

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 4, 2013 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Battle of the Somme and the 8th Canadian Hussars (Princess Louise's)

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I stand today to tribute the Battle of the Somme and the 8th Canadian Hussars (Princess Louise's). The Battle of the Somme started in 1916 during the Great War. For many people, the Battle of the Somme was a battle that symbolized the horrors of warfare in World War I. This one battle had a marked effect on overall casualty figures and seems to epitomize the futility of trench warfare.

The Battle of the Somme was one of the largest battles of the war. By the time fighting paused in late autumn of 1916, the forces involved had suffered more than one million casualties, making it one of the bloodiest military operations ever recorded.

A soldier's poem, by Alan Seeger, *I Have a Rendezvous with Death* — he wrote this prior:

"I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air —
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair."

Seeger kept his appointment with death on July 1, 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme. He was 28 years old. In the course of the battle, 51 Victoria Crosses were won — 31 were won by non-commissioned officers and 20 by officers. One of the regiments that has battle honours at the Somme is the 8th Canadian Hussars (Princess Louise's), a regiment I served with when I was a young soldier.

Battalions are proudly displayed on their guidon and when you come and approach the guidon, you come to attention and salute.

Originally founded as New Brunswick Regiment in 1848 by the regimentation of a number of independent cavalry troops, the regiment was the first volunteer cavalry regiment in British North America.

The symbolism of the cap badge — the coronate of her Royal Highness Princess Louise — represents service to the Crown and the relationship between Her Royal Highness and the regiment.

The insignia represents the cavalry nature of the regiment. The Roman numerals VIII and the words "Canadian Hussars

Princess Louise" are formed on the regimental title and "regi patriaeque fidelis" is a motto of the regiment: "faithful to King and Country."

Tomorrow, April 5, will be the 165th birthday of the regiment. So I stand today because of one of the greatest battle honours on our guidon, the Battle of the Somme.

I would like to thank all the men and women who served past and present in the Canadian Forces and give much appreciated time and energy toward keeping our land glorious and free. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of International Day of Mine Awareness

Mr. Elias: I'd like to take a moment to pay tribute on behalf of all members to International Day of Mine Awareness and assistance in mine action, which was established by the United Nations in 2005.

When we say "mine" in the Yukon we think of mineral exploration, environmental protection, prosperity and economic development. To a child in a place like Cambodia, however, that word is a warning to tread cautiously.

Just last October, for example, a group of six farmers were killed and two more were maimed when their truck ran over an anti-tank landmine as they returned home from the market. In 2012, a total of 43 people were killed in Cambodia by landmines — the same number as in 2011. The good news though is that for the first time annual landmine casualties dropped below the 200 mark down to 187. Unfortunately, a full third of those injured are children.

Since 1979, landmines have killed 19,660 Cambodians and injured another 44,519. Landmines were laid in Cambodia by all sides during two recent conflicts during the Vietnam War and the North Vietnamese Army laid mines in Cambodia to protect their bases and supply routes. The U.S. Forces responded by dropping mines from airplanes and laying additional mines in mutual areas of Cambodia. The rest of the country was literally blanketed in landmines after the Khmer Rouge seized control in 1970. Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, called landmines his "perfect soldiers" because they never slept and they waited with limitless patience to kill and maim for decades.

It's no wonder that only 25 percent of land-mine victims are soldiers. Most are civilians trying to rebuild their ravaged nations long after the end of armed conflicts. Cambodia isn't the only country that suffers from landmines but it's certainly one of the most affected. Other nations that are heavily affected with these explosive viruses include Angola, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Around the world there are an estimated 110 million landmines scattered over 70 countries. That's one landmine for every 17 children in the world. Every 20 minutes someone is killed or injured in a landmine accident.

At the current rate of removal, it will take 1,100 years to rid the world of landmines, assuming no new ones are laid, that is. Canada was a founding participant in the 1999 United Nations Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. For years our nation led the global de-mining effort. Unfortunately, our financial support has flagged recently, causing a slowdown in de-mining activities around the world.

That's unfortunate because it limits the ability of our global partners to grow and develop economically as we are largely free to do.

In Cambodia, for example, economic development is extremely limited by the simple fact that the landscape itself is too dangerous to enter. Imagine then if, on top of environmental concerns, regulatory processes and legislative constraints, mining exploration and development in the Yukon were hampered by a constant threat of being exploded by a landmine. The Yukon would be a very different place, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the world needs another major figure to take up the cause of banning landmine use and work for increased clearing of existing mine fields — someone like Princess Diana whose dedicated work in this area was cut short by her untimely death in 1997. Or maybe this effort is left to all of us now, because a millennium is too long. We need to commit more resources to expedite the removal in order to save lives and enable the economies of our partners around the world.

In recognition of Underhill Geomatics' 100th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a leading contributor to Yukon's economic and social development — a private sector business that has played a key role in the growth and the change Yukon has experienced in the past few decades.

Underhill Geomatics offers comprehensive geomatic engineering services, both in Canada and internationally. It has been doing surveys in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut for more than 50 years and is the oldest survey company in Yukon. Tomorrow the firm will join the entire Underhill group of companies in celebrating their 100th anniversary. The Underhill Group originated in 1913, when brothers Jim and Clare Underhill first formed the Underhill and Underhill partnership. They developed a thriving land survey and engineering firm focusing on high standards, personal integrity, efficiency and technological innovation. To better serve northern Canada, the firm's Whitehorse office was established in 1970 by Tim Koepke, who left the company in 1986 to become the federal head negotiator for Yukon land claims processes and currently serves as Yukon's Ombudsman.

Bruce Underhill moved to the Yukon in 1984 to join the management of the Whitehorse office until his retirement in 2009. Carl Friesen joined Bruce in 1989 to help run the Whitehorse office, which he continues to do to this day.

All three of the resident managing partners were active in providing leadership in both national and Yukon professional associations.

As surveyors like to remind us, nothing can be built until it is surveyed. Underhill helped lay the groundwork for much of Yukon's key infrastructure through the work they did on projects such as the Aishihik power project, Mayo B, the Shakwak highway projects and numerous residential areas, including Porter Creek, Mary Lake, Pineridge and Copper Ridge.

The firm has served the mineral exploration and development sector, with clients such as Yukon Zinc, Minto mine, Victoria Gold, Alexco, Kaminak, Archer Cathro and Kinross, just to name a few.

Surveys for land claims have also been a predominant focus for the company. Underhill performed about 40 percent of the northern land claims surveys contracted by the federal government from 1986 until 2012 and is very proud of its work with Yukon First Nations. The company has enjoyed partnerships with First Nations through the years and has employed hundreds of Yukon First Nation citizens.

The company was further strengthened in 2011, when it merged with longtime Whitehorse surveyor, Gabe Aucoin, and his company, Aucoin Surveys.

Its current slate of employees are almost all born and bred Yukoners, and many of its alumni now work in key positions in the Yukon government and in the private sector.

In addition to its business activities, Underhill has been a good corporate citizen supporting and sponsoring many local activities, organizations and charities. This company is truly a great example of contributions the private sector can make to territorial evolution of communities and governments. We are very appreciative of their good work throughout the territory and we are pleased that a number of the representatives of Underhill Geomatics are here with us in the gallery today.

Please join me in welcoming Bruce Underhill, Carl Friesen, Robyn Tripp-Friesen and Gabe Aucoin. A number of other family members and staff are also here. We are certainly glad that you could attend today so that we could extend our appreciation for all that your company has contributed. I'd invite you all to stand so that we can recognize and welcome you to the Assembly.

Applause

Speaker: I'd also like to add my personal experience — in my former career I had the privilege of working with quite a number of people from Underhill and, having been in the private sector with a number of companies across Canada, I know that the Underhill name is highly respected all the way across Canada for the excellent work that they do. It was a pleasure to work with you guys.

Are there any introductions of visitors?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly here today to extend a warm welcome to my ministerial colleagues from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

The Hon. Loren Kusugak, who is the MLA for Rankin Inlet South-Whale Cove, Government House Leader for Government of Nunavut, Minister of Community and Government Services, minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation and minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to my other colleague, the MLA for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Robert C. McLeod, who holds the responsibility for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and minister responsible for Homelessness and for Youth.

Of course, members may also recognize the name — I would be remiss if I didn't mention this, and my apologies — I hope it won't ruin our relations going forward, Minister McLeod — but I had the occasion of having a wager with my colleague from the Northwest Territories over the gold medal midget male hockey game during the last Arctic Winter Games held here in Whitehorse — it was a pretty big game. As you're aware, Yukon came through. Thank you to our Yukon boys hockey team for coming through for Yukon.

In turn, Minister McLeod had the opportunity, then, to wear the Yukon hockey jersey with our name — my name — on the back of it. He had to actually do that during his tribute in his Legislative Assembly in Northwest Territories. I just wanted to say thank you, again. You are the bigger man for it. I also want to say that that is, in fact, why we're here today — to talk about the future of the Arctic Winter Games. I look forward to our meetings tomorrow.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'd like the House to welcome Arden Meyer from Trans North Helicopters. It's certainly another strong private sector company in the Yukon that has been around for a long time. I ask all members of the Assembly to welcome Arden.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Silver: I do have a document for tabling.

Speaker: Are there any other returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct an agricultural land audit that would:

(1) quantify the amount of agricultural land in the Yukon;

(2) quantify the amount of agricultural land that has been made available for agricultural purposes;

(3) determine the quantum of currently allocated agricultural land which is being used for agriculture;

(4) determine the quantum of agricultural land that has been made available that is either lying fallow or is being under-utilized; and

(5) determine the quantum of agricultural land that has been made available for agricultural purposes that has been subsequently converted to uses other than agriculture.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with NGOs and the private sector in Dawson City to investigate the possibility of turning the existing McDonald Lodge into social housing.

Mr. Elias: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Canadian government to reinstate funding to the Canadian Landmine Foundation to enable it to continue to fund mine action projects to make the world safe from landmines, including:

(1) clearing existing minefields;

(2) assisting victims of landmine injuries;

(3) funding the training and delivery of mine detection dogs; and

(4) preparing and delivering awareness campaigns.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister? This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Social inclusion policy

Ms. Stick: The government's *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy* has three goals, one of them being to reduce inequities. The Minister of Health and Social Services referred to the development of a poverty reduction audit to ensure inclusiveness of new government policies, new programs and new services. The minister has spoken of the new socially inclusive lens for all these new projects, but what about current programs that are not doing enough to address the root causes of poverty. Insufficient income leads to poverty and leads to social exclusion.

With its poverty reduction strategy, which specific aspect of poverty or root cause of social exclusion does the government aim to reduce, and how?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As members will recall, two committees were formed to guide the overall development of the strategy. The interdepartmental steering committee was a committee within the government, and the community advisory committee was an advisory committee formed of members of various NGOs and associations outside of government. These two committees made a number of recommendations, and as a result we have now established a project team which is currently working on developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the strategy.

Interdepartmental work is still being undertaken as we speak to evaluate existing social inclusion and poverty reduction initiatives and to propose new initiatives. At this time, we haven't reached that point where we're specifically identifying projects within various government departments.

As I said before, this policy is seen as an intergovernmental policy to make sure that all departments take a look at social inclusion from an overall outlook.

Ms. Stick: The minister has referred to the social inclusion project as an internal government project and focused on programs that are run by government, but my question is

focused on making a real difference for those who are excluded simply because they are poor — excluded from housing and excluded from food security.

In the Yukon, the cost of living — particularly housing — is increasing way faster than incomes. Thirty percent of Yukon renters have reported that they are unable to afford shelter that meets their needs: Adequacy, suitability and affordability norms. Does the government have a target for this 30 percent of the Yukon renters who are unable to afford adequate or suitable housing?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's one of the reasons we have a social assistance department and a number of people working within that department who are prepared to act on providing assistance to people who cannot afford the necessities.

A few years back, we increased social assistance rates immensely. They are increased on an annual basis with the cost of living. If the member is aware of people who require this kind of assistance, she should be forwarding those names to the social assistance people or at least directing them to the social assistance department.

Ms. Stick: In the 2010 social inclusion household survey, 20 percent of adult Yukoners reported experiencing at least one element of food insecurity. In its October 2012, *Mind the Gap Snapshot*, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition reported that two-fifths of Yukon rural boys, grades 6 to 8, report going to bed or school hungry. The Whitehorse Food Bank is serving four times the number they initially planned for, and the Salvation Army was serving 1,500 more meals a month in 2012 than in the previous year.

The government's strategy lists an objective to strengthen access to necessities such as food. A single Yukon child going to bed and to school hungry is too many. Will the minister tell us of plans to eliminate hunger for Yukon children through the social inclusion and poverty reduction report?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I said before, the social inclusion poverty reduction strategy was just that — it was a strategy to work within departments internally to ensure that whenever new initiatives have begun, they are seen through the social inclusion and poverty reduction lens. This strategy was never intended to create programs that are currently underway, such as Food for Learning that provides breakfast for children in need and any number of other programs offered, by not only the Education department, but by the Health and Social department as well.

I think the member opposite seems to have some confusion about what the social inclusion poverty reduction strategy was all about.

Question re: F.H. Collins Secondary School reconstruction

Mr. Tredger: The Yukon public is well familiar with the long and confusing saga of replacing F.H. Collins. The minister has said that the plan now will be to import a cheaper design and incorporate elements from the previous consultation process.

