

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, December 16, 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 Father Jean-Marie Mouchet

Mr. Elias: It is my honour to rise today to pay tribute to Father Jean-Marie Mouchet, who passed away on Monday, December 2, 2013, in Whitehorse at the age of 96. He was called “Father” because he was a Roman Catholic missionary priest, but for many, many Yukoners, Father Mouchet is the father of Yukon cross-country skiing.

Father Mouchet was born in Malbuisson, France, on May 1, 1917. At the age of four, he was introduced to cross-country skiing, which began his life-long passion for the sport.

Later, during the Second World War, he would patrol the border between France and Italy. He served in the French Resistance and was taken prisoner by the Gestapo shortly before the end of the war. In his words, “I experienced the dark side of humanity.”

Thankfully, he was among those who survived the brutality of the Second World War. Perhaps it was his war-time experience that shaped his gentle and calm personality. He studied theology and was ordained as a priest in 1945. He would serve the church through the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, which included taking the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He dedicated his life to sharing the gospel values of reconciliation through forgiveness, peace, hope and love. I think everyone who knew Father Mouchet knew him as a man who was forgiving, peaceful, hopeful and loving.

He immigrated to Canada in 1946 and to the Yukon in the 1950s. He spent years serving Watson Lake, Teslin, Carcross, Telegraph Creek and Ross River as a missionary.

In response to a desire by the Roman Catholic Church to establish a mission for the Vuntut Gwitchin in 1955, Father Mouchet moved to Old Crow with a mandate to evangelize the community and to build a church. It would be the beginning of a 25-year posting. Although warmly embraced, it became apparent that his parishioners were not going to go to his building, so Father Mouchet decided to go to them.

He combined his missionary work with his passion for cross-country skiing and, rather than compelling the community members to come to his church and be converted to the western concept of religion, he quickly recognized that the people of Old Crow could pray and be closer to God through skiing because of their exceptional physical and

mental strengths. He immediately recognized that the local youth were physically active, so he started a cross-country skiing club in Old Crow, both as a way of connecting with his parishioners and as a way of helping the First Nation youth of the community develop the life skills they would need to be successful in a rapidly changing world. Thus, the territorial experimental ski training program, or TEST program, was born.

I have been recently told so many stories of the fond memories that the people of Old Crow have, and it’s obvious that Father Mouchet has truly touched everyone’s heart in our little community. That’s why we feel we have recently lost a family member.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most famous examples of the success of his skiing program are Sharon and Shirley Firth, who qualified for Canada’s national cross-country team. I’m given to understand that they competed for 17 consecutive years on the World Cup circuit and at four Olympic Winter Games — in Sapporo, Japan in 1972; in Innsbruck, Austria in 1976; at the 1980 games at Lake Placid; and in Sarajevo in 1984. Their 79 medals prove that they were world-class skiers and, Mr. Speaker, that is a testament to Father Mouchet’s vision.

Another northern athlete who also excelled was Martha Benjamin of Old Crow. She won the Canadian senior women’s championship in 1963. As a mother of five children, she became the first Yukoner to win a national skiing title. It would be a long list of those Yukoners and northerners who have achieved success and championships in competitive skiing because of Father Mouchet — too many to name here today.

When Father Mouchet moved to Whitehorse in the late 1960s, the TEST program quickly became very popular. From its modest start with seven pairs of skis at Takhini Elementary School, cross-country skiing has gone on to become one of the most popular sports in our territory.

Father Mouchet is the patriarch of cross-country skiing in our Yukon. He was instrumental in introducing the sport to the region, and his remarkable strength and dedication has left a mark not just on the north, but on all of Canada. Father Mouchet’s approach to coaching shows that positive, constructive encouragement and persistence can yield great returns. He believed that sports training and the confidence and motivation it inspired would serve as a tool to build stronger communities across the north.

Father Mouchet has received so many distinguished awards and has been recognized locally, nationally and internationally. He was inducted into the Yukon Sports Hall of Fame in 1980. He received the Yukon Commissioner’s Award in 1981. He was awarded the National Order of Merit in 1987 from the president of France. In 1993, he received the Order of Canada in recognition of his 50 years of dedication to the people of the north. Just a few weeks ago at the Sport Yukon awards, Father Mouchet was named skier of the year by the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club.

Father Mouchet, the author, also wrote a book titled *Men and Women of the Tundra*. This book is about the exploits and

activities of this very unique individual and the communities of Telegraph Creek and his 25 years in Old Crow. I'll take this opportunity to quote some individuals.

Mr. Ken Coates wrote of Father Mouchet that "All who have been subjected to his gentle prodding, who have heard him speak of the importance of 'motivation' and have had him press them to set new, lofty goals for themselves, carry those lessons with them forever."

Marie Jo Mouchet from France said that his mission was to give humans their dignity rather than to convert them.

Yvonne Frostad shared that sometimes she would call to invite him and he would say, "What time is supper — at 6:00?" she said, "We loved it. He would come and the first thing he'd ask is, 'What's for dessert?' He'd gauge how much dinner he would eat by how much space he wanted for dessert. Tiramisu was his favorite. I don't think it's a coincidence that he passed away just a few hours after our fridge quit. We will miss him."

