclusive and special education, and putting in place the right supports for school communities. They are not all equal. There are different needs, I think, in all of our various schools that we are operating — again, working closely, of course, with our partners, with the Francophone School Board and the First Nation School Board as well, in looking at how we can collaborate and work together around various approaches to support students.

Ms. White: I do appreciate the answer. Just to make sure that I hone in and fully understand, I was just asking if the program was going to continue. I just got the nod from the minister that the program is going to continue.

One of the things I have heard from families who have children participating in that room is how successful it has been, how they have been showing off the room, and how they have been showing off the program. One question that we are getting from other parents is: When we are going to see this program mirrored and these rooms mirrored in other schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The work under RISE — and if you hear me talk about it often, it's because it has been a really major focus within the Department of Education. These are exactly the initiatives that we are testing in some schools, looking at different approaches. Yes, this is an area that we are looking at with all schools to ensure that these spaces are made available, that they are safe, and that we are not practising practices of the past by putting children with diverse learning needs in other places, unless it's for these types of supportive and nurturing environments. So, this is definitely work that is being undertaken by RISE.

I will, of course, be continuing to talk about it because it is a major focus of our work at the Department of Education. As we delve deeper into the implementation of the Ready-to-Learn program in schools, we will see more and more recommendations that will not just be recommendations; they will be put into action to ensure that we are meeting the needs of students in all of our schools.

There are specific working groups and communities of inquiry that have been working for some time. We will start seeing more and more of the recommendations coming forward to begin implementing as soon as we can. Of course, we are looking forward to the start of the 2023-24 school year when we will see a lot more of these recommendations coming into reality.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am just looking for clarity. The minister keeps referencing RISE — reimaging inclusive and special education. Are there any programs right now that are in schools? Has RISE gone into schools? What have they done in schools? What schools have they gone into? Is it on the ground right now, or are we still talking about developing programming with that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Maybe I will just go a little bit further into Ready-to-Learn because that is a program that is in

schools right now that we piloted. It was a pilot from a community of inquiry from the Takhini Elementary School. The Ready-to-Learn Schools program was introduced by staff at Takhini and is being introduced in schools across the Yukon. The Ready-to-Learn program has been implemented at Takhini, Selkirk, and the Nelna Bessie John School in the White River area.

This school year, we are moving forward at Jack Hulland Elementary, Grey Mountain Primary, Selkirk Elementary School, St. Elias in Haines Junction, and Nelna Bessie John School in Beaver Creek. The pre-engagement work has begun at Del Van Gorder in Faro and Robert Service in Dawson. The responsive instructors' approach will eventually be implemented in all Yukon schools. The pre-engagement includes, of course, as I mentioned a little bit earlier, working with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, as they have a unique agreement under section 17.7 of their self-government agreement.

Communications and training are ongoing there. Ready-to-Learn trains teachers and staff to be developmentally responsive and to recognize the uniqueness of every child. I won't go through that descriptor again, but that is a real example of an outcome of RISE.

Communities of inquiry — there were eight; two of them were collapsed into each other, so they include engagement with community to co-construct definitions of inclusive and special education in Yukon and create a vision of inclusive classroom, which includes elders and knowledge-keepers. The recommendation received so far is the vision statement of inclusive classroom definition and key elements developed — we're identifying policy issues now — compile and collaboratively review policies and procedures that — this is the number 2, sorry, community of inquiry — to compile and collaboratively review policies and procedures that relate to inclusive and special education; purposefully and collaboratively coordinate policies to facilitate Yukon's vision of inclusive and special education.

So, some of these things had to happen before others could happen. This group was waiting on the community of inquiry number 1 before they could advance the full response in this area and develop a framework. Number 3 — explore effective, professional, collaborative development structures where educators can learn how to structure learning options that will benefit students through more inclusive classroom practices. This is still in progress. Recommendations are expected in the spring of 2023 — again, with our eye on seeing this actually happen in some of these being reflected in the 2023-24 school year.

Number 4 — establish norms for engaging across differences, and use these to shape the workplace culture at the Department of Education. Recommendations are received now, reviewing and developing a response, and looking at where this can be implemented. Again, there were two working groups here, number 5 and 6, to implement consistent, competency-based, individual education plans — the IEP templates that incorporate student voice and create accountability structures around IEPs, student learning plans, and behavioural support

plans — that was one — and then strike partnerships with First Nation governments, other government departments, and organizations to create coordinated and holistic supports for students and families. This is in progress. Recommendations are expected in the spring of 2023.

Number 2 — examine budgets, funding models, and staffing allocation to determine how they can be better aligned with student needs and action taken in response to the review. Preliminary recommendations have been received. We are currently reviewing and developing a response to those; extend the existing outdoor experiential learning programs, culture camps, and other hands-on activity as a way of teaching students with learning challenges. Preliminary recommendations have been received. We are currently reviewing and developing responses.

I think that one, in particular — I mean, there is a lot of focus throughout the Yukon right now on land-based healing, and you will see it, as well, in the priority document that we released in December on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, where land-based healing structures and facilities was an actual — that was a priority area. We have unpacked it a bit more, and some of that will be incorporated in — so, there are connections between departments — I guess that is what I am trying to say — that Health and Social Services is the primary lead on the *Putting People First*, which leads to land-based healing, which, you know, again, infrastructure and facilities are a big part of that.

I personally see Education as being a key partner in the use of those types of facilities as well, so that they can be fully utilized for the well-being of Yukoners overall, whether it be in educational programs, or healing on the land, or other initiatives, so that these facilities can be utilized year-round and be used by different user groups.

It's an area where I have certainly had a lot of experience in, and an area I am very passionate about, and I do want to see that full access by our young Yukoners to make that a way of life and have that experience from the youngest — again, as a life-long learning type of approach.