Last week, school staff was asked for input on the design with a due date by this Friday. Staff is to provide their list of

what they want to see in the school — no constructive discussion, no meaningful dialogue, just a list.

The staff members want to be involved in a meaningful way. They are the ones who live and work in the building and know best what is needed to educate kids. Requesting a list due tomorrow is insulting and not consultation.

Does the minister sincerely believe that this rushed request of the people who spend the most time in the school and know best how to educate our children is adequate?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I thank the member opposite for the question. A couple of things with respect to the replacement of the F.H. Collins Secondary School — of course, a significant amount of work was already put into that through the building advisory committee engaging staff. I know one of the current vice-principals and a current teacher actually travelled out to visit some schools when they were coming up with the existing design. We are going to take a lot of that work — as much work as we can — that was done by the building advisory committee and transport it into the new school. The deputy minister met with staff last week, as the member opposite referenced, and had the opportunity to talk to them about what their list would be. Of course, the school will incorporate a gym and a staff room and a library and a cafeteria and the other core elements, but we are looking beyond that.

We'd like to see if there are any additional things that they would like. We are looking to adopt a design that has been built successfully and economically in other jurisdictions. We want to make sure when we look to those designs and incorporate as much of the work of the building advisory committee as possible and take into account input from the school community as well.

Mr. Tredger: The plans the minister has thrown in the bin cost millions of dollars and reflected countless hours of participation by stakeholders — all stakeholders. Their participation resulted in a school design that was cutting-edge. After all the setbacks, flip-flops and changes in direction, the minister is saying he now wants to get the F.H. Collins replacement project right. However, the public is disillusioned and highly skeptical, given the government's history of bungling this project.

In order to get it right, the minister needs to stop rushing a new plan and bring staff and other stakeholders back into the process in a meaningful way. Will he do this, or will the minister plow forward and risk building a new school that doesn't reflect the vision and needs of the broader school community?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I believe the building advisory committee work began in 2009-10 for the design that the member opposite referenced. Of course, in an effort that is supported by many Yukoners to be fiscally responsible, when the final bids came in \$10 million over what our project estimates were, we decided to go in a different direction. That is not to say that we're going to disregard all of that hard work that was done by the building advisory committee. As I mentioned in my previous answer, a number of members of that school community were involved on the building advisory committee, including many of the teachers who work there. I know the principal, the two vice-principals, and a number of other educators were in-

volved in some of the meetings. There were notes and minutes taken. That's what we're planning to incorporate into the final design.

In order to come up with the design, what we're looking to do — as I've mentioned — is construct a school that has been built successfully and economically in other jurisdictions. That's what we're intending to do. We want to make sure that the school is built and that the students, teachers and parents can move in there as soon as possible.

Question re: Select committee on hydraulic fracturing

Mr. Silver: I sent an open letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources this week regarding the establishment of a select committee to examine the issue of fracking. One of the issues I raised was how the creation of the committee will affect any private sector applicant that comes forward looking for permission to frack in Yukon. It is my view that the creation of the committee places a de facto moratorium on the practice of fracking in the territory. It would be inexcusable for the government to permit the activity until the committee has completed its work and Yukoners have been heard from; otherwise the work from the committee is irrelevant.

The company that owns the Kotaneelee gas well in southeast Yukon, in a presentation to stakeholders, said it plans to drill, complete and frack shale gas in 2013-14. The overlap of the work of the committee is obvious.

What is the government's position on this question? Will it permit fracking before the committee has concluded its work and recommendations have been implemented?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would refer the Member for Klondike to what was stated in Motion No. 309, brought forward to this Assembly by me and passed in this House last fall. The whole purpose of this committee is to analyze the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing if it were to be allowed in the Yukon and to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly, to the government, with regard to that matter.

To the member's specific question: Of course, the timelines that he put forward indicating that a company had presented to its stakeholders — well, they certainly will not be in a position that that would not preclude the work of this committee. We will stay committed to what we said in Motion No. 309 and the key question at hand is what the committee will do in the recommendations.

I would hope that the Member for Klondike will participate in this committee sincerely and genuinely, as members have in the past, in an attempt to bring, where possible, a multi-partisan approach and attempt, if possible, to come to a consensus on proper steps that meet the Yukon interest in its recommendations.

Mr. Silver: In order for the work of the committee to be meaningful, it should not be undercut by a government decision to permit fracking at the Kotaneelee well in southeast Yukon or anywhere else, for that matter. The company with a controlling interest in that well said they want to begin fracking in 2013-14. It's not realistic to believe the committee being struck this spring will have concluded its work in this time frame. There are warning bells to consider when discussing

fracking, and there are also enormous economic benefits when it comes to shale gas development.

I've heard from people on both sides of this issue. Based upon statements in *Hansard* to date, the Independent member and I may be the only members on that committee without a predetermined outlook. The minister has no doubt met with the new owners of the Kotaneelee well and discussed their plans. Did the minister tell them an application to frack would be considered, or did he tell them there was a moratorium in place until the committee has heard from Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Part of the reason for the determination of the proposal to create a select committee is to determine the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing in the territory and to consider how the implementation would go for Motion No. 309, which was discussed in this House last fall. To be clear and to reiterate that motion, the goal of the government is to facilitate and inform public dialogue about the oil and gas industry, including risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing — also known as “fracking” — before any regulatory approvals or permitting allows the use of this activity in Yukon.

I don't think that could be any clearer. We think that the recommendations that will come forward from the select committee will be beneficial for government to review the regulations and policies around the oil and gas industry and the specific ones aimed at this particular practice. We're not going to predetermine the outcomes of that select committee, and we hope that the members of that committee will deliberate in good faith and determine outcomes that are in the best interests of Yukon citizens.

Mr. Silver: I thank the minister for a direct answer. It seems that what I'm hearing is that the government is not planning to consider applications for fracking while simultaneously creating a committee. That is wonderful news.

In my letter to the minister, I said the decision to create the committee is an admission by the Yukon government that current regulatory mechanisms are not sufficient to address the issue of fracking. This contradicts the long-held view of the Yukon Party government that no public discussion or regulatory changes were needed. A properly planned oil and gas industry would have seen this discussion take place several years ago. The department's intention, however, to finally do the right thing and engage the public in this debate is very encouraging. In order to demonstrate that there is a free hand, the terms of reference for the committee must be set by the members of the committee and not by the government.

Will the government allow this to happen, or will the terms of reference be dictated by the government?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the member opposite for his kind words about the responses.

In regard to his question at the tail-end of his dialogue, he asked about the terms of reference. Of course, the motion will set, to some degree, the terms of reference for the committee, and we've committed in this House that we would share that motion with the NDP, the Liberals and the Independent member before tabling in the Legislature, and we intend to do that. I believe we're still working on the drafting of the motion, and we'll be in a position to share it with the respective proposed

members of that committee shortly. As soon as we have some material to share with them, we will. I look forward to getting their input on the content of that motion, and we'll do our best to incorporate it. I look forward to the meeting to determine the work of this committee and getting on with the good business.

Question re: Nutrition North Canada program

Mr. Elias: I have a question for the Premier. To put it plainly, the Nutrition North Canada program is defunct in our community of Old Crow. The Nutrition North Canada program is — plain and simple — a disappointment to me and to my constituents. Some food prices have more than doubled, and Old Crow residents can only purchase food from one store now.

Our community has been working hard to resolve this issue and I must say this is the most difficult and frustrating file I've ever had to work on as an MLA. It is clear to me that Old Crow must be exempted from the Nutrition North Canada program. On behalf of my constituents I would like to thank the Premier for speaking directly with the Prime Minister and writing a letter to him to talk to him about the Nutrition North Canada program in Old Crow.

Can the Premier please inform the House what the response was from the Prime Minister of our country?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'd like to begin by thanking the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for his tireless work on this very important topic that affects all residents of the community of Old Crow. I've certainly been there on different occasions and have been able to witness some of the pricing that does occur in that store. It certainly is something that is not only alarming, but also really limits the ability of families to be able to have disposable income to do other things as well, because they have to put such a large percentage of the income that they have toward just the basic necessity of purchasing food. I also want to note that this House did unanimously pass Motion No. 80 that was brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin just about a year ago from this date, really looking at this program and what we can do. We look forward to continuing to work on this file.

Mr. Elias: Right now in Old Crow it costs \$26.19 per kilogram for red seedless grapes and the goal of the Nutrition North Canada program is to ensure that healthy foods are more accessible and affordable to my constituents. Just recently, a former manager of the food mail program said that the federal government is trying to make the Nutrition North program look like it is working better than it is. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right of Food publicly condemned the program, and dozens of MLAs across the north and Members of Parliament said the program is not working.

Our community has been consistently lobbying the federal government on this program since they announced it in May 2010, and we have been solution-oriented the entire time. I have asked that it be in the opinion of this House that the Auditor General of Canada immediately examine the Nutrition North Canada program insofar as it relates to the community of Old Crow. Does the Premier support this motion?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Certainly there are some stark differences between the Nutrition North program and what it can

do in the Yukon versus the eastern Arctic, and I think that that is one of the fundamental problems that we have: a lot of the issues that have been identified certainly are not issues here in the Yukon. For example, the barging of food to islands across the eastern Arctic is a problem.

So there are some very unique situations here and I think there is an opportunity to work with the federal government to try to find a Yukon-specific solution to the only community in the Yukon that actually is involved in the Nutrition North program.

We need to continue to work to see how we can work with the partners who are involved with the delivery of food to the town of Old Crow, along with the community of Old Crow, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin and Canada to look for some creative solutions to enable us to recognize the fact that Old Crow is unique in the Nutrition North program, and how we can use this opportunity to ensure that we come up with something that is specific for us and is of benefit to the residents of Old Crow.

Mr. Elias: I'm glad the Premier is talking about solutions, because one of the solutions is to re-establish a personal shipping transportation subsidy to and from Whitehorse and Old Crow of nutritious perishable foods, non-perishable foods and essential non-food items for the residents of Old Crow via Air North. The transportation subsidy could then be administered by Air North.

The power to make food purchasing decisions needs to be returned to the citizens, because when corporations and the federal government retain control of what ends up on my constituents' tables, that spells trouble for us. Another solution is for our community to occupy the field and simply receive funding directly from Ottawa and manage the program and services ourselves. Will the Premier help our community facilitate these solutions with the Government of Canada to ensure that improvements are made to this program immediately?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: In fact, as the member opposite did describe, in February, during my face-to-face meeting with the Prime Minister, we specifically talked about this issue and its importance to the citizens of Old Crow. We had a very good dialogue about it. I do concur with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. There are different solutions that we could look at that would be unique and that could help solve this problem. This government is committed to work with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and to work with Canada to find a timely solution, because the clock has been ticking on this for some time. I know that we have brought it to the awareness of the Prime Minister, and I'm hopeful that we can continue to work together to find a solution for all the people in Old Crow.

Question re: Genetically modified products and seeds

Ms. White: It is a well-documented fact that invasive species are one of the three biggest threats to biodiversity in the world, alongside direct habitat loss and climate change.

The economic cost of invasive species is also dramatic with impacts on agricultural production, impacts on recreation, on tourism and impacts on private property owners. Invasive species hurt economies, they hurt jobs, they hurt the environ-

ment and they hurt local species. Invasive species can arrive by accident; they can spread through natural systems like pollination or they can be purposely introduced as agricultural products. Some genetically modified crops are classified as invasive species and they can cause all the damage that I noted.

What role is the Minister of Environment taking in the discussion of invasive species, including genetically modified organisms, in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I agree with the member opposite that invasive species are a challenge for our government and for the territory. We have noticed over the years an increased level of invasive species in the territory. As a result of that I know that an NGO has been formed — I believe it is the Yukon Invasive Species Council — which is doing some work to raise awareness of the problem of invasive species in the territory. We have provided funding to that group for a number of different initiatives throughout the years. The most recent one that comes to mind is the community development fund funding for that group to provide some educational materials about invasive species and how best to prevent their spread and how best to limit their spread in the territory.

Of course when it comes to further action I am always interested in meeting with NGOs like that to hear their perspectives. We'll provide the member opposite with an update after I've had a chance to meet with that particular group. As she said, it is an issue. We're aware of it, and we're doing our best to determine what government can do to prevent the spread of invasive species in the territory.

Ms. White: As Yukon does not have a system to rank invasive species, I've relied on Alaska, which has programs, legislation and a ranking system. According to the Alaskan government, alfalfa is listed as a mildly invasive species. This ranking is fluctuating as alfalfa is reacting with climate change and spreading more quickly in the north. This means that alfalfa can spread into the natural environment and to nearby farmland. It is well-established that invasive species are known to wreak havoc on the environment, on private property and on economies.

What does the Minister of Environment think about allowing genetically modified alfalfa seed into the Yukon, where it can spread into the environment and to nearby farms?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: In response to the member opposite, this is an issue that we've heard some discourse about in this House — the potential of genetically modified organisms in the territory. Of course, as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources noted yesterday or earlier this week, this is a contentious issue among the farming community. It's something that he'll be working on diligently with the farming community.

For my part, I'll be working with other groups, like the Yukon Invasive Species Council, to determine what species are here today.

We know there is a whole suite of species here in the territory currently. Anyone who has driven down the highway in the spring or in the summer will have noticed the invasive species that plague the roadways in the territory, which are a challenge for the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Our focus is on the species that are in the territory and on limiting their spread. When it comes to anything related to the development of the agricultural industry, that's something the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will continue to work with.