Father Mouchet was the embodiment of the principles behind sport for life as he continued to ski the trails of Whitehorse well into his 90s. He lived his belief in the power of sports and physical well-being.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I would also like to convey my sincerest condolences to Father Mouchet's family and to the many friends who were with him during his final days. Father Mouchet helped shape a generation. I believe that it would be fitting for the greater Yukon community to come together, discuss and recommend a commemoration for Father Mouchet, for he is truly a legend.

It is important to note that there is the Father Mouchet scholarship fund that is administered by Sport Yukon and the funds will be directed to struggling, competing cross country skiers who are on the Yukon cross country ski team. I encourage all to contribute.

All of us in the Yukon have benefitted from his example and his encouragement. His vision and energy have made the north a stronger and better place. As tradition holds, his cross is on its way to Rome in recognition of his service in the north.

He might have been born in France, but he was one of us — a northerner through and through. That was exhibited by the hundreds of people who attended his funeral service on Tuesday, December 10 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral. It was an emotional moment as his body was leaving the church underneath an arch of hundreds of skis held by Yukoners.

I will conclude by quoting part of his eulogy. It said, "Today, we gather in the glory of a winter's afternoon to celebrate the life of Father Mouchet. It is difficult to mourn the life of a man who lived so fully. Yet there is a sorrow that comes from walking into a world that Father Mouchet has left. We have lost a coach, a mentor, a friend, a priest and so the sorrow is ours."

Qu'il repose en paix. Thank you, merci, mahsi' cho, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Hanson: I too am honoured to pay tribute today on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to Father Jean-Marie Mouchet.

As was mentioned, Father Mouchet was born in Malbuisson, France in 1917. He entered the Notre Dame novitiate to study to be an oblate priest. His studies were interrupted by the Second World War, during which time he joined the French alpine division of the army. He trained French troops how to ski in the mountains between France and Italy. He was captured in 1944 and served a brief time in a prisoner-of-war camp.

After ordination as an oblate priest in 1945, he came to Canada, serving first in the Telegraph Creek, Iskut region in northern British Columbia. He was there from 1946 to 1954, beginning a life devoted to learning from the people.

He also brought with him his passion for skiing. Last week, I talked with Bonnie Dalziel, who grew up in Telegraph Creek. She described how Father Mouchet introduced her to downhill skiing. Together, they made a pair of skis from some wooden planks that they carefully steamed and bent. They used snowshoe bindings to tie the skis on. Like so many others, she said the care and commitment that Father Mouchet demonstrated in challenging her to try this new and demanding activity contributed to the development of the tenacity needed to live a full and rewarding life, and she said her own children later took part in ski programs in the Yukon.

Father Mouchet's approach was that of a listener. As he reflected in later years, he would ask himself, "What am I doing here? I am a foreigner; an intruder. On the other hand, if you are humble enough to admit that you are an intruder and you do your best to learn from the people, to share their humanity, to live side-by-side with the people, to talk with the people and then to listen, to see them communicate — above all, to see how they live — you can offer a sort of dialogue. This place, the north, was primitive in so many ways, but it offered me a wealth of knowledge and contributed to my own development," he said.

Father Mouchet later said of his arrival in Old Crow in 1954, "When I arrived in Old Crow, I knew nothing. I was shocked to find an independent, self-sufficient society where they did everything for themselves. Nature was everything. It sustained and defined them as a people."

He came to realize that the traditional lifestyle still being lived in Old Crow when he arrived was under threat. He spent much time observing and challenging his own perceptions. For example, he said, "One day I asked an elder, 'Why do you make your kids run ahead of the sled dogs?' I said, 'It is cruel. You shouldn't do that. They're kids, nine or 10 years old.' He turned to me and said, 'To live here, they have to be hunters. They need endurance to run after the game.'" Father Mouchet said, "Then I understood they were being trained. They needed to be taught to exert themselves, to make effort."

It was that value of effort that was to lead him to develop an extraordinary approach to working with children, to develop what became the territorial experimental ski training program, TEST. He had watched the society in Old Crow transform over 25 years and, in the late 1950s, he began to see

evidence of poor health and a lack of self-esteem, some of which we now know was attributable to residential schools experience. As Father Mouchet saw it, it, the First Nation culture, was all being swept away to bring them this white society. He went on to say that he feared the Old Crow society and culture would disappear, and if the culture disappeared, so too would the people, through disease, alcohol and so on.

He believed fundamentally that physical fitness is key to self-worth. He had seen it when he first met the Vuntut Gwitchin. He was very impressed at that time by the fitness of the northern people. It was interesting to read that his observations were confirmed by a group of Norwegian physiologists who visited the village in 1959 and found that many residents there had the fitness levels of elite athletes.

He started to work with the people to develop that cross-country ski program that he described as being beyond fitness — it is a philosophy.

Father Mouchet worked out of Inuvik and Old Crow, developing the ideals of the TEST program. Many of his cross-country skiing protégés achieved national and international success. A May 2012 article in *Up Here* magazine reflected that, despite the fact that Yukon accounts for just one-thousandth of Canada's population, there is a sense that time, tradition and community commitment have created a rare skiing culture in the Yukon, a culture that produces champions.