Ms. White: I have a quick question for the minister. Is the document that the minister was reading from publicly available? If so, can she let us know the title of it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Actually, this is 2023 progress report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. It was recently provided by the Department of Education on February 28, 2023, so it does go through addressing the recommendations for kindergarten through grade 12 education in Yukon and the 2019 report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

This document is a good summary and a deeper look into where all those recommendations are at. When I think about the audit — and I spent a lot of my career working outside of government, and working on audits that would happen from time to time on different topics, like child welfare or the correctional system, or others that I came directly in contact with. I would always feel, I think, a level of frustration that we wouldn't always see the change happen as the result of this

really in-depth look by the Auditor General of Canada into certain areas that were important to Yukoners.

So, I feel really proud that this has become part of our department's everyday work to respond to this and to take what we received from the Auditor General and go further and do our own reviews. So, all of those reviews really point us at the heart of where the issues are in our education system, and we're very specifically, and with a lot of intention, working toward addressing those systemic issues that are within our K to 12 education system.

So, this report gives a pretty good view of where things are at, a snapshot in time. Things change quickly, and we'll begin to see more and more results as we go forward.

Ms. White: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thanks to the minister for that. I was hoping that the minister could walk us through how a school is accredited. For example, we have the Montessori school in the City of Whitehorse, and we also have the Wild School just outside of Whitehorse city limits, but I was hoping that the minister could tell me what kind of approval those kinds of schools need to go to, to be able to operate as schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The *Education Act* defines a private school as a school, including a school operated by a religious group, other than a school operated by the minister, or a school board that offers educational programs during school days to school-aged children.

The Minister of Education is responsible for approving an application for registration of a private school and for regularly monitoring and evaluating the school. The act states that no grants or contributions shall be made to a private school by the minister, the Commissioner in Executive Council, a school board, or a council.

I can unpack that a bit more and come back with really specific steps, but it is done through an application process that is then worked through our approval systems. Ultimately, a recommendation is made to the minister to proceed, if all of the requirements have been met, but we can bring back some more specific details around that, if the member wishes.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Sure, I will take more information.

One of the things the 2019 audit did was really talk about the importance of experiential learning. It talked about hands-on learning. We have heard the minister today talk about the importance of land-based learning, so it's an interesting point. The reason why I want to bring this up is that Montessori is 100-percent experiential learning. It's very hands-on and the Wild School is wild in every part of the definition, in the fact that children are on the land for the entire school day. It's beautiful. It starts with a circle of gratitude, a land acknowledgement, grounding, and it's pretty phenomenal.

The reason why I want to ask about whether or not these private schools are recognized as schools is because there are times when families have to make decisions about what schools their children attend, whether it's a school run by the Department of Education, or the Commission scolaire, or a religious organization, or the First Nation School Board — you know, sometimes, you have to make decisions that are right for

your child. So, I just wanted to know if the minister has had a chance to tour any of these schools, specifically the Montessori or the Wild schools.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I certainly am very aware of the work that's being done at these schools. I guess I wanted to go in a couple of different directions here to talk about, first, our Yukon education curriculum. We provide all early K to 12 students with a modern curriculum that follows the best practices from across Canada and the world, and incorporates Yukon context and Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

The curriculum is designed to be student-centred with more hands-on and personalized learning opportunities, incorporating career and finance education, along with applied skills, design, and technology requirements. The concept-based and competency-driven curriculum allows for students to access deeper understanding of concepts and application of processes, as opposed to memorization of isolated information. Flexible learning environments that include space for incorporating local context and place-based learning opportunities are at the forefront of the current curriculum.

Numeracy and literacy development is designed to be integrated across the curriculum, not just in the English language, arts, and mathematics curriculum. The reason I wanted to pivot there is that we made this shift. Yukon schools began using the redesigned curriculum for K to grade 9 in 2017-18, grade 10 in 2018-19, and grades 11 and 12 in 2019-20. The redesigned curriculum is based on the BC's modernized competency-based curriculum. BC is the leading jurisdiction in Canada and the world in education, and Yukon has used BC's curriculum now for a few years, and we will continue to do so.

That is the curriculum that is required under the *Education Act* — particularly, of course, with the First Nation School Board, the CSFY, and the schools that are under the Department of Education. The changes to the curriculum are based on international research and extensive consultation with teachers and experts in education — references available on the BC ministry curriculum website.

We can see some of those years were right as COVID was happening, and things had to change pretty rapidly, so I don't think we have really seen the full extent of what can happen, and there is a lot of flexibility with this curriculum.

I am very interested in what is happening at the private schools that are operating in the Yukon. I think that one of the other notable notes is that under our quality assurance, under early learning childcare, it's a requirement to follow a certain curriculum in early learning and childcare, and we have also adopted the BC model, which is based on the Montessori model.

I am in agreement with the member opposite, for sure, on experiential learning. I focused a lot of my attention in the community of inquiry number 8, on the land-based experience, but it really is to extend existing outdoor and experiential learning programs, culture camps, and other hands-on activities as a way of teaching students with learning challenges.

So, there is a specific group really working on this. I look forward to an opportunity to visit the private schools that we

have operating. I have not received an official invite to do that, so I will seek that out, if that is the wish of — it certainly is an interest of mine, but I would seek it out specifically, if that would be a desire of the member opposite.

Ms. White: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I do thank the minister for that, and I will reach out and get her that invitation to both of those schools. The reason why, and I think it's important, because the minister just talked about goal number 8 and recognized that young people with learning challenges sometimes will do better in a different school setting.

The reason why I am bringing this up is that every Yukon student is entitled to an education. It is a founding concept in our *Education Act*, right? — that everyone deserves access to education. So, if a child starts in the Department of Education and is identified as having learning challenges, and they go through all the testing, and they go all through the evaluation process, and they are recognized as both being given an IEP or other such designation and they are recognized as requiring an educational assistant — so, an EA — it is a recognition that is what that child needs to learn. So, it doesn't matter what school they go to; they still need that support.