As I said before, we will work with the NGO dedicated to this issue, and we look forward to providing continued support to them in whatever fashion we are able to determine. I look forward to providing an update for the House once we have some further information on that.

Ms. White: The sad truth is we already have alfalfa spreading in the Yukon. Alfalfa is all along the roads and on the land in Haines Junction; it is on private property; it is on nearby farmland. It is particularly noticeable in June with its swaths of yellow. The even more unfortunate part of this story is that alfalfa has escaped from the federal government's experimental farm in Haines Junction, and it's spreading fast.

According to the *Environment Act*, the Minister of Environment is the public trustee of the public environmental trust. Where is the Minister of Environment on this important issue? When will he stand up for the Yukon's environment and for Yukon farmers and ensure that genetically modified alfalfa is not used in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, with regard to the member's question as it relates to alfalfa that she claims resulted from a federal farm, I'd point out that cleaning up federal messes is something we've had to do on a few occasions. There are some legacies, including and notably Faro, that we inherited from the federal government and have to deal with as best we can.

With regard to the topic of genetically modified organisms, as I noted in my response to the petition, we very much appreciate the concerns of everyone who signed that petition and others who have concerns about the potential impact of growth of genetically modified organisms in the Yukon, as committed to in that petition. We believe the appropriate next step is for us to engage with groups representing farmers and with individual farmers to try and build a consensus position on what the appropriate next steps may be, understanding — as I noted in my petition response — that the farming community was very divided on this issue.

With regard to genetically modified alfalfa itself, I have received recent correspondence and met recently with representatives of organic growers and heard their concerns specifically. I've received additional information and, frankly, I met with them just this morning on this topic and we will be giving consideration to their concerns.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 10: *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Department of Education — continued

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think we will start off today in the hope that we can expedite debate and perhaps even clear Education this afternoon. I know there are a number of other large departments in the budget we still need to discuss here in this sitting. I'll answer some of the questions raised on Tuesday when we were in general debate on the Department of Education, as well as touch on a couple of other things that have come up over the week with respect to the *Act to Amend the Education Act*. I know that that will come back to Committee, but there are dollars associated with that in the budget that we're discussing, particularly with respect to the collective bargaining agreement and increasing the hours for our educators.

The first questions that I'd like to address was raised by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I'll just repeat the questions that he asked. Has the educational leadership program been evaluated? How many have graduated and how many have found work in the Yukon?

The response the department has prepared says that ongoing feedback has been received by the participants, Yukon Education officials, and external education contractors on the development and modifications of the program. This has resulted in an exceptional learning experience for the participants.

The successful two-year Yukon educational leadership program, which began in 2008-09, resulted in 26 participants completing the two-year program and 25 participants entering a Master in Leadership at Yukon College in the 2009-10 school year. Six graduates are currently employed as administrators in

Yukon schools and a number of others are engaged in alternative leadership roles.

A second question by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is about us needing a comprehensive strategy for the patchwork of ideas. That is certainly a recurring theme over the past couple of days, whether we were talking about private members' business yesterday or with reference to the budget debate that we were engaged in on Tuesday. Of course there are a number of strategies that the department has developed: the labour market framework; the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. When we talk about programs and look to introduce different aspects into education, there are certainly two main documents that, as the Minister of Education, I refer to. The first of course is the *Department of Education Strategic Plan 2011-16: Our Commitment to New Horizons* and the second is the mandate letter that I received as Minister of Education from the Premier.

That is reflective of the platform commitments that we made to Yukoners in 2011 in our "Moving Forward Together" platform and making sure that I'm able to deliver on those, but we also look for new and innovative approaches to delivering education to the Yukon, with an eye to fit in under the strategic plan that was developed by the department and the goals set out by the department.

The MLA for Klondike also asked a few questions, and I'll get the answers to those. His first question: Is there a capital asset replacement plan? I did answer at the time, but just to repeat — we do have a draft long-term facilities plan, which we look forward to providing to members of the Legislature during this fiscal year, if everything goes as planned. If it's not developed in this fiscal year, it will be released early in the 2014-15 fiscal year and will have to be discussed extensively with the affected school communities. Particularly in Whitehorse, I know there are a number of schools that are reaching the end of their life, and we want to come up with a plan that gives us a staged approach to replacing those facilities. In this budget a couple of schools are receiving major renovations in this fiscal year: Porter Creek Secondary School and Selkirk Elementary School are both having roof replacements done.

We look forward to that work being done to make sure that we maintain those buildings in the proper way, but also ensuring that a number of Yukoners engaged in that field have the opportunity to go to work. So we will be working with the Department of Highways and Public Works on the tendering of those two projects, and we look forward to getting them out as soon as possible.

A second question raised by the Member for Klondike was about Yukon school attendance data, by month, to compare June versus November. The figures that I have actually go September through until May. Of course, a number of schools in the territory spend very little time in June, including the Member for Klondike's school, Robert Service School, in Dawson City, so the June numbers aren't readily available.

Just as a snapshot, the total student days absent in the Yukon — it's a very startling number, given the fact that we have only around 5,000 students — for 2011-12 is 175,896. Rural Yukon schools total student days absent is 31,340;

Whitehorse area schools, or the urban schools — and this one includes Wood Street Centre as well — the number is 72,278. These are very startling numbers. That's why I think it's something we have to take very seriously, and I know I take it seriously as the minister — working on those attendance numbers and working with the entire school community — working with the parents and the students and developing programming.

I know the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and the Member for Klondike may be surprised by the months where those numbers are the highest. Of the schools I looked at — and I will provide these statistics to members opposite as well — for one of the schools, October had the highest number of days absent. For a second school, it would have been November. For 15 schools, which is the majority of the schools, January is the month with the highest number of absences. March only has one school with the highest number of absences and May, which is the final month, would be 11.

Again, I know the Member for Mayo-Tatchun talked about some of those — I think he referred to them as being “teaching sweet spots”, being the months where it's dark and cold and you can keep students engaged and inside. In January, for instance, as a Yukon total, 23,567 student days absent; February, which would be another one of those sweet-spot months I'm assuming the member opposite is referring to, is 22,244, but the highest month is May, at 26,678.

As the year progresses, that's when we see the absences increase and we need to find programming that keeps students engaged. Again, those are some of the challenges we're going to tackle through the rural action plan, and the motion put forward yesterday by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin with respect to exploring models for the establishment of a dual-credit trades school will be another aspect I think we can work on to engage those students. It's going to take the work of everyone to make sure we improve these student attendance numbers.

Prior to Christmas and the fall sitting, I said we have some students arriving in grade 8 who have missed as much as two years of school with unexcused absences. The results are that they're two years behind — most of them, depending on their learning. Attendance is certainly one thing. As I mentioned, the Member for Klondike brought it up and I will provide this monthly attendance by school document to members opposite during this sitting. I'll make sure that those documents come over.

One question with respect to the *Education Act* amendments — I will note that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun did approach me prior to the start of proceedings today and said that he would be forwarding me tomorrow or perhaps early next week his proposed amendments to the *Act to Amend the Education Act*. I want to remind him that I'm hoping what accompanies those proposed amendments is a summary of the consultations he undertook and perhaps the reasons why he didn't consult with me as the Minister of Education prior to this, or perhaps even with the Department of Education. I know that we would have liked to have taken a look at that.

He did write me a letter in December with respect to proposed changes to the *Education Act* and proposed calendar changes, suggesting one month was far too short for us to have

that consultation. Again, it would be interesting to just get a sense of where the public was able to comment, on which website the public was able to comment, as far as these proposed amendments, and getting an opportunity for all Yukoners to comment on those changes — like we did when we went out with our four proposed amendments.

As a result of those comments, we altered two of our proposals in the amendments. One was extending the term of school councils from two to three years. We received feedback from individuals, particularly school councils, saying that that was too long and we reduced that back to two years. Again we have put in an option that if the school council requests, I as minister can extend the term of a member by up to one year in order to maintain that continuity.

The second aspect that we altered that we had originally proposed was with respect to staggered elections. That was one of the things that wasn't received very well.

Again, I think it's important as legislators, when we are proposing amendments to any legislation, that we seek that input from the public and do the hard work and that we are able to react to changes positively. So again, I'll look forward to receiving the member opposite's summary of consultation and perhaps even a quick reason as to why he felt it wasn't necessary to consult myself as Minister of Education with those prior to the start of this sitting.

There are a number of other things I think we can talk about as we move forward with debate here this afternoon, but I know individuals are interested in getting on with this vote so that we can get to other votes. I know the Minister of Health and Social Services is anxious to introduce his budget, perhaps as early as today, and we look forward to clearing this and getting on with the business of the House and ensuring as much of the budget as possible is able to receive the proper amount of debate that it deserves.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the Minister of Education for his answers and I look forward to a discussion around amendments to the *Education Act*.

When I spoke to it I indicated general agreement with the amendments and congratulated the minister and the department on their efforts to bring the amendments forward. I have a few minor suggestions in the light of perhaps clarifying some issues that may cause some trouble down the line. The minister knows well that there are many opinions around education. He and the Member for Klondike and I have often talked about the need to talk together and discuss ways that we can use all our expertise in devising something that is best for the children of the Yukon.

The amendments that I'm making will be done in an effort to improve that act for clarity's sake. They are not to undermine the minister's position and he knows full well that as an opposition critic, I do not have the resources to conduct a territory-wide consultation process like he has done.

I am waiting for the results of that consultation process they did prior to the introduction of the act. I have met with a few people and they have given me some suggestions, which I am bringing forward on behalf of my constituents. However, in no way do I claim to represent all Yukoners and I do not profess to have discussed in detail every community and every

situation with school councils, with parents, with teachers. The resources on this side are limited. The minister did not discuss it with me and I wouldn't expect to discuss a lot of things with him. We do the best we can with what we have.

Having said that, I'd like to move on with this discussion. I would like to thank the minister for his extensive answers to the questions that were raised yesterday. It's much appreciated. I do appreciate the quick and responsive answers from the minister and his department. It makes things go much more quickly. I will work with the minister to get through the questions I have as quickly as possible. It is important that we do discuss education in a full and robust manner.

It is critical to the future of the Yukon. It's about our children; it's about our teachers; it's about our education system. I think it's important that we do take the time to consider it, to recognize the achievements of the Department of Education. What they have done and accomplished is wonderful and we can look at it with a light to ways we can improve that. Thank you to the minister for his cooperation and the department for its cooperation in this process.

I'd like to talk a little bit about First Nation languages and culture in our schools. I don't think it is any surprise that many, many First Nations feel that their language and their cultural programming are in crisis. It's reaching a critical proportion. I think we can probably count the number of students who have graduated from our system having taken 12 years of First Nation language instruction who are fluent in their language. I believe there was some evaluation done of the language programming in our schools, or it may be ongoing. I would like to ask the minister: Can he give me an update on that?

What measures are being taken to work with the First Nations to improve First Nation language instruction? Could he give me the required time in each elementary school that's allotted to First Nation language instruction? I know there are some schools that don't offer it, as they are in town, but could I get a breakdown of the time allocated in elementary and in high school on a school-by-school breakdown?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I know that during the introduction, I did speak about the amount of money we invested in our First Nation language teachers. There are also investments in the Yukon Native Language Centre that is housed at Yukon College. I will endeavour — I'm just going through my budget speech to get those numbers again, if the member requires them, but we can drag them out of *Hansard* as well.

With respect to the required time in each school, my understanding is that it varies school to school. I don't have those figures, but I would be happy to provide them to members opposite as soon as possible with respect to each individual school.

One of the positive aspects of the coordinated calendar, or the two common start dates — and actually, this has more to do with the spring break opportunity. When we went out with the options for the school calendar, Whitehorse-area high schools and elementary schools in 2013-14 will have a two-week spring break. We've given the option to the community schools to pick one or two weeks, but it has to be one of those two weeks, because the Deputy Minister of Education was ap-

proached by the Yukon Native Language Centre to offer training to First Nation language teachers in that week immediately prior to the start of the Whitehorse spring break. So this is an opportunity that hasn't existed in the past, because our spring breaks were all over the place. So I think that's something we can be excited about and one of the positive aspects of programming, training and those things we were looking to do by introducing the school calendars.

Again, when it comes to First Nation language — I believe there was a conference held recently here in the Yukon, as well, revitalizing First Nation language and culture.

I haven't had an opportunity to review the notes from that conference, but I will look forward to doing that and, if they're available publicly, I will certainly direct members of the Legislature to where they can find them on the website. I know this is something that's very important to First Nations. I had the opportunity — I believe I've mentioned this — to appear at Council of Yukon First Nations Leadership meeting twice, and this issue has come up twice. You know, there are aspects, of course, for all individuals, no matter where they are in their lifelong learning journey, to engage their culture and learn the First Nation language that is specific to them. One of the aspects we talked about — and I think it was received positively at the leadership table — is the opportunity for early learning and some of the aspects around early childhood learning, especially when it comes to First Nation languages. You know, for many of the elders I've spoken to who are at the leadership meeting, this is their number one issue — preserving their language. It's something we take very seriously.

Just quickly, before I turn the floor back over to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, with respect to those figures: \$239,000 in curriculum, which includes First Nation languages; \$405,000 in this budget for the operation of the Yukon Native Language Centre located at the college; and the salary amount that we pay for aboriginal language teachers is \$4.2 million. Those are some of the numbers. I hope they help the member out and if he requires more, I can certainly get them to him at a later date.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for his answers. I know that we spend a lot of money and put a lot of effort into First Nation language programming. My question — maybe I phrased it wrong — wasn't so much about the money that was spent, but are we evaluating for outcomes? What kind of measures are we doing to see that what we're doing and the money that we're spending is well spent? It's extremely important to our First Nation communities, but I would argue it's important for education as a whole and Yukon as a whole that we have strong and vibrant Yukon First Nation languages and cultures.