It went on to say that when you see that kind of strength in a ski club, usually there is a history, and around that history it creates culture — a history that is perhaps best captured in recounting the tale of the 1963 Canadian senior cross-country ski championships in Midland, Ontario, where Martha Benjamin, a mother of five and lifelong resident of Old Crow, raced for the Yukon. When Benjamin crossed the line ahead of the pack in the women's 10-kilometre race, she became the Yukon's first skiing hero.

The front-page headline in the *Whitehorse Star* the next day read, "Martha Beats Them All". Benjamin's coach, Father Jean-Marie Mouchet, told the paper, "Martha is steel, straight steel. She could go on forever. Old Crow skiers have the ability to find a source of energy that we don't know exists." The article went on to say that, "In the program's heyday, TEST's skiers flourished. Benjamin was the program's first champion." Glenna and Mary Frost, also from Old Crow, were the top Canadian junior champions. "A few years later, Sharon and Shirley Firth, Gwich'in twins from Inuvik, emerged to compete in four straight Olympics."

When Father Mouchet moved to Whitehorse in 1968, he continued to work on spreading the ideals of the TEST program. TEST has affected the lives of hundreds of Yukon youth. This really was evident at both the vigil the night before Father Mouchet's funeral and also during the funeral ceremony.

Many people spoke of how difficult the TEST program was and how much Father Mouchet pushed each person to achieve their personal best. As one person said, "Father believed in our potential and pushed us until we began to see

it for ourselves." This, of course, was not just about skiing; it spilled over into all aspects of life.

Gary Bailie, a former national ski team athlete who began skiing with Father at the age of 8, recalls the tough lessons of the TEST Program. He said it was all character building. The aim of the TEST program was to develop character in young children through cross-country skiing. People who have a good work ethic and know how to be healthy and how to live well will be successful in the rest of their lives.

Gary Bailie is now the coach of the Kwanlin Coyotes, and he credits Father for changing his life in a positive way. Glenna Frost, now Tetlich, who spearheaded a five-year pilot program in the mid-2000s to reintroduce the fitness regime and ski program that Father Mouchet had introduced to Old Crow, said, "I got from him that our most valuable resource is children. He often said he wants me to work with the young mothers. He'd say: 'We have to work with the children from ages six to nine. After that, they're finished.'"

This is an interesting point. When Father Mouchet was asked to go back to Old Crow to help community members start a program similar to what he had done years before, the National Film Board captured the project in a remarkable film called, *The Challenge in Old Crow: The Hope of a New Generation*. The film depicts the struggle of the five-year project to take children ages seven, eight and nine and build them up, develop their physical fitness to make them healthier — not just physically, but mentally and psychologically.

Father Mouchet was quite specific about focusing on the young child. He said that a child of six, seven, eight or nine does not do exercise like a 12- or 13-year-old. The younger child has no hangups. When they get to be 10, they start to identify with society, so you have to give them a foundation before they move into that society. As he put it: "It's not a question of changing society, but of infiltrating it with healthy, young people."

I think it probably goes without saying that Father Mouchet was not enamoured of institutions. He despaired whether the school system could or would ever embrace the importance of linking physical health and resilience to intellectual development and achievement. As he said: "Just outside the school, you have nature, which for millennia has helped these people to develop into extraordinary human beings. You have a unique and remarkable culture."

He believed it was, as he said, time to shake things up so something new can emerge. When it came to the institution he represented, Father Mouchet was equally unorthodox. He dressed in casual clothes; he would often say that skiing and hiking were like being in the biggest church you could find in the world. One of his relatives commented at the vigil that they timed him when he said mass and 14 minutes, 20 seconds was the record. He told them that they could be happy and laugh during mass; that God liked that. I can say that I can recall being in Carcross at mass and I thought it was a record at 15 minutes, so when the fellow — his nephew — said the 14 minutes, 20 seconds, anybody who has gone to Catholic mass would be quite surprised.

Whitehorse residents and visitors alike who enjoy the access to the beauty of the Yukon River that was made more accessible by the completion of the Millennium Trail also owe Father Mouchet a nod of thanks. His vision and stubborn insistence on the potential for this urban link to nature is legendary. One former city official described visits from the then octogenarian, who roller-bladed to City Hall, to talk about the reasons why the trail should be built. It is fitting that the trail has been dedicated to him.

Father Mouchet, as has already been said, is recognized locally, nationally and internationally. In addition to the awards that were already cited, it's important to note that just days before he died on December 2, he was inducted into the Northwest Territories Sport Hall of Fame. The Canadian Museum of Civilization archival collection includes 159 photographs of the Vuntut Gwitchin taken by Father Mouchet in the 1960s. He donated his slides to the museum for long-term access and preservation, knowing they would be extremely important to present and future generations in showing the traditional way of life in Old Crow.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from a blog post by Pavlina Sudrich, another young Yukon athlete whose life was transformed by her relationship since childhood with Father Mouchet. She wrote, "In our last conversation, Father reminded me that skiing is another form of prayer."