I appreciate that the minister talked about how no grants or no contributions to private schools — and I would say that would be to offset the cost of private schools — but what happens if a child is identified as needing an educational assistant — it is a critical thing to their learning — that it turns out that they don't function very well in mainstream education. You know, I wouldn't go so far — but I never sat still. I think I would do really well in places like the ILC. I think I would have loved the Wild School as a kid. Sometimes, those decisions, for example, to look to the ILC or to Montessori, isn't exactly an option, because if your child is slowly wilting away under the standard school system, then obviously, as a parent, you are going to look for whatever resources you can.

So, I want to know if the department has any plan on looking at the evaluation of whether or not children who have been identified as having the requirement for an EA — as to whether or not those assigned assistants — whether or not it is through the standard education process or through an alternative process — for example, with either the Montessori or the Wild School — or even a religious school — as to whether or not the department is looking at that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The *Education Act* allows for a variety of learning environments, including private schools, to suit individual student needs. Private schools charge fees for students to access programs and services offered by the school. The Yukon *Education Act* speaks to the right of students to receive an educational program appropriate to their needs and to receive an educational program outlined in an IEP when they are in need of special education programs. However, the act speaks to students attending a school operated by the minister or a school board. The Department of Education does not operate or manage private schools, nor does it provide staffing or funding to private schools.

Further, the programming of private schools is the responsibility of the school and not the department. As such, the Department of Education is not responsible for providing

support for students attending private schools, either in the Yukon or outside of the Yukon. I think that is a really key and critical piece for the member opposite to think about as well.

There are a number of Yukon students who attend private schools outside of the Yukon, and certainly those are not schools that the Department of Education operates.

So, I am sympathetic to the needs of students. I think that these are decisions that caretakers and parents are making to access private school environments. These are provisions under our Yukon *Education Act*, where we are following the law, in terms of what is expected of the Department of Education and how we support students who are under direct education within our schools and within school board-run schools as well.

I will stop there and see if the member has further questions.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that.

I am going to put this out there: We have changed lots of legislation in this House in my time, and we have some on the docket this Sitting to change, because we recognize that things need to be updated and changed to encompass what is going on. Looking at the different needs of students now, for example — from when the *Education Act* was originally passed, or even from the last time when it was really updated in 2002 — the reality is that things have changed. They just have. So, if that requires an update in legislation, I hope that the minister is open to taking a look at the legislation that guides her work, recognizing that what we are talking about is making sure that students — that children — can be as successful as possible.

I understand her point about not funding or subsidizing, but I would say that support for a student to be successful, if that support existed in the mainstream education that did not work for a student, that maybe we need to start looking at having that support follow the student. I just wanted to know if the minister was open to taking a look at her legislation to see if it's reflective of Yukon students today.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I have referenced a lot today: the 2019 audit and the final report of the review of inclusive and special education. One that I haven't cited today is the Child and Youth Advocate review of school attendance. These all tell us that we have to rethink how we are supporting students and delivering timely, effective supports for learning needs.

All the work we are doing to reimagine inclusive and special education — certainly, part of the work that these communities of inquiry are doing right now is looking at those angles and what we can do within legislation, and what we can do, potentially, with changed legislation. I think those could form some of the recommendations that are coming forward. I don't have all of the recommendations here with me today. The ones that we have received, we are working on, and we are continuing to work with the community of inquiry or the working group — another word for “community of inquiry”. It certainly could form the future work within the Department of Education, as we reimagine inclusive and special education.

You are right — we are dealing with legislation that has been in place for some 30 years. I think all legislation can benefit from review to meet the needs of the changing world

that we're in, so I look forward to those results from those communities of inquiry, and for real change to happen as a result of that work that is continuing to unfold and moving closer to really tangible results.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that response. I guess my concern is that there are students who are currently within — school-aged children — either the minister's education system or outside of the minister's education system who do not have the time to wait for the spirals of inquiry to come back to say that we need to change certain systems in order to capture all children.

The reason I bring this up is because, to be honest, there is a very clear picture of a small human in mind who is really struggling. I know that what the family is really looking for is an educational assistant so that this small human can stay in school because the school that they have chosen makes more sense for their success. They have a chance to be successful in this school, whereas they didn't — they were wilting. I don't mean to be overdramatic, but when you think of a school not working for a child, it can literally feel like death. You just wilt away.

Knowing that this family made a decision that wasn't easy — it's costly to pay out of pocket for the school — but knowing that the only recourse that they have been told by the minister's office is to put their child back in the standard education system that caused to them to wilt in the first place. The department is not there to be responsive and is not there to support their child to be successful in an education that works. I don't know what the answer is — I don't.

I would love to suggest that we can have a conversation outside of this and it could be on a case-by-case basis. But knowing that we are trying to revamp education, which I totally respect — this *Education Act* passed the first time in 1990. As the minister said, it's more than 30 years old. It's just trying to make sure that it does — we don't want to support most kids; we want to support all kids.

Luckily for most kids, they will fall under certain paths and it will be okay, but I want to make sure that we get all the kids — the ones who may need the neurodiversity room at the Hidden Valley school or those who have really done incredibly well with the trauma-informed education at Takhini Elementary that we are seeing mirrored in others — and all of these kids have the opportunity.

So, I'll leave that there because I could probably talk myself in circles right now but that won't be of benefit.

One last topic before we move on, after the announcement was made last year that École Whitehorse Elementary School would be moving to Takhini, there was a commitment that there would be an engagement with my community. I live in Takhini. So, it's really easy — if I was really good at throwing balls, I could hit Takhini Elementary from my front door. I wanted to know when my community could expect a conversation about the announcement made last year.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I have spoken a lot this week about the project advisory committee that has been formed, and it includes members of the École Whitehorse Elementary School Council, the Whitehorse Elementary School

administration, the City of Whitehorse, the Government of Yukon, the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council, and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. The project advisory committee meetings — there are several that have occurred. The advisory committee will be providing department input on key aspects of the school's planning and design, including ways that the school can help to meet the community needs in terms of functionality, cultural components, and community space.