I guess my question is, how are we evaluating the programs and how are we ensuring — the minister touched on a couple of them. I'm very glad to hear that, and I know there are a couple of pilot projects, one in particular at Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, that I've heard nothing but good things about.

I congratulate the minister and his department for doing that. I believe it's in its second or third year and I'm wondering whether that pilot project has been evaluated in terms of look-

ing at how it is succeeding and how it can be replicated in other communities.

I'd also like to applaud the minister for his efforts, especially in terms of early childhood and early learning situations because, as we know, the earlier one is exposed and begins to use one's language, the more likely one is to become a competent speaker. I know various communities have looked at things like a language nest or bringing First Nation language into their early childhood programming, perhaps in a kindergarten classroom, to help with the transition from the community.

All of those things are very good and I applaud the department for what they are looking at. I think it's important that we do evaluate and look at things in terms of ways that we can measure them so that we can find out exactly what is working and where we can go from there. So if the minister could talk a little bit about that, I would appreciate that — I'm sure it's the minister's opportunity to talk about something we are doing very, very well, and that's the Champagne and Aishihik project and whether or not we're looking to extend that to other schools.

Hon. Mr. Kent: There are a couple of things I want to touch on here. I'll first of all say that when it comes to all of the programs that we offer through Education, whether they're First Nations or more of the mainstream programs — I guess I'd like to call them — that are offered through the department, we're constantly looking to evaluate and improve. It's a continual process that we go through with respect to all the programs. Some, of course, like the program referenced by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, the Champagne-Aishihik Southern Tutchone bicultural program, I can just briefly talk about.

It is a bilingual and bicultural program intended to increase the level of Southern Tutchone content and perspectives in the St. Elias Community School for kindergarten to grade 2. Of course, all members will know that the St. Elias Community School is located in the community of Haines Junction. It is a pilot project and there is an evaluation currently underway. After that, should it be proven successful, the foundation and framework will be used as a model for other Yukon communities.

Just a bit of history: the partnership project plan was signed by Yukon Education and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations in February 2009. This agreement outlines the principles and performance goals of the project, as well as detailing the project evaluation timeline. The current curriculum has been adapted along with the development of a language and cultural framework. The program maintains the academic expectations and standards of the standard B.C. curriculum. The steering committee held a meeting in December of 2012 to provide an update of the program and determine next steps. By the briefing note in front of me, it looks like there was a meeting held as recently as March 26 of this year to review the final report. Once the work gets completed, the program evaluation will be complete and we'll be able to move forward.

One other issue with respect to First Nation language that I would like to highlight is some research MOUs that we have with Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

Those MOUs were signed with both SFU and UBC in aid of their applications for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council partnership grants to research First Nation languages. In both cases, Yukon Education will be contributing in-kind staff time, equipment and meeting rooms. Applicants will be notified in April of this year — this month — as to the success of their respective applications. With respect to the SFU application, they applied for \$2.5 million to assist with projects relating to language documentation, emerging language use and fluencies, use of new digital technologies in language learning, and supporting language learning in an urban area. Our in-kind contribution over a 7-year period will be just a little bit shy of \$90,000. What that research is looking to do is document best practices and provide opportunities to improve digital technology for language learners. Yukon Education will benefit in the areas of teacher training and language resource material development. Yukon College has also signed this memorandum of understanding.

Briefly, with respect to the UBC application, they've applied for \$150,000 over four years to do a Kaska language digital archive and dictionary database. This project includes the use of video conferencing for Kaska language teaching and documentation. Liard First Nation is a signatory to the memorandum of understanding and will retain intellectual property rights over the archive. Yukon Education will benefit from sharing the technical achievements with other language groups.

Hopefully, that answers the questions raised by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

I should just put in a little plug for Education Week. It is April 15 to 19, but of particular importance with respect to what we're discussing right now is Monday, April 15. An event, held by the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon Education, which is entitled "Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow", will be taking place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre in the firepit outside the centre, closer to the river, I believe. CYFN invites everyone to their Education Week event celebrating Yukon First Nation education and the 40th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. There will be a stew and bannock lunch, storytelling, entertainment, and displays of Yukon Education's First Nations Programs and Partnerships curriculum materials. The event will be a great opportunity to learn from Yukon First Nations about their culture, language and programs.

I would invite all members of the House to attend that prior to the start of our sitting that day. Indeed, there couldn't be a more fitting way for us to kick off Education Week than with a celebration of First Nations and that very important 40th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. That's my quick plug for the kickoff of Education Week. Members can anticipate a number of other announcements and exciting events taking place throughout that week as that event continues to grow in size and popularity over the past number of years.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answers. Again, I would encourage him to continue to do all that is humanly possible to ensure that First Nation languages be trans-

mitted and that each First Nation student has the opportunity to work in their language.

I have a couple of quick questions about the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, the WNCP. The Yukon has been a member of that for some time. Apparently, though, even B.C. has dropped out. Are we continuing with that?

Could the minister provide us with a report? I know we have been attending it for some time. Have there been regular reports made? How much is the WNCP costing per year?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I thank the member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to highlight the work of the Western Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education — or the WNCP, as he mentioned. It provides strategic and collaborative leadership based on common goals and principles of curriculum development. The focus is on developing curriculum frameworks based on competencies and assessments for 21st century learning.

On behalf of the three northern territories, Yukon assumed the chair of the Western Northern Canadian Protocol in 2011 and will lead the initiative until 2013. I believe we're turning the chair over to Saskatchewan this year. As mentioned by the member, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the northern territories are involved. British Columbia is not involved in this initiative at this time, and I know that all members continue efforts to try to repatriate B.C. into the work that they're doing.

The cost for maintaining the secretariat, including a coordinator position, amounts to \$300,000 per year over two years for \$600,000, two-thirds of which is recovered by our northern neighbours. That's what we put in. Obviously there is staff time and resources that go into that which aren't quantified. With respect to the reports and the documents that the member opposite is looking for, they are available on the WNCP website. If there is difficulty accessing recent reports, we can certainly look to send him links or provide that documentation to him if he just sends me or my executive assistant a quick e-mail.

Mr. Tredger: I can understand the desire to discuss curriculum with our northern neighbours. I am just questioning whether — with us following the B.C. curriculum, we're getting full benefit from it. It particularly came to mind when the residential school curriculum discussion came up.

We found that both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories were working on a common curriculum and the Yukon decided to opt out and go with their own. It would seem to me that the WNCP would be an ideal fomenting ground for them to get together and to develop that. However, it didn't happen.

I guess my next question would be around the residential schools curriculum and the development of culturally relevant material, like land claims and Yukon history, especially at a younger age — the grade 5, 6, 7 areas. What is being done there? As well as any high school course being developed in terms of land claims, Yukon history, would the minister give the House an update on where the residential school curriculum is and whether the First Nations have been consulted and involved? I assume they would be but can he confirm that? When can we expect it in our schools, at what grade level and will it be a full rollout or will it be put into target school to test the curriculum?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Even though British Columbia is not a member of WNCP, it creates resource materials to support curriculum. The collaborative development of such materials results in huge cost savings for each jurisdiction. Yukon's position as lead over the past couple of years has enhanced our ability to respond from a cutting-edge position on the research into Yukon students' learning needs.

This is, of course, where aspects of the N.W.T. and Nunavut residential schools curriculum — it was at that table that a lot of the discussion took place on how we could put a Yukon lens on that curriculum and adapt it to our experiences here in the territory. I'm sure all members can appreciate that the residential school experiences differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction across the country.

Obviously, there are some similarities, but there are some slight differences that allow us to adapt the curriculum that was developed for the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We will be using that as a template to develop our Yukon-specific curriculum and other resource materials. The Yukon Department of Education recognizes that it is absolutely necessary to tailor curriculum to reflect desired Yukon learning outcomes and to include locally developed materials.

A couple of things — Yukon Education has a workplan with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation to develop a teacher's guide for the book *Finding Our Way Home* to be piloted at the grade 10 level in the fall of 2013. It will be targeted to some specific schools. I don't believe those schools have been chosen yet, but we will certainly work with the school communities to determine which schools are best equipped to manage that rollout for the fall of this year.

Yukon Education has also hired an additional First Nation curriculum consultant, who will be working on the residential schools curriculum and other First Nation curriculum initiatives. One of the things we've talked about with the common start dates is the ability for us to host — I think for the first time — two teachers institutes this summer, which will be a variety of professional development opportunities for our educators across the territory.

Included in that will be the residential school curriculum that will be introduced at the teachers institute and available to those who want to be involved with it. Pardon me — it's training for our teachers with respect to the residential schools and the experience of our First Nation citizens, and that will be held at the teachers institute, one scheduled for the week prior to the Discovery Day long weekend, for those schools that will be starting immediately after Discovery Day, and the second prior to the Labour Day weekend, for those schools that have chosen to start after the Labour Day weekend. Again, Whitehorse area elementary schools will be starting after the Discovery Day weekend, and Whitehorse area high schools will be starting after the Labour Day weekend.

Mr. Tredger: The residential schools curriculum — I missed what grade it would be offered in and whether or not it will be offered to all Yukon students or be optional. Is this something the minister intends that all Yukon students should be taking, or will it be decided by individual schools and individual teachers, in terms of its rollout?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned in my previous answer, it's going to be piloted at the grade 10 level in the fall of 2013, and there will be some schools targeted. We haven't decided which schools will be targeted, with an eventual plan to have that offered across the territory at the grade 10 level sometime in the future. We haven't determined the rollout plan, but the plan is to get to a course offering that involves all grade 10 students in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer.

Last year, we talked a bit about Reading Recovery and Wilson Reading. The instructor/teacher/trainer was away for a year and consequently no training took place. Reading Recovery and Wilson Reading fill an important niche in our schools today. With the demands that are placed on the individual teacher, these programs offer an opportunity to catch children who otherwise may fall through the cracks. They are high-risk students.

While the programs are expensive, talking to parents, teachers, community members and many others, they have long endorsed these programs with letters, through their talks on it, and through their desire to have their children take part in the programming. Reading Recovery is not taken for granted, and has become something that our elementary schools count on, and it is becoming an integral part of their education and education system. Never before has it been so important. In our system we now have over 800 students on IEPs. Some of them for behavioural reasons, some of them academic; many of our classes have upwards of 20 students. The early childhood development index indicated that 38 percent of our students were at risk. That's a tremendous task for teachers.

These two programs have allowed for one-on-one instruction for the students so they are able to catch up and close the gap, in terms of reading, literacy, ability and confidence to interact in a classroom, and the gains have been remarkable.

I would ask the minister if we indeed are going to be training more instructors this year and, if so, how many? Can we continue to ensure the parents in our schools that all our elementary schools will offer Reading Recovery and, wherever and whenever possible, Wilson Reading? Will we continue to strive to ensure that Wilson Reading is offered to all of those students who are at risk and in need of these evidence-based, research-based programs that have been very successful?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think we spoke about what's happening before in the fall sitting of the Legislature during Education debate. Both of those programs are currently offered to our students, of course, but are being evaluated for their effectiveness.

I know I've spoken on a number of occasions, both on the floor and outside of the Chamber, with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun about the need for evaluation and making sure we offer a suite of programs that meets the very diverse needs of our students who are on IEPs and particularly those who require more intervention and assistance. Those programs are currently offered and are currently being evaluated. I'll look forward to reporting back to the House and to Yukon residents on the results of that evaluation and what we can do to ensure the programs we offer meet the needs of our students and we have a

wide range and variety of programs available that are effective. I know the member opposite, as a former educator, speaks about "evidence-based", and those things are important.

As I said, those programs are currently being offered and are currently being evaluated. I look forward to reporting back to members when that evaluation is complete.

Mr. Tredger: I guess I'm a little concerned about that answer. Reading Recovery and Wilson Reading are programs that need a bit of lead time; they need specifically trained teachers. We've already missed one year in terms of training. If we miss another year we will be in jeopardy of not being able to offer it to those students who do need the programming. Reading Recovery certainly has a lot of evidence-based research done and they've kept very clear track of statistics and stuff over the years. I haven't seen as much on Wilson Reading, but when I left education, they were working to develop such a program. I would encourage the minister to at least continue the training until such time as he completes his evaluation. A number of schools and students count on it a lot; a number of parents count on it.

It's just not possible for all teachers who are teaching primary school to deliver the kind of programming that is being delivered through Reading Recovery and Wilson Reading. Those teachers have been trained, sometimes over several years, to recognize situations where there are gaps and specifically teach to those gaps, to encourage the student and develop the competence and confidence to function in a regular classroom. It's not possible for all teachers to replicate that in a classroom situation. That's not that our teachers aren't competent, it's that there is a limit to what they can accomplish. I remember a situation but we'll talk about it at another time. I think it is just so important that those programs continue. I would encourage the minister to ensure that the training occurs next year so that while the evaluation is going on we are not left trying to catch up and having a lag time of two, three or four years before we get back into it.

This department has invested considerable resources, time, money and volunteer time to build up a system. If it's not maintained, it will be very difficult to get that back.