Father Jean-Marie Mouchet passed away on December 2, 2013 at the age of 96. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment — I was going to try to identify them, but I just realized there are so many — to welcome the many friends of Father Mouchet, who are here with us today in the public gallery to share in this tribute to Father Mouchet.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: I will endeavour to identify some. We have Philippe and Amanda Mouchet; we have Mia Lee; we have the Frostads, who I refer to as Mr. and Mrs. Frostad; we have Bonnie Dalziel; we have Don and Marguerite Roberts, we have Dave Brekke and many more. Thank you so much for coming.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Hassard: I have for tabling the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the federal government to establish long-term funding for the national immunization strategy for vaccine-preventable diseases as a fiscally responsible way to safeguard and promote public health.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Yukon municipal governments to determine new ways for municipal revenue generation as discussed in "Our Towns, Our Future" report.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release the results of the \$609,000 Yukon visitor tracking program exit survey by the end of 2013 as promised by the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Canada Pension Plan

Ms. Hanson: Headlines in the national news today are about the federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers meeting in Meech Lake to address the Canada Pension Plan.

Two in three Canadian workers do not have a workplace pension plan. One-third of Canadians cannot save enough to retire with dignity and security. Less than 25 percent of Canadians were able to contribute to an RRSP last year. Last week, the Deputy Premier refused to answer whether or not the Premier and Minister of Finance supports expanding the Canada Pension Plan to provide Yukon workers with better retirement security.

Curious people are wondering why the Minister of Finance is here today and not at this important meeting — a meeting that will have an impact on thousands of Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Certainly the subject of the Canada Pension Plan is one that has spurred a lot of debate within the ministries of Finance across this country. What we know at this point — in fact through the meeting today — is that we still don't have a consensus across this country on how to proceed. What there is a consensus on is to continue studying this issue, because it is in fact quite a complicated one. We need to really understand the economic climate and do the due diligence that is required to ensure that when changes are made, they can in fact be targeted, because there are only specific areas within the workforce where there is a need to be able to look at how we can modify their potential for increasing pensions. We will continue to work in culmination with the other ministries of Finance across this country.

There have been some very innovative ideas that have started to come forward. For example, in Quebec they are now proposing there could be an additional benefit to seniors once they reach the age of 75. Some people are talking about an employee contribution only. There are many different opportunities right now and we look forward to further discussion and to moving forward as a country on this.

Ms. Hanson: In fact many studies have been going on for a number of years and the reality is that many Canadians are struggling to get by. Indeed, many Yukoners are struggling to get by.

Most of these people have full-time jobs but they cannot afford to invest in RRSPs. Those who can afford to invest in RRSPs, mutual funds and other retirement tax schemes have seen their investments wiped out or seriously eroded with the tech-market crash in early 2000s or cyclical stock market downturns. Market-based retirement programs do not always offer the stability and security of the Canada Pension Plan.

Mr. Speaker, again, would the Minister of Finance tell Yukoners what his position would have been on Canada Pension Plan expansion at this important meeting, if he had attended?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I find it interesting — the comments that the Leader of the NDP has when she talks about the fact that people are struggling to make ends meet. What we're talking about with an enhancement to the Canada Pension Plan is actually taking more money out of those people's pockets so that their take-home pay every week — or how often they get paid — will be less than it is now. Not only is that a concern for those people — and I've heard that from many working-class people who are concerned about how much money they take home — but it's also a concern for small businesses as well, because small businesses contribute to the Canada Pension Plan, as well.

A lot of people will say that this is really another tax by a different name. You're right — we need to continue to look for ways to help those people ensure that they can provide the savings for themselves that they're going to need for their retirement in that targeted area right now, where it has been identified that there needs more work to be done.

We are also concerned — what we're hearing from people is, "I don't want more money taken out of my pocket at this point in time." There are some opportunities out there right now for people without access to RRSPs. Yukon is the first jurisdiction before any of the provinces to be able to go forward with pooled pensions and there are tax-free savings accounts, as well.

Ms. Hanson: The last time the Canada Pension Plan contributions were increased in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the sky did not fall. In fact, economic indicators like the unemployment rate improved. The federal Finance department's own research shows that Canada Pension Plan expansion will bring long-term economic benefits to our economy by putting income in retirees' pockets. Expanding the CPP could be done through modest and affordable increased contributions and would be phased to allow workers and businesses time to adjust.

We know market-based retirement schemes carry a high risk. Despite this, this government continues to promote registered pooled plans that would leave Canadian and Yukon workers' retirement savings tied entirely to the ups and downs of the markets. Why is the Premier not prepared to join other premiers in calling for modest CPP increases that will allow Yukon workers to save for a more secure retirement?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As I mentioned at the beginning, there is not unanimity across this country on what is the proper and the best way to move forward in this difficult situation — one that is very complicated — and there are many different avenues being looked at.

The chief actuary did his tri-annual report for 2013 that came out and said, at the rate of 9.9-percent contribution at this time, that even acknowledging that we have a tremendous amount of people who will be retiring and a smaller work force, the Canada Pension Plan is sustainable for at least the next 75 years.

What we can talk about is the financial record of this government, and as a result of that financial record, some of the support that we do supply — for example, the seniors income supplement and the pioneer utility grant — are things that the opposition have voted against.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that the position of the Yukon government on this issue and all the issues that were discussed at that meeting are well-articulated with the federal minister because the federal minister did call me personally yesterday. I had the opportunity, instead of being in a room with 12 other Finance ministers trying to speak to the federal minister, to have a one-on-one bilateral with the federal minister to not only talk about those issues that were on the agenda, but also to continue to move forward those things and priorities for Yukon.