The school community, the Takhini area residents association, Association franco-yukonnaise, the Canadian Parents for French, other relative organizations, and the general public will be encouraged to provide feedback on the project at key milestones in the design. How that will take place — let me come back to the member opposite with some specifics because, again, they have had a number of meetings, starting in October 2022, with their most recent meeting being February 6, 2023, and there have been meetings in between that.

I can bring those specific details back to the Legislature, or I can bring them directly to the member opposite as the MLA for the Takhini area. I am not sure what the preference would be.

Ms. White: I thank the minister. I would appreciate the information directly, but I also think having it tabled for the public is good.

I remember the whole conversation from the Whistle Bend community prior to the planning and the construction of the Whistle Bend school, which involved community members. I appreciate that there are meetings going on with the École Whitehorse Elementary School community, which is great, but it's going to be in our backyard. This new school that will be built will be in our backyard, so I am looking for a community consultation. I am looking for an open house where Takhini can come and learn more things about what is being planned and what that's going to look like.

I very clearly know the area where the school could go, what it looks like, and how it may affect the neighbourhood, and so people, I think, are curious. My hope is that, at some point, the Department of Education will actually have a direct conversation with the residents of Takhini so that we stop hearing it second-, third-, and even fourth-hand, and it comes directly from the department. I will just put that out there — that Takhini would really like that.

I just want to actually bounce back to Hidden Valley and the porcupine den — the neurodiversity room. When I was asking about making sure that the LAT position that the minister mentioned was there next year, it turns out that I misspoke, because what the Hidden Valley community — what the school has actually asked for — is an FTE so that it is not taking away from the teacher population. My understanding is that the request has been made to have an additional FTE at that school so that it is not a teacher having to do two things; it is just one teacher who can concentrate on the porcupine den altogether. I am just looking for confirmation that this is going to happen.

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is a specific position — it is an additional learning assistance teacher with a specific focus on neurodiversity who is supporting the school. Also, there is a

clinical counsellor who is supporting the Hidden Valley Elementary School on a two-year term. What we are doing now — and as I have stated already during this debate over the last couple of days — is that I will be working closely with the Hidden Valley administration and school community on their need for the 2023-24 year, but this again is an important resource for the school, one that has really worked and one that I am personally supportive of having continue.

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 continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate? Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$514,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$514,000 agreed to Department of Education agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a five-minute recess to give officials time to take their places?

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 before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Executive Council Office

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I first would just like to thank the officials who are here with me today: deputy minister of the Executive Council Office, Michael Hale, and director of finance in the Executive Council Office, Exilda Driscoll. Thank you to the officials for the preparation of the work — not just for the supplementary, but for the work on the main budget, which we will be debating later on in this session.

I will just start with a short synopsis and some notes around our *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*. I am pleased to introduce the supplementary budget for the Executive Council Office for the 2022-23 fiscal year. The Executive Council Office provides leadership and guidance throughout the Government of Yukon and also directly supports the Cabinet Office. Through our work, the Executive Council Office contributes to informed decision-making, strong relationships with Yukon First Nations and other governments, and the public's engagement and confidence in our government.

Here is a brief overview of the items in our supplementary budget. The Government of Yukon is committed, under Aboriginal Relations, to reconciliation and building strong relationships with First Nation and Indigenous groups. Much of the work is led by the Aboriginal Relations branch. We aim to achieve meaningful change and tangible benefits for all Yukoners through a range of environmental, economic, and social projects.

Aboriginal Relations is requesting a \$1.2-million increase in this year's supplementary budget, which is required to meet legal obligations and commitments to reconciliation with First Nations, including capacity funding for consultation and engagement, bilateral negotiations, and meeting final and self-government agreement obligations.

There are also several decreases to the Aboriginal Relations budget due to a budget transfer to Health and Social Services and a deferral of some planned activities into next fiscal. The overall increase for Aboriginal Relations in the supplementary budget is \$585,000.

Now, we will move on to the adjustments to the Corporate Programs and Intergovernmental Relations budget. This division includes many branches, including Intergovernmental Relations, the Water Board Secretariat, and the Office of the Science Advisor.

Intergovernmental Relations helps the Yukon achieve its priorities through strong intergovernmental engagement and cooperation. Intergovernmental Relations is requesting an increase of \$25,000 to account for a Red Cross donation to Hurricane Fiona recovery in eastern Canada. We are proud to support and maintain partnerships with our provincial counterparts.

The Water Board Secretariat provides, on top of this, administrative and other decision-making support to the Water Board. The Secretariat is requesting an additional \$300,000 for the 2023-24 fiscal to cover unbudgeted legal costs and additional costs associated with public hearings.

Moving on to the Office of the Science Adviser, which helps governments and organizations identify and address scientific knowledge gaps that are important to Yukoners, the Science Advisor also supports the research and innovation, while assisting the government to develop and implement scientific solutions that improve Yukoners' quality of life.

In 2020, with the support of the Government of Canada, we announced, as well, \$1 million in funding for the COVID-19 recovery research project. We supported 12 research projects that examined the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic. The projects examined themes, such as First Nation emergency response, women's livelihoods, health and well-being of Yukon educators, housing, recreation, and more. The information gathered through these research projects will inform our continued response in recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic and help us prepare for future emergency scenarios.

The budget for this research program was split evenly over two fiscal years. The \$270,000 we see in the supplementary estimates is a request to utilize unspent funding from 2021-22, as many recipients experienced project delays last year due to pandemic impacts. The funding, again, is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada, and any unspent funds will be returned.

With that, I look forward to answering any questions the members may have about the 2022-23 supplementary budget for the Executive Council Office.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to the supplementary budget today for the Department of the Executive Council Office. I have a few questions for the Premier on a range of issues, but I'll start with one that came up earlier today in the Legislature, because as the Premier noted, this supplementary budget includes an increase to the IGR of \$25,000 in support of relief for Hurricane Fiona.