I mentioned the ECDI report — early childhood developmental index — and it indicated that 38 percent of our students are at-risk. I know that the department has looked at transitions and one of the programs they developed was Stepping into Kindergarten. It was initiated in May 2010 and over the next five years new assessment and intervention tools will be available at all schools.

Could the minister please give me an update on the Stepping into Kindergarten initiative?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, I know that the member opposite recognizes the importance of evaluation. With respect to Reading Recovery and Wilson Reading, while those programs continue I think it's always important to evaluate them for effectiveness and ensure that they're helping the students. If there are students that neither of those programs particularly assist — I know I've spoken to principals in some rural schools where perhaps one of those programs isn't as effective as it could be. So they're perhaps looking at different opportunities there.

As mentioned — and I know the member opposite appreciates this — evaluation is key and ongoing evaluation is key to our programs. We certainly want to make sure that we're addressing the needs of those students with special needs, can assist them in their learning and help them become the citizens that we know they can be and reach their potential.

With respect to some of the early learning initiatives and the questions asked by the member opposite, members in the Legislature know that the Department of Health and Social Services currently has responsibility for the ages from birth to kindergarten — so, really, birth to approximately age 5 — learning opportunities, so at the Department of Education we have seconded one of our officials to Health and Social Services to come up with a plan. It's a great partnership that extends down from the ministerial level through the senior officials, and this initiative is underway there. Perhaps once that work is done, there will be an opportunity for us to report back to the House. Perhaps the Minister of Health and Social Services will have some more details on the initiatives that are underway when we start his department later on today.

The other initiative that we currently have in Education is called "Learning Together". It is something that has been piloted over the past number of years at Selkirk Street Elementary School and has been quite successful. There are a number of other jurisdictions that do similar programs.

It is really an opportunity for parents, guardians or caregivers to attend a session with their child, to learn any number of things before they start school, from helping to do homework to proper nutrition, and a number of different aspects about what it's going to take on the home front to assist that child as he or she makes their way through the public school system.

I'm very excited to report that in this current budget, and as part of my mandate letter and our platform commitment, we did commit to expanding Learning Together to other schools. This year, similar programs will be offered in the communities of Watson Lake and Pelly Crossing. Those are the two communities that we picked because we really want to get out into the communities where there are some challenges and reach those families where we know we can hopefully make a real and measurable difference in assisting them as they keep their children engaged through the public school years and helping them adapt to the different aspects of school. I mentioned a couple of things: nutrition, helping with homework and basic functions. There are a number of other initiatives that they undertake there.

We have been very encouraged with what has been happening at Selkirk Street Elementary School with the initial program and look forward to introducing it this year to the communities of Watson Lake and Pelly Crossing with an eye to expand it beyond those communities at some point in the future.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Hanson: I'd like to ask the Members of the Legislative Assembly to welcome to the Legislature Denise Leschart and her husband Bob. Denise is the much-loved and

currently missed face of the NDP caucus. She has been out on an injury. We were hopeful that when we saw her today that she was back, but she is not going to be back for awhile. We're happy that she has dropped in today.

Applause

Mr. Tredger: The Stepping into Kindergarten program was highlighted in the 2010-11 annual report. I just wanted a bit of an update on that. Another item was highlighted in the 2010-11 annual report; I have not seen a report on it, but it states, "During the 2010-11 school year the department started preliminary work on a Resiliency Initiative. Led by Dr. Wayne Hammond, the work will continue during the 2011-12 school year to deliver a resiliency survey to all Grade 3-12 students. The information from this survey will help educators focus programming on social-emotional learning and provide information to inform the Rural Strategy."

That was taken from the annual report.

I believe that survey cost over \$100,000 — maybe the minister could confirm that. It was a community-based survey. It was to include an action plan, and one of the results was to determine community vulnerability. I know, in talking to some of the schools and some of the communities, they talked about how every student, every kid, would end up with somebody they could go to if they were in trouble. The survey was done and the communities were involved — at least, I believe all of them were. Can the minister report on the results of that survey and whether or not there was any follow-up with the students and communities that took the survey? That would be proper — people take part and dispense information, so there should be some follow-up.

Can he tell me how it has informed part of the rural strategy and whether there have been any evaluations or actions taken from the survey?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have that level of detail, and I apologize to the members of the Legislature. I have the 2011-12 annual report with me. I don't have the 2010-11 one.

When it comes to the social-emotional learning, you can find on page 4 of the 2011-12 annual report that it's one of the support practices that factor into the main framework, continually contributing to its overall strength. When it comes to social-emotional learning, it's designed to foster an educational environment based on emotional health by building classroom communities, providing emotional literacy instruction and fostering teacher wellness. It is my understanding that that is one of the key aspects that has led into the rural strategy development.

But as far as the detailed questions that the member opposite asked, I can endeavour to get back to him on those.

Mr. Tredger: I would like to talk a little bit about school busing. I would like to thank the minister and recognize that the school bus company now sends a mini-bus to pick up children at Gentian Lane for Golden Horn Elementary School.

I know that my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, received many calls from parents with safety concerns related to their children being bused to and from the intersection of Gentian Lane and the Alaska Highway. I'm glad that

these concerns were heard, and the bus now goes down Gentian Lane. I thank the minister and the department for responding to that.

I do have another question about busing. At one point, there was talk about using the city bus system to transport high school students to and from their classes. I know the minister was looking into it, or said he would look into it. Is that currently happening? Are high school students being issued a bus pass? Are they able to use the city bus system, or are we continuing to run a dual system in our town? Finally, are there any plans in the future for running a single bus system for high school students?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the Gentian Lane issue, I know there were obviously a couple of occasions where there were some safety concerns with the bus stop there. I'd like to thank departmental officials, particularly the Deputy Minister of Education and our director of finance, for coming up with a solution working with our busing service provider that now works — an interim solution for the balance of this year. We have asked the Department of Highways and Public Works to get out there this summer once the snow melts and do an assessment of a safer pull-off for those students who are coming from Gentian Lane and are accessing the bus on the highway.

Again, a big thank you to department officials for acting swiftly. I know they have received nothing but positive remarks and letters from area residents about the interim solution, which is for a smaller bus, I believe, to go down and pick students up at the ends of their individual driveways.

A number of solutions were explored and this was the one we came up with, and I applaud the officials and the service provider for coming up with that.

When it comes to the city transit aspects that the member opposite asked about, we have run two pilot programs through the environmental stewardship program at the Department of Education. There is a coordinator who looks after environmental stewardship. It offers free public transit passes to high school students to encourage a more sustainable community, and my understanding is that many of the students enjoy it because of the independence they get when they have their own bus pass. I think this year more than 100 bus passes were handed out to students at a variety of high schools, particularly F.H. Collins and Vanier Secondary schools. A couple of students attending the Individual Learning Centre have received bus passes as well.

One of the programs that the Department of Education stepped up this past spring break and funded was a driver training program for students at the Teen Parent Centre.

I know that it has been run one or two years previously, but they were having some funding difficulties and it was a pretty easy decision for us to fund that program, as it has really made a difference in the lives of those young students — those young mothers — when they're trying to balance going to high school and raising a child. I know they were most appreciative. It's certainly something that we in the Department of Education, along with a couple of community groups, I believe, stepped up and funded to allow that independence.

With respect to the pilot programs for the transit passes, we look forward to continuing them and eventually perhaps getting to a point where, with the city's new loop system, we can maximize the number of students who use city transit. I know there is a tender out that closes very shortly for the Whitehorse-area school busing. It does provide for the introduction of public transit for high school students in the event that Yukon Education decides to implement that. So again, over time, as I mentioned, it's hoped that better use of public transit will reduce our busing costs for high school students, as well as reduce the environmental impact that busing incurs.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. It does indeed seem like a win-win situation all around and I would certainly support it, as would teachers, students and parents I've talked to — would support working with the city to develop a system that is economical and more functional.

I'd like to talk a little bit about YNTEP, the Yukon native teacher education program, which was originally designed in conjunction with Yukon First Nations. It was recognized that a lot of our teachers were not First Nation; in fact, very few were. I believe at the time it began, there was less than one percent. The program was successful to a large extent in doing that, but the numbers are still only about 10-percent First Nation teachers in our school system. The program was quite effective; it produced a number of very fine teachers and grads and they've contributed a lot to our school system.

I must say I'm proud of any involvement I've ever had with YNTEP and proud of the YNTEP grads that were in our school. I would like to commend the people of Carmacks, the Department of Education and the Tantalus School because I believe that at Tantalus School the majority of teachers are YNTEP grads. That's pretty exciting to see and it's extremely exciting for the communities.

There was a lot of concern when the intake was postponed for a year. I heard in our briefings that the plan is to have intake again in the fall. I do have a number of questions. The recent review had six recommendations and, while the program is taking students again, we have heard that the YNTEP review will also be continuing. I'm wondering if that review will involve First Nations and what format that would take. Is it government to government or would it be government to CYFN — Department of Education to Council of Yukon First Nations? How are the First Nations being involved?

I'm also concerned that over the years the number of First Nation seats was down and I wondered what is being done to encourage more buy in from prospective students and help them to transition from our high schools into YNTEP? I guess I'm asking the minister if he could provide me an update and assure us that strong cadre, the First Nation cultural component — the supportive cadre that developed in each one of those grades or each one of those years' cohorts — will continue under the new system. What are our expectations? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to the Yukon native teacher education program, yes, there was a suspension of the intake, as the member opposite referenced, and the college has confirmed they will be accepting first-year students once again

for classes beginning in September 2013, after that one-year pause to conduct a program review.

There were a number of recommendations that were made and, over the next four to five years, the program will work with the University of Regina and other partners and stakeholders to build a new teacher education program that's designed with a Yukon lens in mind — a made-in-Yukon teacher education program.

With respect to the way the First Nations are being engaged: of course we're engaging First Nations on this. Based on those recommendations from the external review, the college created a review action committee with First Nation membership to determine the purpose, goal and vision of a teacher education program in Yukon. I'm not on this committee and I'm not sure if there are any First Nation chiefs on it, but there is First Nation involvement. I'll find out what level it is, whether it's officials or whether it's at the political leadership side of things.

I know that during my time at the last Council of Yukon First Nations Leadership meeting, Yukon College was gracious enough to let me jump the queue. Right after, they did a presentation on a number of initiatives that they are undertaking.

Some of the immediate changes to the program are going to include advanced courses for the teaching of reading and shifting from courses that focus on the technical approach of how to teach to courses that address a more philosophical approach, such as: "What does it mean to be a teacher?" "What makes a good teacher?" "What biases does one bring into the classroom?"

Another recommendation of the review is that the program will be integrated into the college's governance, administrative and academic structures. Other review recommendations are to gradually expand program options, share responsibility for the cultural and linguistic component of the Yukon bachelor of education program, campaign to raise the teacher-education profile and establish a transition committee to consider the review's recommendations.

With respect to the internal work with the Department of Education, the director of human resources is going up to speak to this year's graduates. He will talk about the interview process and resumé writing and preparing them to enter the workforce.

I thank the department and the director of human resources for taking that task on as we prepare those students for transition into the workforce.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his update. Experiential learning is of increasing importance, and we've talked about it; the minister has acknowledged it; the department has acknowledged it; First Nations are looking for it; research has substantiated that.

Often there has been discussion about an experiential learning centre. When I'm in the communities, talking to various teachers, they are looking for ways to facilitate that for their own professional development, but also so that they could take their students to a centre or to a place where it could be developed. I know a number of communities would certainly offer their community up as a centre for something like that.

We do have Wood Street in Whitehorse, and it does a wonderful job of involving students.

I wonder if the minister has any updates on experiential learning programs. He mentioned a hub, perhaps out of Carmacks and maybe an expansion to Wood Street Centre School. How is the minister intending to involve more teachers through professional development to give them the skill sets and support to be able to take their classes on trips, to be able to involve their classes on experiential projects within the classroom to extend that, as well as perhaps a centre or a place to bring students to, where model teaching may occur, where experiential activities may be planned?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think there are a number of things when it comes to experiential learning — we have some tremendous success stories. Of course, there is the Old Crow experiential education project. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation released curriculum and resource materials in October of 2012 that were developed for the project, and Yukon Education is sharing this with all of our schools. Many will know the background. I was able to travel with the Chair of Committee of the Whole to Old Crow in September for the launch of their boat. They are very excited and have since been invited back up by the Chief of Vuntut Gwitchin to travel down to the camp. I'm hoping to be able to take him up on that offer.

Some of the other aspects we're looking at with the experiential learning opportunities, which, of course, is our re-branding of the traditional field trips. We think that every opportunity that students have to leave the schools is an experiential learning opportunity.

As far as professional development goes, I know I personally witnessed two of the experiential learning coordinators at the new teacher orientation held in August of last year at Selkirk Street Elementary School.

Perhaps there are some opportunities to introduce some of those aspects at the teacher institutes. As that programming and agenda is finalized, that's something that we can look at. One of the things that we referenced earlier with respect to the rural hubs was a combination of grade 10 cohorts and bringing a larger student community together — or, pardon me, one grade-10 cohort from a variety of schools. The one that I referenced would have been Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Mayo, Ross River and Faro. I know work is still underway, but I think we are close to getting that done and introducing that broader learning community so that those students can take advantage of experiential learning opportunities in different communities throughout central Yukon.

One of the enabling aspects of a more coordinated calendar is that we are able to do that and look to engage students from different schools; whereas before we had a number of different calendars that existed throughout the territory and now, with the two common start dates, professional development opportunities that didn't previously exist with respect to experiential learning now exist, and we're looking forward to taking advantage of those and assisting Yukon learners with any variety of experiential learning opportunities in the current school year and in future school years.