Question re: Patient safety reviews

Ms. Stick: On November 6, the minister assured this House the Yukon Hospital Corporation would, "...immediately investigate any of these adverse events..." The minister also said, "I have that confidence that patient safety reviews are underway or have been completed for the two adverse events in Watson Lake."

The two events the minister was referring to are the deaths of two patients at the Watson Lake hospital in 2012, Teresa Scheunert and Mary Johnny. We know that the hospital did not immediately investigate the death of Mary Johnny and that, in fact, no one spoke with her family members for well over a year after the death of their loved one.

Can the minister inform this House whether or not a patient safety review of Mary Johnny's death has been completed or is underway?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm very sorry, but I can't provide that information at this time. I will be pleased to obtain the information and inform the member immediately upon receipt.

Ms. Stick: In the past, the minister has been confused when I quote from the coroner, saying he's not sure I'm speaking facts.

Today I want to make sure that he knows that I will now quote from the coroner's judgment into the death of Mary Johnny — and I quote: "The physician's decision-making processes in this case were not clear because of the lack of documentation. It would appear that a misdiagnosis of alcohol withdrawal/delirium tremens was made."

The Yukon coroner issued judgments on two different Watson Lake hospital patients for the summer of 2012. One patient's surviving family was contacted by the hospital, the other not.

One patient's death was the subject of a patient safety review, but it appears, or it's unclear, whether the other occurred or not.

Can the minister responsible explain the two different systems' responses to these two deaths?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm not confused about the facts that the member opposite presents. There is no confusion whatsoever. I know, in fact, that some of the facts — shall we say — that she presents are not facts. She presents a lot of stories that she hears on the morning news and passes them off as facts when they are simply not true, not accurate.

Because I don't have the information at hand, I won't speculate nor will I pass off speculation as fact. I'll get the information and return it to this Legislature.

Ms. Stick: Another question on the same subject — the minister said patient safety reviews would be — and I quote — "an opportunity for identification of systemic gaps and improvement activities that focus on system safety." These are his ministerial responsibilities.

The coroner went on and made this recommendation — and I quote: "Steps should be taken to address why documentation was incomplete and, as appropriate, to provide the physician with peer feedback with respect to the care provided in this case."

Yukoners have a right to know if the coroner's recommendations to the Yukon Hospital Corporation have been followed.

Can the minister responsible for the Yukon Hospital Corporation tell Yukoners if the physician who attended Mary Johnny has been provided with peer feedback regarding both the fatal misdiagnosis of Mary Johnny —

Speaker: The member's time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Graham: It is interesting to me to note that the member opposite is finally quoting from the coroner's report and believes that that report was somewhat valuable. I hope that she has the same attitude when the coroner's inquest begins early next year.

The member opposite doesn't seem to understand what the patient safety report is all about. The patient safety report is something that's done internally. It's done in an atmosphere where all medical practitioners can participate in a very honest and forthright manner because many of the incidents that occur are not incidents that will be reported to the general public. I have every confidence in the Hospital Corporation and the medical practitioners there to go through the patient safety report as they normally would and provide that feedback to the doctors, nurses or other medical folks who

were involved with the system. Those facts are not going to be publicly distributed because of the confidential nature of some of the revelations during the patient safety review.

Question re: Mining legislation

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Premier. As we begin the final week of the fall sitting, it is becoming very obvious that the government does not want to debate Bill No. 66, legislation to make several changes to the Yukon mining legislation. There are four days left and the only place so far where we've had an opportunity to ask direct questions about this bill is here in Question Period.

One day last week the minister responsible for the legislation made introductory remarks and then shut down debate on the bill before members of the opposition were allowed to ask questions. Now, we know the legislation is not supported by either the mining industry or the First Nations, and the government, instead of being open and accountable, is playing hide-and-seek with this important bill.

Mr. Speaker, why is the government ducking debate on this bill?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to clarify one of the things the member opposite said, we did get into introductory remarks in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 66 last week. I adjourned debate at 3:15 p.m. to welcome officials from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation. It wasn't that long ago, Mr. Speaker. I would have anticipated he wouldn't have forgotten that already.

When it comes to Bill No. 66 and the work that we have to complete this week, I am encouraged by the progress that we're making through Committee of the Whole with the remaining departments, and I look forward to debating Bill No. 66 through Committee of the Whole before the House rises on Thursday of this week.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, this is day 25 of a 28-day sitting. There has not been a single opportunity to ask questions, other than in Question Period, because the government won't call Bill No. 66 for debate.

At this time of the year last year, the Yukon Party government brought forth another resource bill that was unpopular when it made changes to the *Oil and Gas Act*. They didn't allow questions on that bill either.

The government has a bad habit of refusing to debate important bills that it doesn't want to defend and using their majority to pass them through this House. Mr. Speaker, I would like the opportunity to ask questions and to get some answers on Bill No. 66. When will the government allow this to happen?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Business of the House for today is to debate in Committee of the Whole Bill No. 11, *Second Appropriation Act, 2013-14*. We have four departments called — Education; Environment; Energy, Mines and Resources; and Executive Council Office. We're anticipating that the opposition will endeavour to ask their questions in a timely manner. This isn't just a one-sided affair. The government answers questions that are asked by the opposition.