The Premier may have noted that, earlier today, I tabled a motion requesting that the Yukon government consider providing \$25,000 to support the Red Cross' efforts to provide relief to the victims of the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. I would like to ask the Premier if he would be willing to provide that \$25,000 to support the Yukon Muslim Society's efforts to provide relief by providing the \$25,000 donation to the Canadian Red Cross, as is standard with these types of events in other parts of the world.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I was happy to see that motion from the Yukon Party today. Of course, we had an opportunity — I was there a few weeks back, in support of their work around this fundraiser. I commend the Muslim Association on their work. They have brought in two individuals from Windsor, Ontario, whom I had a chance to sit with. They were doing some work internally at the mosque. It really focused on calligraphy in Arabic.

I had a great opportunity to sit there with my son, and both of them, and talk about the Yukon and the support we have for the community, and had a chance to have them work. You could sit down and do a donation, which personally we did. They had drawn out different images, and you could take home with you. It was a good chance to see the vibrant culture that we are seeing now in our territory. I know that there was some early work and supports through the Economic Development community development fund toward the mosque in the community. I think it's extremely important that we are open to all cultures. It just makes our society stronger. It also provides extensive strength within the fabric of our economy as well.

I also want to share that we did take the information that was provided by the organization, and we shared that on all our social media platforms with many members of the House, plus through the Cabinet office — just giving people an opportunity to see the direct route they could take to donate to their cause.

So, what I will do is that I will sit down and take a look at how we have handled international donations through the Executive Council Office. Of course, the donation that I was speaking to in the supplementary budget was a donation into another area within the country. I just want to take a look and do the proper due diligence to see if there is any differential between some of the domestic donations we have made in Canada versus the international. I want to be able to track what those dollars have looked like. I know there was — over the last four or five years, due to significant natural disasters, we have donated internationally, and certainly will contemplate that.

I appreciate the member opposite for bringing that forward, and I will bring that information — I think what I will do is I will just reach out directly, if that is appropriate, when I have the information in place. I don't know if there is any — instead of bringing in a ministerial statement — I can certainly bring back a position from us on how we will handle the request that has been put on the table and the ideas that have been brought to the Assembly today during the supplementary budget.

Mr. Dixon: I think it has become standard practice over the last several years, when there is a natural disaster of the scale and type that we have seen in Turkey and Syria, that the Yukon government makes a \$25,000 donation to the Canadian Red Cross in support of that relief. So, I think it should be fairly standard, but I appreciate the Premier's willingness to do some due diligence and get back to us on that request.

I will move on to the confidence and supply agreement. Can the Premier confirm that the Confidence and Supply Agreement Secretariat is housed within the Executive Council Office, and if so, how many staff are in that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, the total estimated cost for the CASA, as pertains to this particular question, in the 2022-23 budget is \$281,000. Going back to the piece around personnel that would be covered — that directly correlates back to the CASA — when we look back, the agreement started in May 2021, and it was due to end in 2023 but has been extended to remain in effect through the passage of the 2025-26 mains budget. The breakdown of these costs is as follows: for personnel, the expected cost in 2022-23 is \$271,000. The actual costs for 2021-22 were \$240,000. There was short-term

personnel — about six months — in our previous budget; it was \$29,000. Concerning legislative drafting in 2021-22, it was \$7,800. So, the total was \$276,800.

As part of the agreement, we have provided three support staff and those individuals are not housed in the Executive Council Office. They work directly with the Third Party.

Concerning the question of if this is housed within Executive Council Office, no, but I just want to be very transparent and let you know that we did have an individual and they were doing some policy and planning work in the beginning — and that was the \$29,000 that I spoke to. Again, the drafting concerns any work that would be coming forward by the Third Party.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's response. I just wanted to clarify something. He said that the budget for personnel was \$271,000. Is that the amount for the three positions that are provided to the NDP?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, that is for the three positions.

Mr. Dixon: So, that would be in addition to the normal staffing that is allocated through the Yukon Legislative Assembly that all three caucuses receive. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, it is.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that. I will move on.

Last year saw the creation of a deputy-minister-led working group that was chaired by the former deputy minister responsible for the Executive Council Office in regard to the Hidden Valley Elementary School report and the action plan therein. I have a few questions about the updates on the work of that committee.

First of all, I will start by noting that, I believe, the four members of the committee are no longer with the Yukon government, so can I ask, just to confirm: Who are the four members of the Hidden Valley Elementary School deputy minister committee now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The makeup of the committee has representation from four different government departments, so it is the Executive Council Office, as the member opposite touched on, that is in the chair's position. There is the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, the Public Service Commissioner, and the Deputy Minister of Education as well. I am just taking a look to see if I can provide any additional information. That is the makeup. I can come back to the House with any other required information on some of the work that has been undertaken or is currently being undertaken by that group of government leaders.

Mr. Dixon: I note that the work plan included 23 items, and each has a different lead, so I appreciate that the ones that are not led by the Executive Council Office — I won't ask about today. I will refer my questions to the affected departments.

I note that there is a commitment — and the lead is the Executive Council Office — to update the *General Administration Manual* to reflect the most up-to-date practices regarding interdepartmental coordination for communicating publicly and establishing a schedule for future updates and reviews. Can the Premier tell us if that work has been done?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is a bit out of bounds. We have a few different items within the supplementary budget. I am comfortable with getting into some of the previous work.

I know that, during the mains, we can get into this a little bit deeper, because this is ongoing work, but I will come back. I just want to make sure, because it is such a very important issue and this work is extremely important, that I have the most accurate information. So, I will come back and we can take a look at which items led by ECO have been executed, the status of the work plan, and if there have been any changes or advancements within our timeline.

Mr. Dixon: I would just note for the Premier that the action plan was published — the date on the front page is February 18, 2022. The commitment that I asked about spanned a range of six to 12 months, which would put it within the parameters of the budget that we are currently debating today.