Mr. Tredger: Just another couple of quick questions on that. Can the minister tell me whether the number of field trips or experiential learning opportunities taken year over year have increased or decreased? Do we keep track of those numbers?

As well, if he could give me a brief update on the Wood Street Centre School and measures being taken to increase rural involvement — and how is CHAOS doing this year?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'll endeavour to get the answers to the questions asked on the floor here today. With respect to the number of experiential learning opportunities, the year over year comparison is a level of data I don't have with me here today. I can ask departmental officials to put that together. If it exists, we'll get that data over to the member opposite and try to do a comparison.

When we were talking yesterday about the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's motion about the establishment of a dual-credit apprenticeship high school centre here in the territory and the success of the Wood Street Centre, I referenced attendance numbers. They have some of the best attendance numbers because I'm sure the programs they offer are in high demand and are application-driven and very popular. Students are able to access those from across the territory.

I noted in the paper that there is an upcoming open house at the Wood Street Centre School to talk about their programming and what they offer. I believe it might even be as soon as next week, if not earlier. I'll have to confirm the date on that for members and encourage anyone interested in attending that school or learning more about the programming to go down there.

With respect to the CHAOS program, I don't have any up-to-date information here with me today unfortunately, but perhaps we can address that at another time or if we don't get the opportunity, I can provide that information and an update to members at a later time.

Mr. Tredger: As the minister knows, on-call substitute teachers are not considered "teachers" under the *Education Labour Relations Act*. They also aren't considered "government employees" under the *Public Service Act*. They have no job security; they don't get employee benefits; they aren't covered by insurance; their pay scale is at the bottom of the barrel; but they're expected to be available on short notice whenever needed.

On-call, casual substitute teachers still do not have the option of joining a union. In an *Education Act* review several years ago — I believe it was in 2006 — one of the recommendations was that on-call teachers be given employee status. Any school principal could give the minister an earful about how hard it is to get reliable substitute teachers on a consistent basis, especially those with teacher certification and qualification, because they don't have decent working conditions.

I'm sure the minister has heard of the value substitute teachers provide to our school system. Each day they step into a classroom, they take charge of anywhere from 10 to 20 children and work with them in a strange environment to ensure that learning takes place, to ensure that the lesson plans are followed. They deal with students on IEPs. They sometimes

deal with violent students. They deal with situations where students sometimes feel it's a holiday because there is a substitute teacher there, yet they perform marvelously.

They do our school system an incredible service and we owe them our thanks and we owe them our support. We owe them whatever we can do to ensure that they are recognized as valuable employees. I was a little disappointed when the *Education Act* amendments were brought forward and no mention was made of teachers on call, or substitute teachers.

What is the minister doing to address this inequity? Surely we can't let the status quo continue until the courts force us to make a change. They have ruled in eastern Canada and they have forced the government there to make a change. Is this minister waiting for a court case before he moves or will he do the right thing and enact legislation now?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to this issue, the Yukon Teachers Association brought it to my attention in the fall. I believe it was in November, perhaps even late October — I would have to go back and look. But I recognize the importance of substitutes in the public school system in the territory. Of the 397 substitute teachers we have — just by way of information for members — 188 of them do not possess a bachelor's degree; 75 of them have a bachelor's degree, but not related to teaching, and a further 134 of them are certified teachers. Perhaps that will provide some context for the makeup of our substitute teacher force when it comes to the work they do throughout the territory.

There is a process for legislative changes. We have a number of acts that are in the queue right now for change. The act that the member opposite references is the *Education Labour Relations Act*. Under the provisions of that act, persons employed on a relief, casual or substitute basis are not considered employees and are therefore excluded from YTA bargaining and the YTA collective agreement. I have asked Yukon Education staff to bring forward a recommendation for me to review, so that we can put that into our process and see when the earliest time would be that we can bring that forward.

But I should remind members that when it comes to the *Education Labour Relations Act*, it is the primary responsibility of the Public Service Commission, so therefore the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission will also have to play an important part in these initial discussions when we look to develop that.

Again, I know the member opposite asked if I would immediately table legislation and, of course, the time for that has passed in this sitting. Our Standing Orders only permit legislation to be tabled within the first — I believe it's five days of the sitting — so last Thursday would have been the result. I think all members would agree that we have a full plate ahead of us. We have a budget that's worth well over \$1 billion that we look forward to debating and each department receiving full and fair debate, as well as several pieces of legislation — the ones, of course, that I as minister am personally responsible for, too, as Minister of Education — amendments to the *Education Act*, as well as the *Movable Soccer Goal Safety Act*, and then my responsibility as minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation and the changes to the *Housing Corporation Act*.

I know there are three other pieces of legislation, I believe, that other ministers are bringing forward, so on top of that, there is a supplementary budget on which we still need to have dialogue.

Again, just circling back to including substitutes under the YTA collective agreement: I know this is an important issue for the Yukon Teachers Association that was raised, as I mentioned, in a letter in the fall, but it was also brought up at a meeting that I recently had with the president of the Yukon Teachers Association and two of her senior advisors. It's something that I know is important to them and it's important to me that we give full and fair consideration to the recommendation. I look forward to reviewing it when Yukon Education and the Public Service Commission have been able to do their work and get that in front of our caucus and Cabinet for review.

Mr. Tredger: The minister referenced a New Horizons literacy strategy. Can he talk a little bit about that and how such projects will reach out to rural communities in particular, and how it fits into an overall strategy?

What core funding will be provided to the various non-governmental organizations that are currently involved in bringing literacy to our adults and students?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I thank the member for that question. The development of a new literacy strategy here in the territory is long overdue. There have been many changes in the field of literacy since the creation of the *2001 Yukon Literacy Strategy* for adults — I believe that was the title of that document.

We're committed to supporting literacy as a priority because literacy is a fundamental building block for learning. With respect to the new literacy strategy, we're looking to set strategic direction for early childhood, kindergarten to grade 12 and adults.

As such, we have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Services as they're responsible for the early childhood aspects. In December 2012, the Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services, hosted the New Horizons Education Summit that focused on literacy. The opening event was attended by the Minister of Health and Social Services and me, as well as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. It highlighted a number of the new technology aspects and other things that we are able to take advantage of when it comes to storytelling and literacy. Important work was done beyond that opening day — that opening evening and into the next day. What that summit has led to is the creation of the Yukon literacy strategy and action plan working group, which includes participation by a range of literacy stakeholders including Yukon government departments, the NGOs, First Nations, Yukon College and the business community. This working group is responsible for the development of a new literacy strategy and action plan and the due date is January 2014. It will reflect the many changes in the field of literacy since the creation of the original strategy and it's going to be a driving force behind the government's efforts to prepare adults in Yukon for training and employment opportunities.

That was the 2001 strategy. What we're looking for, again, is a comprehensive and inclusive strategy and action plan to

come out of this. I'll look forward to releasing that after its development. Again, that due date is January of 2014.

Mr. Tredger: Just a quick question on financial literacy. Is the government considering offering any training in financial literacy to high school students? This type of curriculum has been recommended by experts in the financial industry and I believe the minister opposite referenced it at one point as being valuable to our students.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Numeracy, of course, and that financial literacy piece will play an important part in the development of the new strategy and action and implementation plans.

I know the gentleman who spoke at the start of the New Horizons summit in December spoke about entrepreneurial math and how that would have benefited him much more than the other types of math that are currently offered. That was one thing I didn't have an opportunity to talk about yesterday during my time speaking to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's motion on the trades training. Many of those young individuals taking trades training will end up owning their own business someday. They will go out on their own. I think we know many young tradespeople — the Member for Takhini-Kopper King mentioned that, had her career path not taken a different route in 2011, she would own a bakery today. Perhaps a course in entrepreneurial math would have been beneficial to her as it would be for many of the other people who are getting involved in our trades training.

Again, financial literacy is one of the reasons that one of the private sector individuals in particular was very involved in the literacy summit — Wendy Tayler from Alkan Air has been talking to me about financial literacy training since I became the Minister of Education. I look forward to incorporating those ideas in this strategy and the action plan that we are looking to have delivered to us in January 2014.

Mr. Tredger: Yukon student information system — YSIS as it is known, usually with a few adjectives attached. However, I understand that it is going to be replaced, as the company has quit offering support to it. It was a B.C.-driven program. I have a couple of questions around the replacement, in the hopes that we don't make the same mistake this time that we did with YSIS.

Will the information needed be cross-referenced with the Auditor General's report to ensure that the items the department agreed to and the Auditor General asked or suggested that we follow are indeed the information that will be gathered through that system? Will there be staff involvement in choosing of the system? Will there be Yukon modifications made so that it does indeed meet our needs? Will staff time be considered when choosing a system? YSIS was an incredible demand on teachers' time, and it wasn't effective in many ways.

So are these things being considered? How are we going about choosing a replacement? When can we expect some results from that? I guess the last part of that would be to ensure that teachers and staff aren't caught unaware. Reporting is very stressful. Teachers do what we would call "performance evaluations" three times a year on their students. Sometimes in the high school that's several hundred students they're doing performance evaluations for. You can imagine the amount of

work and the amount of time. I know in elementary school — the home room teachers, at least — don't have quite as many students — up to 20, maybe 25; I believe 21 is the max — but each one of those performance evaluations three times a year, each one taking upward of an hour. One can imagine the amount of time that teachers put into the system. So it's incredibly important that any reporting system we have works with the teachers to ease the burden — to make it easier for them to get a report that parents and students can use to develop the child's education.

Could the minister share some of his thoughts on a YSIS replacement — what is being done — and assure me that teachers and administrators are being involved in the development?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When I was doing my initial school tours, particularly in rural Yukon, YSIS was one of the things that was brought up by a number of educators. That was in the spring of 2012, and perhaps even into the fall a little bit, but I did most of the rural school tours then.

One of the first things I would like to say is that the student information system is providing us with some very useful data. The data I've referenced on attendance came from YSIS. I know we're getting accurate data out of the existing system. Some of the bugs are coming out of it; some of them are systemic and some are related to some of the connectivity aspects.

We've had discussions at senior levels with Northwestel about some of the connectivity issues, particularly in rural Yukon. When I was in Ross River, for instance, there were some significant challenges — and some challenges with it in Watson Lake as well. We're working to address that and working with Northwestel to do that.

Pearson School Systems will be decommissioning the current YSIS, and it will need to be replaced by early 2016. The B.C. Ministry of Education has sent out a request for proposals for a new student information system that can be used across British Columbia and hopes that the vendor of that can be selected by 2013. The Yukon has been included on the request for proposals with British Columbia, and therefore cannot approach vendors until the selection process is complete.

We're kept informed about the specifications for the B.C. system, and we'll review the choice made for compatibility and functionality in the territory. However, we intend to select a student information system that addresses our unique needs. Although we're included on the RFP with B.C., we do have the opportunity, I believe, to choose the B.C. system or choose independently. The one thing I should mention, though, for members is that building a system from the ground up is something that is much too costly. It wouldn't be cost effective, so it will have to be a system that is in existence.

This spring, a committee of stakeholders will meet to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and determine requirements for any new student information system. We look forward to including all of our relevant partners in education, when it comes to the use of this system.

Costs we'll need to consider include the system itself, including the possibility of hosting the information — or where it's to be hosted — implementation and training costs and hu-

man resources. I know that for a lot of criticism the current system has taken, it is providing us with very useful data — data that was asked for by the Auditor General and data such as the attendance figures that I was able to present here earlier today in response to a question raised by the Member for Klondike.

Just before I sit down, I would like to take the opportunity to thank those educators — those teachers who are out there — for their patience with the system and for sticking with it and for using the helpline and even for the departmental staff who were involved in it. As I said, it was one of the top topics when I was doing my initial tour. Kudos to those teachers for their patience, understanding and commitment to helping us to provide the data that we need so we can make sound decisions when it comes to programming or increasing the programming for students, or addressing some of the outcomes and the things we need to do to improve those outcomes for our students.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his comments on YSIS.

Yukon is represented by the Minister of Education at the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada — CMEC. We've been a member for quite some time. One of the things that comes out of CMEC is the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program — PCAP. This is an assessment program that assesses core competencies in reading, math and science. Yukon has been doing this for either 12 or 15 years — somewhere in there. We have 12 to 15 years of data. This gives us a strong indicator territory-wide and nationally where we stand in relation to other jurisdictions.

It gives us some information in how we're doing basically in core competencies, as I mentioned, in reading, math and science. That data is invaluable when we're looking at the performance of our students. While we haven't always done as well as we would hope in that, the data has proved information and it has directly shown how we do. I believe our kids are no less competent or less skilled than students in other jurisdictions and can compete. Rather than do away with the PCAP — or Pan-Canadian Assessment Program — we should be looking at how we can improve our students' performance.

Does the minister intend to do away with PCAP? I believe I read that somewhere. If he is, is he replacing it with something?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I should let members know that Yukon was the only one of the three northern territories that participated in the PCAP — or the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program.

The member is correct in what he referenced as far as what it assesses. What I can inform members of the House is that for the current year and the 2013-14 school year, we have decided to suspend the PCAPs at that time. We won't be writing them. The results of the 2010 PCAPs confirmed what we suspected. We have a number of top performing students who are highly successful but we do fall behind the rest of Canada when we look at the number of students who are struggling. So what those results reflect is a need for some focused planning. The department's strategic plan, which was developed by a variety of stakeholders and partners in education, is placing us on the

right path for success for each learner, so we will revisit it. It is suspended now.