With regard to Bill No. 66, the member opposite has selective memory when it comes to this piece of legislation. We went through second reading. That was an opportunity for opposition members to put forward their feelings with respect to the bill. The Member for Klondike, earlier on in this session in Question Period, indicated that he had already made up his mind prior to even receiving a briefing on the legislation.

With respect to Bill No. 66, we have four days left in this sitting for House business. I would anticipate, if we're able to get through other business of the House, we will be calling this bill for Committee of the Whole, something that has already started and started last Tuesday.

Mr. Silver: I'm glad that the minister is confident that we will actually have active debate in this House on this very important bill. I have lots of questions regarding the changes that the government is making to Yukon mining legislation — so do miners and so do First Nation governments. We know that there was little consultation with anyone before the bill was written. We know that the government decided not to share the bill with anyone before tabling it in the House. We know that both industry and First Nations are unhappy with the way this government has handled the entire episode. We know that the bill goes well beyond implementing a single court decision and that it contains new provisions to address land use planning issues.

When will Bill No. 66 be called for debate?

Hon. Mr. Kent: This gives me an opportunity to go through some of the issues around Bill No. 66 and where it arrived from. This is stemming from the court case last December between the Yukon government and the Ross River Dena Council.

There were two declarations made in that court case, one of which we decided to accept and one of which we decided to appeal. The one that we decided to accept has led to the changes that are before this House to the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* to the class 1 notifications that are required for First Nations before class 1 exploration activity can take place. There has been consultation that was conducted through June and July of this year, as well as additional work done in August, September and October through the development of the legislation and the regulations.

There is a substantial amount of business left before the House — important questions on Education that I'm sure the Member for Klondike would like to ask, important questions left on Environment and important questions left on Energy, Mines and Resources.

When it comes to the speed of debate and how we are able to deal with different departments and different bills, our expectation on this side of the House is that we conduct our business in a timely manner but the members opposite have to remember that, too. One only has to remember the three-and-a-half-hour economic action plan put forward by the NDP one Wednesday afternoon.

Question re: Agay Mene Territorial Park

Mr. Barr: During the sitting, the Minister of Environment repeatedly told this House that it is simply

inaccurate to say that a proposed Agay Mene natural environment park is not adequately protected. In fact, he fundamentally disagrees with this statement.

The Carcross-Tagish First Nation final agreement was signed in 2005. Since then, the southern area of Agay Mene park, near Tarfu and Snafu campgrounds, now has 14 mineral claims staked. How can the minister claim that Agay Mene is adequately protected when his government has allowed mineral staking to occur within the boundaries of Agay Mene Territorial Park?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: When it comes to any of the parks that we have in this territory that were arrived at through negotiations and land claims, I am quite confident and satisfied with the level of legal protection that is enabled there. Last week when we debated this in Committee of the Whole, both the member opposite and his colleague asserted that, for some reason, they thought there was not adequate legal status of these parks. That's something that I fundamentally disagreed with.

When it comes to the specific case of the Agay Mene Territorial Park, the steering committee for that is not currently active, at the request of the First Nation, because they don't have the capacity within their First Nation to appoint people to that steering committee. So, the planning work is not currently underway but we are optimistic it will continue in due course.

First of all, we would like to see substantial process in Kusawa. We feel that the terms of reference we've arrived at there with those First Nations are a positive step forward and could be brought forward in to the Agay Mene process as well.

I look forward to that park management planning activity going forward very soon, but we need our First Nation planning partners at the table, and they're not able to be at the table right now, when it comes to Agay Mene. When they are able to come forward and work with us on a management plan, we will be ready, willing and able to do that.

Mr. Barr: The proposed Agay Mene natural environment park currently has 14 mineral claims staked. These have happened under his government's watch since the signing of the *Carcross-Tagish First Nation Final Agreement*. On November 25, 2013, the minister asserted that — and I quote: “The decisions and recommendations about whether or not withdrawals need to be taken come from those management planning activities...”

Is the minister saying that he is comfortable with active mining projects occurring within Agay Mene natural environment park?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: What I'm comfortable saying is that we will engage our First Nation planning partners on the development of management plans for each and every one of our parks that have been arrived at through the land claims process in this entire territory.

When it comes to any of these parks, we have an obligation to work collectively with the First Nation to come up with management plans for these parks. We have done that in areas throughout the Yukon, like the Tombstone Territorial

Park. When it comes to the Kusawa park, as I said, we have arrived at terms of reference that we feel are a positive step forward — not just for that particular park, but for park planning throughout the territory. In the case of Agay Mene, specifically, that territorial park had a steering committee but it is no longer active at the request of our First Nation planning partners.

The committee members were appointed, and Yukon government is prepared to resume planning in work with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council as soon as they are ready to do that. I am confident that our First Nation planning partners and the Yukon government will be able to come together and arrive at a management plan for that particular territorial park, but in due course and in due time — once First Nations are ready and willing to come to the table to negotiate and discuss a management plan for that particular park.

If the member's question is, am I satisfied with the level of protection for Agay Mene — the answer is certainly yes. I am quite —

Speaker: Order please. The member's time has elapsed.

Mr. Barr: So the minister thinks mining in parks is acceptable. That's what I take from that answer.