I appreciate that the Premier will look into that and get back to us, but perhaps I will have to raise my questions in the mains debate for the Executive Council Office. Perhaps I will just note for the Premier, in preparation for the next debate, if he could seek an update on the action items that are the responsibility of the Executive Council Office in advance of the next time that the Premier is before the Legislature for this subject area, because I know that there are a lot of folks who are very interested in that work and would like an update from the Government of Yukon on that work.

Recognizing that the Premier doesn't seem to have those notes handy, I will move on. I would like to ask briefly about the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. I noticed on December of last year that the former Premier appeared before the Senate committee remotely, I believe, but he referenced the Yukon's chapter to the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. I know that this chapter has not yet been completed.

In his speaking notes to the Senate committee, the MLA for Klondike noted that they were seeking funding from the federal government for Yukon's chapter, or for the chapters under the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. Can the Premier provide us with an update on the funding that is or is not flowing from the federal government to support Yukon's chapter in the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* is the Government of Yukon's vision for the north. A number of our government's priorities are reflected in the framework, including access to renewable and affordable energy; a safe and secure Arctic region; and investments in infrastructure that can support healthy and prosperous communities. I think that these comments are quite in line with what you are hearing from the other two Premiers, and what you have heard — we are looking at a bit of additional policy work, and I will touch on that in a second.

We will continue to work closely, again, with the federal government for the benefit of all Yukoners and Canadians. Working collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments, the federal government, and other territories is essential in developing a meaningful, long-term plan for Canada's north. Our government is engaged with the Council

of Yukon First Nations on plans separate, yet linked, in *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* partner chapter.

So, I was at the Council of Yukon First Nations this week. This was one of the topics I touched on, requesting that we come back together and have a discussion on, not just our northern policy framework, but also work around Arctic security, and that we can define a more congruent path forward.

Yes, we have continued to request just resources from Canada, but my prerogative is that it is not just about, again, policy development; it is also about some of the work that we want to do on security work. You will see in my mandate letter that we are defining a path forward that we believe should be a Yukon path forward, not just a path forward led by Canada. We think that there are a number of experts, both at the local level and the federal level — or at the national level, I should say — that can help us define some of our policy positions.

We know that Canada has made announcements around significant investments in defence in all three territories. We think about that in a number of different ways. We think that those are important to Canada and to the security and sovereignty of our country, but we also see significant economic opportunities, as the dollars are being deployed to build this infrastructure. We want to make sure that our territory and the citizens of this territory are as well-positioned as possible to ensure that they can reap the benefits in the early stage of the buildout of some of that work.

There have been conversations with the Minister of Defence. There has been a dialogue going on now — correspondence between the three northern Premiers. This year's northern Premiers conference will be taking place in Inuvik, with the potential of some time spent in Tuktoyaktuk. We dialogue together, and we have sent an invite to the Minister of Defence, which is important as well. When it comes to the dialogue with Minister LeBlanc, which is leading intergovernmental, it's the conversation saying that we need to make sure the resources are in place and we can get the policy work done, because we believe that needs to be completed.

As well, there has been some dialogue from Yukon First Nations and the Yukon First Nation organizations about doing some work on their own. From where I stand, I want to be working in collaboration on this, especially as we see what the future looks like when it comes to Arctic security. I think for anyone who saw it, there were some concerns from some of our communities in the Yukon — Dawson City or Mayo — I will report back to the House that the Minister of Defence did a great job of communicating with the chiefs of both nations, but I do think there is some extra work that has to be done in collaboration.

I just want to share a couple of other points with the House, which I think are important — just on the Arctic security piece. As the member opposite touched on, it was really around the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, but I believe it does feed into the longer conversation when it comes to Arctic security. There was a conversation about my predecessor and some of the conversation that happened in Ottawa at a hearing. As part of the Senate of Canada study on Arctic security, the Yukon government, at that time, highlighted the importance of

governments working together to build critical infrastructure and resilient communities.

We continue to engage the federal government on investments that will increase the capabilities of the armed forces in Canada's north, while providing infrastructure that supports our resilience and development. We encourage, again, federal decision-makers to come to the Yukon to expand their understanding of our geography and our people. It is essential that there are no decisions made about us without us, and that has been the conversation that has been really coming from the northern Premiers forum and in our dialog with the federal government on many of these things. We have had some post-mortem briefings on what had played out in Yukon in the last couple of weeks and continue to voice a number of things, really focused on communication strategies, protocols, engagement, and understanding, which I think are part of the policy path forward.

Working with international Arctic partners to ensure northern communities thrive is also a priority, and that is partially why we helped fund the Arctic Arts Summit last June. Something that has become quite prevalent within the circumpolar world is what would be called cultural diplomacy, and that is an opportunity around some of the cultural sharing; a chance for diplomatic representatives to get to the table. Last June, we had ambassadors represent from, essentially, all the Nordic countries here in Whitehorse, and that has built a framework that we can now use, a set of relationships, to continue to talk about some of our panarctic dialog across borders — again, which is also critical and important, as you see just today, some of the investments that are coming from Denmark and other things to ensure — for this solid geopolitical.

Just in closing, still looking to finish up the policy framework, bringing back a congruent process — new on the horizon is the Arctic security and sovereignty, and I think, when we're in the mains, we'll talk a little bit about some of the work that we are going to do here in the Yukon to define a Yukon path forward when it comes to these issues, but more specifically, around Arctic security.

Mr. Dixon: I have a very specific question about federal funding under the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. On the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada website, it notes that the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* takes an inclusive approach to the region and reflects the unique interests, priorities, and circumstances of its people. As a part of this inclusive approach, territorial partners have been invited to develop chapters to the framework that lay out their respective visions, aspirations, and priorities.

I note that Northwest Territories and Nunavut have both completed their chapters. I note that page three of the minister's briefing note is with regard to the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*.