One of the new things, as I think members know, is that with the Yukon achievement tests, we have gone from the Alberta-based testing to a British Columbia-based testing. I believe that the Alberta-based testing was grades 3, 6 and 9 and the results — they were often written late in May and there were some challenges. I talked to a number of teachers. I believe that the Member for Klondike and I spoke about the need for YATs and some of the challenges in keeping students engaged toward the end of the school year.

We didn't get the results until the following school year. With the British Columbia grade 4 and grade 7, for this year in particular, we're able to take advantage of a couple of things: one of them is year-over-year performance for those students in grade 3 last year and the students in grade 6 last year who are now writing the grade 4 and grade 7 results, and as well, the testing is done earlier. When I was touring some of the schools earlier this year, they were writing YATs. I was in the Teslin School actually and the students were writing some of the YATs. The YATs have already been written; the results are in and teachers are able to help students improve in the same year, so it's a very positive aspect of moving to British Columbia. It made a lot of sense to me, since we follow the British Columbia curriculum as well, for us to adapt their equivalent testing for this type of thing.

With respect to the PCAPs, we've temporarily suspended them. We'll revisit and take a look at participating in 2015-16, but we're getting some good results and some more timely results from the current Yukon achievement tests.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his response. It's unfortunate that we're walking away from 15 years of longitudinal data that gives us a mark. There are some concerns with the move from the Alberta 3, 6 and 9 based on competencies in Alberta to the 4 and 7 which is a curriculum-based exam. When it is done in February they're halfway through a curriculum. I realize there is something to be said on both sides, but in terms of a teacher trying to prepare the students to get them ready, the grade 4 and the grade 7 ones would cover the curriculum for that year. When it is written in February, they may or may not have covered that by the time the test comes. Because it is curriculum-based it doesn't — like the PCAP or the Alberta test, which I questioned as well. I have many concerns about it.

Again, we have longitudinal data over a long period of time that allows us to see any improvement or any areas that we need to improve. It's important that we consider this when we are changing testing and testing styles.

Further to that, I noted in the annual report that B.C. provincial exams no longer offered optional exams for B.C. and Yukon students. What is the minister doing to ensure that standards in these courses are the same across Yukon now that there isn't a common exam? Or perhaps there is. Are we working with in-servicing teachers to develop a Yukon-wide exam in these optional courses with common expectations? What has been done to assist teachers who are teaching these optional exams and help them prepare to properly assess their students?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to the B.C. provincial exams — the optional ones now — while I don't believe we have common exams currently for the Yukon, there is a common curriculum. One of the enabling aspects of the common start dates will be some common professional development for teachers from across the territory. We are looking forward to bringing that in and watching that grow in the coming years, with the doubling of the non-instructional time that we have for our professional educators. When it came time to move away on the Yukon achievement tests, I've heard positive things from a number of teachers. I think the most disappointed individuals were students in grades 3 and 6 last year because they had to write the grades 4 and 7 YATs this year. It's interesting to travel to a community and see a student in grade 4 tell you that they are stressed out — that's pretty interesting — but I could sympathize with them. I think the member is right — there are arguments on both sides. We certainly appreciate the fact, as I mentioned in my previous answer, that the tests are written and the results are in right now.

We look forward to helping those students reach goals during the school year, before the summer holidays and the summer slide continues, where we spend a lot of time catching up in the early part of the following year. Again, that was one of the downsides to the Alberta-based model, in that the results would come in the following year, and we weren't able to catch up on some of the learning outcomes right away.

With common curriculum for the tests and common professional development opportunities and the positive aspects that come with the B.C.-based assessments in language arts and mathematics, we're able to get a good read. I should say, as I mentioned in my previous answer — just to correct the member opposite — we haven't abandoned the PCAPs; we've suspended the use. We'll review it and evaluate it and take a look at re-introducing those tests in 2015-16. Just to be clear, we haven't walked away or abandoned them, we've just temporarily suspended them while we look to adapt to these other achievement tests in changing from Alberta to British Columbia.

Mr. Tredger: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada — CMEC — recognized a need to assess how our students were doing and what was happening in terms of their use of information technology. Last year, the international communication and Internet literacy skills assessment was done as a pilot project at Porter Creek Secondary School. The assessment tool, provided to target grade 8 students, assessed the skills to navigate the Internet, to critically analyze data, to see whether our children have the skills to be safe and to look at our use of Internet data. All this data is important when designing curriculum and lessons and trying to ensure that our students are in a safe and supportive environment even when they are in a virtual environment.

Can the minister share the report from that assessment last year and let us know whether the tool will be used at other schools or whether this was a one-shot opportunity? I know that CMEC has it out and it is used in many jurisdictions on an annual basis. Are there any plans for Yukon Education to do so?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have a copy of the report or the other information that the member opposite requests, but I'll take a look and see if department officials can access that and, if they can, I will provide it to members opposite.

Mr. Tredger: Can the minister provide us with an update about training of teachers in English as a learned language or what supports are being provided to the schools where there are a number of students, and whether there is any thought to that rollout to schools where it isn't as prevalent — where they're not as many but where there are a few? I know we are doing some things for the schools where the majority of students are in ELL, but what about those where there are only one or two? How is that being coordinated in the department and how is it working?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to English language learners and programming issues and plans by the department, Education provides many supports to the increasing number of English language learners who make the Yukon home. There are approximately 200 identified ELL students or English language learner students in our schools, many of them in the Catholic school system here in Whitehorse, as many of them come through the immigration nominee program from countries that are primarily Catholic — of course, we all know the Filipino contribution to our territory and everything they've done.

A committee that includes school and department staff is looking at the issues related to the programming for ELL students and will be making recommendations for improving supports for students, teachers and parents. Yukon Education will be establishing the British Columbia English second language performance standards as the assessment tool to be used for ELL students in the spring of 2013, with professional development in the fall. There has been a 0.5 FTE consultant support and two FTEs assigned to support ELL learners. I know we've added a number — I believe 17 — of paraprofessionals, the educational assistants this year, on top of the 22 we moved from temporary to term in the first year of this third consecutive majority mandate of the Yukon Party government. There have been some positive aspects taken there when it comes to assigning educational assistants. Of course, all members know that there are budgetary and resource restrictions when it comes to this, and we're doing our best to determine the best way we can support our students.

There are English language learners summer camps that have been held the past two years by Yukon Education. Advanced Education has entered into a contract with the Multicultural Centre to provide free language classes for our adult learners. There are a number of aspects that we are working on. We are trying to maximize the amount of resources that we can with respect to English language learners and the programming issues and plans by the department. With that, I will turn the floor over.

Chair: Would the members like a short break?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order, resuming general debate on Vote 3.

Mr. Tredger: I'm wondering if the minister could give us an update on the status of the endowment lands for Yukon College.

Hon. Mr. Kent: One of our platform commitments was to provide land to Yukon College for the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining — any buildings that would be required under that program — as well as potential land for a new student residence. I know that last year there was interdepartmental work being done on that initiative, as well as providing perhaps more land to the college with respect to their long-term growth horizons and what they anticipate over the next number of years. So, while I had hoped that that work would be completed last year, or perhaps last fall, the work continues, and I don't have anything to report to the House on it as of yet. As soon as I do, I will make that report to the House.

Mr. Tredger: Last year there was an effort to reduce the number of long-term, seconded teachers working in the Department of Education. There was some suggestion to limit their secondment to three years. The seconded teachers do have an effect on schools, as they are replaced by temporary teachers. That means when there is a seconded teacher, their replacement is a temporary teacher in order to keep that position eventually open.

It was agreed that it was a step to reduce the number of temporary teachers as well as to ensure that the positions in the department that were in a sense "permanent" would move to the Yukon Employees Union and therefore the positions would be advertised. Could the minister give us an update on the status of that, the number of positions that are currently seconded from our schools and working in the department and the number of those seconded positions that have been in that position for more than three years?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have that level of detail that the member opposite is looking for with me here today. We can take a look if it's available and provide it at a later date.

When it comes to the teachers, many of them are serving in very important roles as curriculum consultants and in a number of other important roles. I've heard from individuals, including the Member for Klondike, that many of those individuals enjoy the professional development aspects of that. Whether or not any work is undertaken as far as capping the number of years that are available, it's something that we could possibly explore, but those individuals serve important roles.

One situation that was recently brought to my attention was an educator who was working with the Whole Child Society and how important that is. We're endeavouring to work through that as well. There are no immediate thoughts around capping it. Those professional development opportunities are appreciated by many teachers. They play important roles in the department when it comes to curriculum development, among other things.

Mr. Tredger: The question was not to question the value of seconded teachers working in the department. As the minister referenced, it is a valuable professional development opportunity. When those teachers return to their schools, they return with additional knowledge and are often reinvigorated and of extreme value to the schools. The question was about whether or not they are actually in seconded positions — what should be seconded positions — and how long they are in them and how the staffing is done.

I'd like to move on to the Yukon nominee program and temporary foreign workers. The Member for Copperbelt South asked me to bring forward some ideas on temporary foreign workers. It has been of special interest to her. The NDP Official Opposition caucus is very interested in ensuring that temporary foreign workers and nominees are treated fairly, are aware of their rights and are not exploited. We have also been clear that these types of programs must not be used to lower wages and must not replace efforts to provide more training and employment opportunities for equity-seeking groups in the Yukon.

My colleague, the MLA for Copperbelt South, has written the minister on several occasions about the nominee and temporary foreign worker programs, and I'd like to thank the minister — and she'd like to thank the minister — for his detailed responses. In a July 18, 2012 letter to the MLA of Copperbelt South, the minister indicated that there were 1,370 foreign workers who have come to the Yukon through the federal temporary foreign worker program. The federal government committed to a review of the temporary foreign worker program after problems with a mine in B.C. and is conducting a consultation. According to the newspaper reports of the background paper, circulated as part of the consultation, the federal government said that an increasing number of employers are using migrant workers to address long-term structural labour gaps instead of meeting short-term needs.

A document prepared by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada — HRSDC — for the review of the temporary foreign worker program said “Some employers are using the program as a substitute for necessary adjustments such as investments in capital and (re)-training workers, or adjustments in wages.” According to the background paper, more than 300,000 temporary foreign workers and 82,000 in low-skilled occupations resided in Canada in 2011 — triple the 101,000 a decade ago. Was the minister or someone else from the Yukon part of this consultation? What is the Yukon's position in terms of the future of the program and is the Yukon's temporary foreign work annex implemented? If so, is this available to the public?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to Yukon's involvement in the temporary foreign worker program — the review and the different aspects — the Assistant Deputy Minister of Advanced Education is our lead on that file. He or perhaps a designate, when he is not available, has been involved in the meetings. I know he has been the main individual involved in that program and any discussions with the federal government.

However, I had the opportunity to meet with the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Minister

Kenney, when I was in Ottawa for Yukon Days in February. We had a very good discussion about our temporary foreign worker annex and the fact that at the request of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Yukon was waiting for CIC to provide feedback on moving forward with delivering our Yukon's temporary foreign worker program based on the review that the member opposite referenced of the federal temporary foreign worker program that was underway. It is still underway to my understanding. That approach has allowed us to integrate recommended changes resulting from the review to date. These changes will result in a more effective program delivered in line with CIC's direction.

Even though the review isn't complete, it's my understanding that we are ready to move to the next step with our temporary foreign worker annex, and we're looking forward to doing that. I know there's a strong partnership in the Yukon with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. That is something that allows us to work closely with industry and immigration stakeholders in the development of that four-year pilot project administered by the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. It helps ensure that our temporary foreign workers work in a fair and safe environment. The reason we are moving ahead prior to the completion of the review is the annex was targeting two of our main industries, our cornerstone industries — the first being the tourism hospitality sector and the second being the resource exploration and mining sector. That's why we're moving ahead. We're hoping to be able to have the annex in place in time for much of the recruitment that needs to take place by our business community for the summer.

I again thank the federal minister for his attention to this matter when the deputy minister and I met with him and his senior officials in Ottawa when we were down there.

Again, we're anxious to be able to provide human resources to Yukon employers who need them through this annex, building, of course, on the success that we have enjoyed through the Yukon nominee program as well.

Mr. Tredger: The minister said that over 2011-12, four complaints were brought to the department and five employers were excluded from access to the program. Can the minister provide an update on the number of complaints in 2012-13, and have there been any changes on how compliance with the MOU is monitored and enforced?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm just going to pull out one of the briefing notes with respect to the Yukon nominee program and, although I don't have the exact number of complaints, we can certainly get that detailed data. I don't have it with me, so I was able to provide that to the Member for Copperbelt South by way of correspondence over the summer. I thank her for that letter and for allowing me sufficient time to pull together that data and provide her with it. I'm pleased that it has been useful for her in her role as critic for Advanced Education.

When Yukon Education is made aware of possible infractions of the employment agreement — and this is under the nominee program, as we haven't implemented the temporary foreign worker program annex here in the territory yet. So when we're made aware of possible infractions of the employ-

ment agreement signed between the government, the employer, and a Yukon nominee, staff do conduct an investigation. They refer the parties to the appropriate agency or take enforcement action as the investigation dictates. In rare cases, where serious infractions are discovered, the department has the authority to revoke a worker's nomination or ban an employer from the program. The Yukon nominee program — as all members know and indeed all members of the Yukon business and labour communities know — helps to fill critical labour shortages and helps to operate a business where staff are needed.