The minister loudly proclaims that Agay Mene has adequate protection while his government has allowed the proposed park to be staked. He has stated that the final agreement offers adequate protections, but his government refused withdrawing subsurface mineral rights, saying that Agay Mene's geology is largely limestone so no one would stake the area. He hides behind a management planning process that will be now encumbered by existing mineral claims — claims that his government allowed.

Again, will the minister tell the public if he is comfortable with allowing mining operations in what is supposed to be a protected natural environment park?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: First of all, the member needs to realize that, in order for any mining activity to happen anywhere in this territory, it has to go through the proper assessment process. That includes the YESAB process — the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board process — which will naturally consider environmental issues, environmental sensitivities, proposed parks — any of these sorts of things in the process.

In the case of this particular territorial park, as I said, we're not going to rush forward and designate something or come up with a management plan unilaterally. We need to have our First Nation planning partners at the table and participating. In this specific case, the First Nation is not prepared to do so, so we are waiting for them to identify members of the committee that will develop the management plan for that particular territorial park.

For the member to suggest that for some reason the future of this particular territorial park should be unilaterally decided by the Yukon government, I have to disagree.

As we've seen throughout the territory, there are cases where we have parks that do have mineral claims and, again, I

would point to the Tombstone park as one example of that. There are claims within that park that are contemplated in the management plan and considered, and when a proposal comes forward to develop them, they are considered by YESAB.

There are protections in place, there are assessment processes in place, and I'm confident that they will be sufficient.

Question re: Immunization

Ms. White: Many who have had shingles report that it is the most painful experience they have endured. The national committee on immunization has found that vaccination reduces the occurrences and complications related to shingles by 60 percent for people aged 60 and older.

The vaccine is available for purchase for a cost of over \$150. At this cost, many seniors can't afford this vaccine, despite its benefits. Shingles can also lead to long-term pain complications that are debilitating for many seniors. These complications are expensive to treat and some immunization specialists believe that a targeted, publicly funded vaccination program is in order.

Mr. Speaker, has the Health minister discussed with other provincial, territorial and federal health ministers the costs and benefits of covering the shingles vaccines for specific, at-risk groups?

Hon. Mr. Graham: No, we have not.

Ms. White: Since 2010, many health care professionals and public health advocates have called on the federal government to work with its provincial and territorial partners in renewing the national immunization strategy. Following the development of the national immunization strategy in 2003, the federal government allocated money in priority areas to ensure adequate access to vaccination in all provinces and territories.

CARP, Canada's leading advocacy organization for seniors, has identified the renewal of the national immunization strategy as a priority. This would be an appropriate venue to determine whether a targeted, publicly funded shingles vaccination program would be beneficial.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell this House if he supports the renewal of the national immunization strategy and if any discussions between federal, territorial and provincial health ministers are taking place to make this issue a priority?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Currently the Yukon has one of the most generous vaccination programs available anywhere in Canada and we intend to maintain that record. At the present time, we have not looked at an immunization program for shingles. We simply haven't looked at it. We haven't looked at it as a national priority, either. However, it's one of those things that will remain on our list and we'll have discussions — both within the department and with other provinces and territories — to determine if it becomes a priority sometime in the future.

Question re: Pharmacists legislation

Ms. Stick: Another topic on that list is the updating of the pharmacist legislation. The Yukon NDP has asked this government to do this for awhile now. According to a briefing note prepared by the department on this very topic, pharmacists themselves have been asking for nearly 30 years.

The minister's indignation at our questions does nothing to improve the safety of Yukon patients or the working conditions of Yukon pharmacists. Public and professional safety with prescription drugs should be a priority. Last week, the Pharmacists Association of Yukon again wrote the government about the need to update the act. They are concerned they will no longer be able to provide emergency prescription refills to ensure continuity of care. This is a service that is allowed in most jurisdictions in Canada.

Can the minister tell us what his department is doing to immediately enable pharmacists to provide emergency prescription refills so that patients can have that critical continuity of care?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I don't know which indignant part she's talking about. Probably the only time I became indignant at any time is when she provides information that is incorrect to the Legislature.

We did receive in the last little while a letter from the pharmacy association. My department has undertaken to consult with physicians because, again, the member opposite only provides half of the information. The other information that she failed to supply was that pharmacists were very concerned because, in their discussions with physicians in the territory, the physicians were not going to approve those emergency refills on the telephone. They wanted the patients to come back to them, so that's the other part the member opposite failed to reveal.

What we will be doing is entering discussions with both physicians and the pharmacists to see if we can work around this particular difficulty as we prepare for the changes to the *Pharmacists Act* in the coming year.

Ms. Stick: Emergency prescription refills are important for patients who do not have a family doctor, patients from communities or any patient needing an emergency refill. This current dilemma for pharmacists has resulted from changes and decisions made by some physicians in clinics, as the minister pointed out. They will no longer accept requests of medication emergency refills. Yukoners without a family doctor or unable to get a timely appointment will be forced to use the emergency room for prescription refills. This leads to more inappropriate and costly use of the emergency department, which is not sustainable and is certainly not patient-centred.

When will this government update Yukon's pharmacist legislation so that it enables pharmacists to work ethically and safely while providing patients with continuity of care and public safety?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Pharmacists currently provide ethical, proper services to their patients and, under the current legislation, we understand both from the pharmaceutical

industry as well as from the physician community that the legislation needs to be updated.