If he wants to flip to that, he will note that the Council of Yukon First Nations has chosen to write their own chapter of the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* and that they were approved for federal funding from the federal government in June last year, and, as of this briefing note that I have, which is

September, they were still awaiting the funding agreement. It was anticipated to take 12 months, at that point. So, what I would like to ask is: What is the status of the Yukon's chapter and has Yukon sought funding under this framework as well?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The work is still underway. We think that there is some advance work that has to be completed, specifically when it comes to preparation for investment in security, and I'll have a chance to now expand on it. It is about bringing subject matter experts to the table. My hope is that we will see representation from our First Nation communities. That is part of the dialogue I will be having with First Nation leaders at the end of this month, which is part of an agenda that we have put together.

There has been a conversation from day one to ensure that Canada properly invests in the policy pages that are in front of us. The other territories are still looking to see those funds move. As far as my last dialogue with Premier Cochrane and Premier Akeegok, they have not received funds on their completed chapters. I want to see some deeper congruency with First Nation leaders and the Yukon government as we move forward on this. We have not received dollars at this point. We have some work that we want to do to contribute to the completion of the chapter, and we think that it is extremely important that Canada, which has really been at the table from the start, as a catalyst for some of this work — it was started by a co-chair — two individuals — it was Mary Simon, I believe, who led some of that work that we fed into.

To be clear on the question, we have some more work that we want to do on our chapter. We don't believe that the chapters that have been completed have received funding. We think it is important that, when all chapters are completed, we do receive funding. I do not have an update on the Council of Yukon First Nations' request, but I know that I will have an opportunity when I meet with leadership at the end of the month to get a status from them on the funds that they have requested.

Mr. Dixon: So, the minister's briefing note notes that CYFN was approved for funding from the federal government in June of last year. Can the Premier tell us how much funding has been provided to CYFN for that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, I don't think, at this particular time, but I will find out — approval may have occurred.

I don't know if any funds, again, have flowed. That was the point I was just making. In my discussions at the end of the month, I will see if that approval has led to any transfer. If they are comfortable with that number being shared, certainly I can share it, but at this time, I will find out what the status of their bilateral is with Canada — again pointing out that they are an organization outside of the Yukon government, an independent organization, but I can get a sense at that point of what the status is on their conversations.

Mr. Dixon: How much money would the Yukon government be seeking to support Yukon's chapter of the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is hypothetical. It will really depend on the completion and scope of the work of the chapter, taking into consideration some of the geopolitical changes that we have seen over the past year. I think it's prudent to ensure

that we maximize our request to Canada, but that also may contain a larger scope of work than was first contemplated. So, when that work is done and that chapter is completed, and we have had a chance to feed in from subject matter experts — not just on the original intent of this, which was around healthy, strong communities, but more about how we can properly engage on a number of items — we will have a sense of what that will look like. It might not just be a bilateral request as well. It might be a chance for us to look into a number of different areas.

We are looking at all different funding pots of dollars right now that Canada is holding, and we don't just look at it in the sense of bilateral money that was talked about at the beginning of this work as the only funding source. We believe that the critical minerals roundtables are another area that could be very important. We think that the work that could be done from an infrastructure standpoint when it comes to a grid connection to British Columbia is an important part of our Arctic policy. We believe that the work around our port is part of defining our Arctic policy. There are a number of pieces that have to be done when it comes to land planning, so it's really about maximizing the use of federal bilateral funds. That is everything from the work around the nature conservancy, the work that we're doing to enhance our funding for land planning and funding for some of the policy work on the Arctic policy, and it's about ensuring that we can engage properly to maximize our benefits on Department of National Defence spending, and it's about the critical minerals table and the early work there.

We also think it will be pending. Is it going to be to offset just our policy spend, or are we going to be looking for some of the initial funds that could be spent in some of the planning stages for some of the capital expenditures? Again, the policy page will also help us define different models that will be used. Are we going to be working with Canada or the private sector on infrastructure that could be in the north, around the Beaufort? What is the model that we are going to define as we move forward on our work around a grid connection?

We are going to be, again, meeting with First Nations. This was another discussion that was in place with CYFN and that we flagged, and we will be bringing this forward at the end of the month in the Yukon Forum and in retreat — is looking at that. So, there are a number of different areas. I think it is not just about going back and placing one budget item in front of Canada for the implementation of this work. It is about having a complete understanding of multiple sources that can come together to help you build a comprehensive approach to how you are going to implement your Arctic policy, and as well, keeping in mind that Arctic security is a priority, but also an opportunity for Yukoners, Yukon businesses, Yukon First Nation corporations, and Yukon governments as well.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 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

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, 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 \$1,180,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,180,000 agreed to

Executive Council Office agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

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 Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Department of Environment

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just like to welcome the officials to the Chamber. To my left is the Deputy Minister of Environment, Manon Moreau, and to my right is one of the Assistant Deputy Ministers of Environment, Shehnaz Ali.

I have some preliminary comments, and I anticipate moving forward with the debate or answering questions, perhaps, on Monday.

In any event, thank you, Deputy Chair. The supplementary estimates I am presenting today will result in an increase of \$947,000 to the Department of Environment's budget. These additional funds are due to an increase of nearly \$1.1 million to the operation and maintenance budget and a reduction to the capital budget of \$135,000.

Due to the diligence, advocacy, and hard work of the Department of Environment staff, these additional \$947,000 — this increase in our 2022-23 budget — is completely

recoverable through our partnership with the Government of Canada.

Deputy Chair, I want to take a moment to dive into how these additional funds will allow the department to continue critical work across the territory to protect the Yukon's environment and to create a more sustainable territory for us all to call home.

This increase to the 2022-23 supplementary estimates includes \$450,000 in funding for wood bison monitoring, completely recoverable through the federal government's enhanced nature legacy fund, which is helping us better monitor and manage this important species at risk. The increase includes over \$380,000 to further support the implementation of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* to conduct wildlife research projects in the Yukon's North Slope, including Porcupine caribou research and monitoring. This agreement also supports seasonal operations at Herschel Island, also known as Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park.

Deputy Chair, \$150,000 is also included in aid of the development of flood maps for the communities across the territory. Over the next 10 years, the Yukon government will produce flood maps for all flood-prone Yukon communities. First draft flood maps for the Southern Lakes are anticipated to be released this year. These critical tools will give us important insights into flood risk, mitigation, and land use decision-making.