Many businesses could not succeed without the workers that are provided by the Yukon nominee program. To ensure the program's continued success and to protect our workers, our nominees and our employers, the department monitors the workplaces. Most issues are resolved before they become serious problems, but we do have processes in place to deal with those more serious problems.

Mr. Tredger: Employers using the program are required to advertise locally first. The minister told our office that department staff has the authority to request from employers their interview lists in order to probe why a particular local candidate was not accepted. How many times has the department made this request of employers?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The level of detail that the member is asking for is not something I have available to me. If I did have that level of detail here I would have to make several trips down with briefing books. I can commit to provide any information to the member. Perhaps the Member for Copperbelt South could request that through a letter to me at a later date, such as she did after last year's budget debate, which allowed me to provide the information and get correct information to the member opposite.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer, and I understand that for some of these questions he may not have the information at hand, but I would request that he do forward it when he does have it.

In light of complaints that came forward last year, the NDP caucus asked whether an audit of the program would be conducted. The minister said no and went on to say that Citizenship and Immigration Canada plans to complete further program evaluation of the provincial nominee programs across Canada in the future, which Yukon will participate in. My question for the minister: Has the Yukon nominee program been evaluated by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and is the evaluation available to the public?

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my understanding that Citizenship and Immigration Canada, with some of the emerging issues that surround the temporary foreign worker program, is conducting the review of that first, which I referenced in an earlier answer, and then at a later date will conduct the review of the provincial and territorial nominee programs.

Mr. Tredger: We have also asked about whether there should be an advocate position for nominees and temporary foreign workers, similar to the advocate for injured workers. The minister wrote, "In terms of exploring options for the creation of an independent foreign worker advocate office, there are plans for the immigration strategy committee in the

coming months to discuss this and other options to improve the Yukon YNP."

What is the update? What is the committee's plan to improve the Yukon nominee program? Is an independent advocate position in the works or a possibility?

Hon. Mr. Kent: That option is still being investigated, as well as a scan of other jurisdictions to see what they do. I know that Alberta has a position that exists but, obviously, more individuals who are in the program. When it comes to assigning resources, we want to make sure we have the best use of our resources and that there are partnership opportunities with other delivery agencies or those types of things.

When we're looking into it, we're investigating a number of different options. I spoke with the president of the Canadian Filipino Association of the Yukon about this as well. I'll continue to keep that organization abreast as one of the larger contingents of nominees are Filipino nationals who transition into Canadian citizenships.

Mr. Tredger: That concludes my questions for general debate. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for his patience — and his officials. It is important to me and to the people of Yukon that each budget be discussed fully. As the minister is well aware, there are many things happening in Education and many very good things. I would like to congratulate him and the Department of Education for their efforts and what they're doing for the children of the Yukon. I encourage him to continue. Thank you.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

We're going to start on page 8-6 with Education Support Services operation and maintenance expenditures.

On Education Support Services

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$711,000 agreed to

On Corporate Services

Corporate Services in the amount of \$3,129,000 agreed to

On School Support Services

School Support Services in the amount of \$4,160,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,000,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems

Information Technology Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$51,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Education Support Services Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$51,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,051,000 agreed to

Chair: We're going to move over to page 8-8, public schools. Is there any general debate on public schools?

On Public Schools

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$386,000 agreed to

*On Program Delivery**Program Delivery in the amount of \$88,231,000 agreed to**On Learning Support Services**Learning Support Services in the amount of \$9,666,000 agreed to**On Student Support Services**Student Support Services in the amount of \$2,197,000 agreed to**On First Nations Programs and Partnerships**First Nations Programs and Partnerships in the amount of \$1,750,000 agreed to***Public Schools Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$102,230,000 agreed to****On Capital Expenditures***On Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School Replacement***Mr. Tredger:** Could I get a breakdown of that amount, please?**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I guess it's important for members to know that this funding amount represents the amount for the original design for that construction schedule. As all members know, since setting the budget, the bids for the construction contract have come in at 21 percent above the government's pre-tender estimates. We have spoken at length in Question Period about the principles of fiscal responsibility and the reasons why we've decided not to proceed with the design concept as tendered.

But I think it's very important for Yukoners and especially those involved with the F.H. Collins school community to know that we remain committed to replacing the aging school with a new core building design concept and using a design concept that has been constructed successfully and economically in other jurisdictions. I think one of the other important aspects — and we addressed it briefly in Question Period today — is that we don't have to start from square one. There was an extensive consultation process and building advisory committee process that came up with the core elements and some of the — I don't want to diminish them by calling them this — “wish-list” elements for the new school. We are going to try to incorporate those as best we can.

Many of the individuals who were involved with the building advisory committee that started in 2009 are still involved, either working at the school, working in the department or even some still on the school council. I especially thank those on the school council for their continued efforts on the council side of the ledger. For those individuals who put a lot of hard work and effort into the building advisory committee at the officials level in the Department of Education, the Department of Highways and Public Works, the teachers, the principals and the two vice-principals who were involved, we thanked them for all their work and let them know that we're going to try to incorporate many aspects of what they wanted for a learning model in the new design.

What this funding does reflect is the original cash flow requirements, and it will be adjusted accordingly as we move forward with the revised design over the coming months.

Ms. White: Can I please get the original design cost? How much is the cost of the new design? How much was spent on the original process up to this point?**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for the question. I think this was also something that was perhaps asked at the technical briefing on March 28, so I do have the answer in front of me.

The total expenditures to date for F.H. Collins are \$5,365,500, which are broken down as follows: for administrative costs, \$65,500, including printing and advertising — that type of expenditure; consulting costs, \$3,500,000 — in that is the design, the cost consultants, engineering and commissioning; construction costs to date, which would include the site-work and site prep work for \$1,800,000 — that is, again, site services and utilities.

Of course, we're looking to perhaps utilize that infrastructure in the future when we move forward with a different design. With respect to the new design, obviously we haven't chosen a design yet and there may be some modifications to the design, depending on what jurisdiction — I mean, I can, of course, let members know that the jurisdiction that we're focused in on is Alberta. They have some success in building schools in an economic situation.

They've been constructed successfully and economically, I guess is what I'm trying to say. For instance, I believe four schools have been constructed in Alberta under this model or some similar design to what we're looking at in the range of \$100 million. Obviously, we're not going to get that same price. There will be potential modifications to the design, so once those costs are established I'll be able to communicate those to the Yukon public.

Before I leave, I know that there was a press release just issued and I'd like to update members of the House that discussions are beginning on the possibility of a French first language school at the site of the new F.H. Collins. This is a joint release issued by the Yukon government and the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. Yukon Education and the CSFY have begun preliminary discussions regarding the possibility of building a French first language high school on the F.H. Collins site, which would be connected to the core facilities of the new school.

At a meeting on March 27, with the CSFY trustees and staff, the Deputy Minister of Education and I introduced the idea of building a new French first language high school at the F.H. Collins site. Since then, F.H. Collins School Council members and staff at both schools have been made aware of this possibility. Nothing has been decided. That is very much one of the important things, as this is a very complex issue. We look forward to exploring the possibility of incorporating a French first language high school into the design of the new F.H. Collins, but it is important for individuals to know that it won't delay the F.H. Collins process as a result. However, we want to choose a flexible design, in case a French first language high school is included on the F.H. Collins site. There will be a bilingual public meeting that will take place on Tuesday, April 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the l'École Émilie Tremblay gymnasium. All community members are invited to share their thoughts on in-

cluding a French first language high school that would be able to connect to the core facilities of the new F.H. Collins design. In addition to discussions with the francophone community, the broader F.H. Collins community would also need to be consulted, as well as any of our other relevant partners in education. I think this is an opportunity for us to continue to work with CSFY and perhaps, after consultation is concluded, develop an opportunity to move forward.

So I'm very excited to be able to issue this joint release with CSFY. I'm encouraged by the opportunity to engage in that dialogue with both school communities and the broader francophone community in the territory. I thank the board of trustees for their efforts and their willingness to engage in these discussions with Yukon Education.

Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School Replacement in the amount of \$27,206,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Beaver Creek Library Replacement

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Beaver Creek Library Replacement in the amount of \$130,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Site Improvement and Recreation Development

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Site Improvement and Recreation Development in the amount of \$224,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — School Initiated Renovations

Facility Construction and Maintenance — School Initiated Renovations in the amount of \$125,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Various School Facilities Renovations

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Various School Facilities Renovations in the amount of \$125,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Capital Maintenance Repairs

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Capital Maintenance Repairs in the amount of \$1,516,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Roof Repairs

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Roof Repairs in the amount of \$1,813,000 for roof repairs agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Prior Years' Projects

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

On Instructional Programs — Distance Education

Instructional Programs — Distance Education in the amount of \$25,000 agreed to

On Instructional Programs — School-Based Equipment Purchase

Instructional Programs — School-Based Equipment Purchase in the amount of \$435,000 agreed to

On Instructional Programs — School-Based Information Technology

Mr. Tredger: Could I get a breakdown of that, please — information technology for the \$700,000 increase?

Hon. Mr. Kent: This line item is used to purchase computer hardware, software, network infrastructure upgrades and school connectivity costs. These items are placed directly into the classrooms and computer labs. It also provides funding for upgrading and maintenance of the YSIS software — the Yukon student information system software — used in all school offices and the new school library management software used in several school libraries. The platform that's used in our schools is the Mac platform.

For a funding breakdown, the student information system replacement is \$750,000. We got into details of this during general debate, but again there will be a decommissioning of YSIS and a replacement by early 2016. I mentioned the B.C. Ministry of Education and the RFP and our involvement with it when we were in general debate.

We have \$403,000 assigned to a number of computer labs, including F.H. Collins Secondary School, Del Van Gorder School, Wood Street Centre, Kluane Lake School, Nelna Bessie John School, Ross River school, Takhini Elementary School and the Carcross community school. There are maintenance and support activities of \$140,000 and connectivity charges for schools of \$483,000, bringing that total to \$1,776,000.

Again, the increase over the 2012-13 forecast is mainly due to the student information system and increased connectivity costs.

Instructional Programs — School-Based Information Technology in the amount of \$1,776,000 agreed to

On Instructional Programs — Special Education Equipment

Instructional Programs — Special Education Equipment in the amount of \$70,000 agreed to

On Instructional Programs — Prior Years' Projects

Instructional Programs — Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Public Schools Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$33,445,000 agreed to

Public Schools Total Expenditures in the amount of \$135,675,000 agreed to

Chair: Page 8-14, Advanced Education. Is there any debate? We will move into the lines then.

On Advanced Education

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$261,000 agreed to

On Labour Market Programs and Services

Labour Market Programs and Services in the amount of \$6,995,000 agreed to

On Training Programs

Training Programs in the amount of \$6,643,000 agreed to

Advanced Education Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$13,899,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' projects in the amount of nil cleared

Advanced Education Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Advanced Education Total Expenditures in the amount of \$13,899,000 agreed to

On Yukon College

Chair: Is there any debate?

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Yukon College

Yukon College in the amount of \$22,615,000 agreed to

Yukon College Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$22,615,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Mobile Trades Unit

Mobile Trades Unit in the amount of \$1,100,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Yukon College Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,100,000 agreed to

Yukon College Total Expenditures in the amount of \$23,715,000 agreed to

On Revenues

Revenues cleared

On Government Transfers

Government Transfers cleared

On Changes to Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization

Changes in Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization cleared

Department of Education agreed to

Chair: We are going to move on to Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes while we await officials. Thank you.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We will begin debate in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm pleased to introduce the Department of Health and Social Services capital and O&M budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year. In this budget we're requesting \$325,199,000 in O&M funding and \$12,439,000 in capital for a total appropriation of \$337,638,000.

Before I draw your attention to a few of the highlights contained in this budget, Madam Chair, I thought I would first of all bring all members up to date on a few initiatives that have happened in the department and a few other issues that I know are of interest to all members. I thought I would first of all bring you up to date on the Watson Lake and Dawson City health centre facilities, and the latest updates that I have received from the Hospital Corporation, the multiple sclerosis trials, Mental Health Services, medevac and user fees in care facilities.

The latest information I've received from the Yukon Hospital Corporation is that the issues are still sitting with the bonding company and the lawyers who are working out details

of who will complete construction. The potential new contractor is ready to go.

The last thing the bonding company is doing is negotiating with the subtrades to have as many of them return to the job as possible. Once on-site, the general contractor would then need to go through a thorough assessment of the outstanding work to provide us with new realistic timelines.

In terms of timing, we are currently at least two months behind with Dawson City, but every week's delay puts us further behind, so we could well be three months behind once we start up. If we have substantial completion by the end of June, the likelihood of being able to open the health facilities sooner than late August is slim. Although, again, we can't at this time provide hard dates, what the department has decided to do in the interest of prudence is to continue to staff the health centre in Dawson City until such time as the hospital is once again open.

Watson Lake has approximately between one and two months of work left, and we could possibly have it set up and ready to go within four to six weeks at the very best. So we could conceivably move sometime in late June or July.

Please understand, all members, that these are best guesses, and until we receive more information from both the bonding company and the lawyers they can't be confirmed. What I'm attempting to do is just bring you up to date with the latest information that I have. I will do the same with the other issues and I know last year we had quite a discussion with respect to pharmaceuticals and I'll be only too happy to provide a paper on that for you when general debate continues on Monday.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Graham that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 10, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*, 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. Cathers: 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 5:30 p.m.