The Department of Environment has signed an agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada that will bring an additional \$99,000 to our territory to hire a climate change scientist. Through their work, our territory will gain important insights into how climate change is impacting our environment and to help the Yukon government reach our territory's climate goals outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

In addition, \$20,000 is included for the extension of the federal government's climate change preparedness in the north agreement. This agreement funds climate change adaptation projects and assessments in the north and will help strengthen our territory's resilience to the impacts of climate change. Again, I would like to note that all of the funding that I mentioned just now is 100-percent recoverable through our partnership with the Government of Canada.

The Department of Environment continues to adjust its budget and capital needs accordingly. This often means deferring work and expenditures when it makes sense.

This year, contracts for the replacement of boat launches and docks for seven locations were tendered. Unfortunately, due to work delays, some of these projects will be moved to future years. This has resulted in a reduction of \$135,000 to the department's 2022-23 operation and maintenance budget.

In the coming year, the department will be working with the Department of Community Services to advance the replacement of launches and docks at Aishihik Lake, Ethel Lake, Frenchman Lake, Nunatuk, Otter Falls, Teslin, Ten Mile, and Twin Lakes. Funding for these projects will be 75-percent recoverable through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. This work will ensure that we can reach our goals as

a territory in a financially responsible and cost-effective manner.

At this time, I would just like to provide a few comments with respect to some of the primary exciting additional work that will be done under the *Our Clean Future* road map. Yukon's climate is changing, impacting the water, land, and places we call home. We know that elders lived through winter temperatures that our children may never experience. Wildlife and plant species are finding habitat in places that they have not before. Flood and wildfire season is becoming top of mind each spring and summer for Yukoners. We know that we need to prepare for more severe and frequent weather events in the future and to protect our communities, which will continue to face climate risks.

As our population continues to grow, we will require more renewable energy. At the same time, we will need to reduce our carbon footprint and ensure economic stability and energy security. We take the threat of climate change seriously. We have joined First Nations and municipalities in the Yukon to declare a climate emergency in the territory.

Our Clean Future is the Government of Yukon's path to address the climate emergency. Under *Our Clean Future*, we have four key goals: to reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions; to ensure that Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy; to adapt to the impacts of climate change; and to build a greener economy. As I have stated a number of times, the Yukon is warming at approximately twice the rate of the rest of the world. We need to reduce the impact of climate change by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

We have committed to an ambitious target of reducing our emissions by 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. As part of our commitment, we are tracking and reporting the territory's greenhouse gas emissions. In the Yukon, transportation and heating buildings are the biggest sources of emissions. While the Yukon's emissions are a small percent of Canada's total emissions, our per capital emissions are the sixth highest in Canada. We know that we could not meet our ambitious goals alone. That is why we struck the Yukon Climate Leadership Council, made up of 11 persons who represented a diversity of perspectives and expertise in order to support our efforts.

In addition, the Yukon Climate Leadership Council has submitted their *Climate Shot 2030* report, which is helping to guide our climate action. We thank the council for their passion, dedication, and willingness to support the Yukon in meeting our emissions goals. We will reach our reduction targets by tracking and monitoring our emissions, implementing the actions in *Our Clean Future*, and adjusting them when needed.

Advice from advisory groups like the leadership council and the youth panels that we established is also critical in ensuring that our climate action reflects the unique context of the Yukon.

Climate action also means adapting to climate change impacts that are already affecting our territory. Yukoners need to be aware of climate risks and the role that they play as we build a clean future together. The climate risk and resilience assessment for the Yukon that we released in September 2022

has identified where climate impacts pose the greatest risks and the steps that we can take to protect the values of Yukoners.

Deputy Chair, our climate risk and resilience assessment report aligns closely with Canada's national adaptation strategy that was released in November 2022. Each report recognizes the unique challenges that climate change poses for the north and the importance of prioritizing adaptation in northern and remote communities. In order to build our climate resilience, we must protect our transportation infrastructure, prepare for fires and floods, and respond to permafrost thaw. Building resilience supports our territory's food and energy security, our health and well-being, and supports reconciliation with Yukon First Nations by protecting a culture and heritage that is inextricably linked to accessing the land and a healthy environment.

As a government, we have a responsibility to lead climate action in our territory. We are an active participant in climate actions for our region, our nation, and the world.

We support Canada's commitment to the United Nations 2015 *Paris Agreement*. We have put forward Yukon's prospectus to shape the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*. We work regularly with Canada, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut on projects specific to climate change in the north, and we have engaged internationally on climate change challenges by attending the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference.

To achieve our climate goals, all Yukoners need to play a part. Families, businesses, organizations, and individuals can all be part of a solution. I am encouraged by the actions that I have already seen in our communities. Yukoners are modifying the way that we build, finding new ways to travel, and exploring more sustainable energy sources. The challenge of climate change can feel daunting and overwhelming. Anxiety related to climate change is real, and it affects all of us.

One thing I know to be true is that Yukoners are resilient. It is our northern way of life that gives us the ability to band together against challenges that face our communities, like we have done with our flood and wildfire response in recent years, and we can fight against climate change together. We will continue to do our part to address climate change by following through on our commitments in *Our Clean Future*.

I ask each and every Yukoner to consider how you can play a part in addressing climate change and building our resilience. Together, we are adapting to the impacts of climate change, reducing our emissions, and establishing the future of a changing Yukon.

Deputy Chair, I look forward to continuing my comments and to answering questions from the members opposite. However, at this time, 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. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*, 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. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 16, 2023:

35-1-129

Protecting elections from foreign interference, letter re (dated March 9, 2023) from Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier, to H. Maxwell Harvey, Chief Electoral Officer (Pillai)

35-1-130

Foreign interference in Canadian democratic institutions, letter re (dated March 13, 2023) from H. Maxwell Harvey, Chief Electoral Officer to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier (Pillai)