Perhaps the member opposite wasn't listening when I made my first reply that it will be brought forward next year. First of all, what we will be doing is consulting with the medical community as well as with pharmacists to determine exactly which changes will be made.

Ms. Stick: This is long overdue and consultations should have started years ago. It's what the pharmacists have been asking for — an up-to-date and current *Pharmacists Act*. From the point of view of both public safety and fiscal responsibility, this approach has not been quick enough. Right now, this government's inaction is forcing pharmacists into difficult situations. They cannot work to the best of current and modern standards because of how old and dated our *Pharmacists Act* is. This is a deterrent to professionals who might want to come and practice here. They've been asking for 30 years.

This government has said it will provide it in the next year. Would that be in the spring or would that be in the fall of 2014?

Hon. Mr. Graham: They've been asking for 30 years and during that 30-year period, it seems to me that the Opposition was in government for a little while. We didn't see any changes then either. I've said the legislation will be coming forward next year.

We will be working in consultation with both the medical community here in Whitehorse and the pharmacists to determine exactly what will be contained in the legislation. We're really looking forward to it. We see this as a very positive step — a step that we were able to take here in the first couple of years that we've been in government. We look forward to a resolution. Unfortunately I know that the Opposition disagrees with us, but as I said, you had — previous NDP governments had three opportunities during that time frame. They didn't do it.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 11, *Second 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: Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 11: *Second Appropriation Act, 2013-14* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 11, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Department of Education — continued

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, I am pleased to rise in the House again this afternoon to speak to the Department of Education's supplementary budget for 2013-14. I briefly went over a number of initiatives that the Department of Education has been working on. I just wanted to perhaps delve into a few of the initiatives — exciting initiatives — as to how we are delivering education, how it's changing and how we're seeing some really interesting responses to some of these program delivery changes in our public schools throughout the territory.

As I mentioned, there are a number of communities that I've had the privilege of being able to travel to first-hand and to see some of the innovative approaches being taken by the department.

I want to thank the previous Minister of Education, my colleague for Riverdale North, for his work in really seeing the opportunities, particularly in rural Yukon, as to how we can really capitalize on the distances between our communities and how we can make the education system more responsive and more relevant, obviously commanding better results and educational outcomes, which is the primary mandate of our department.

Starting with the Town of Watson Lake, the town that I grew up in, it's just but one example of an innovative approach being undertaken. It is all under the umbrella of the rural equity action plan that the department has been working on, and now we are actually seeing some of these initiatives underway.

The Town of Watson Lake — your home riding, Madam Chair — is but an example of the blended-learning approach that is being taken. It is an interesting model, and I know it's one that perhaps received a lukewarm response at the very beginning.

In my recent community meeting in Watson Lake, hearing directly from school council members and hearing directly from some of the educators in the community, and some of the parents as well, is heartening, to say the least. What we are seeing is the blended-learning approach, for example, really combines the technical approach, so a combination of on-line, distance opportunities, as well as traditional instructional opportunities by the teacher.

What we are really seeing at this early onset is a better attendance rate. We are seeing more engagement by the students, and we are seeing — I know of a student first-hand — I spoke with her mother — who was actually being home schooled a year ago, and that individual is now subscribed back to the classroom.

We are seeing some very good results. It has taken additional supports, in terms of teacher training, to really ensure that the system is meaningful and that it is netting some positive results. I do want to say congratulations to the Town of Watson Lake, to the actual school itself — Watson Lake Secondary School. It's an initiative — an idea — that came forward by the principal herself and we commend that leadership, because it is working so far. It's still early days, but it is but one initiative that we are seeing great results, as well.

Likewise earlier, back in September, it was Robert Service School in Dawson City. I was able to also witness first-hand another different brand of program delivery in the new northern rural experiential model. That was a really great collaboration again. It took seven communities coming together — in total, there were about 86 grade 10 to 12 students from those communities, who really converged in the Klondike, in the City of Dawson, and they were able to select one of eight different offered experiential courses.

Again, this is really the first time that something of this magnitude has occurred in rural Yukon. I had the privilege of being able to spend a day there and to see first-hand many of these courses being delivered by some very high-calibre instructors.

Students had the opportunity to take new courses that aren't necessarily available in their schools, while at the same time earning credits toward their high school diploma. For many of them, it was the first time coming out of their communities and being able to meet some of these other students in other communities. It was a very meaningful engagement, and I think it was a very positive experience.

We've had nothing but great feedback from the students themselves to each of the instructors. I know that Steve Slade — he's a very well-renowned and famous Yukon artist here in the Yukon and was able to deliver one of these experiential courses in music. I know that he had blogged — I think it was on the Artspace North network — and he had nothing but great things to say about this particular program and how it has engaged students in a whole different way — in a very meaningful way.

In addition to networking with others, expanding their peer groups among the communities and making friends with like interests, it really did bring out the passion in the students and the educators themselves, as well.

Choices included digital arts and film — as I just referenced, thanks to folks like Steve Slade — guitar and song writing, FEAST program — which is essentially the food preparation program — a great program that I might add is also being delivered very successfully in Porter Creek Secondary School — woodworking and First Nation fine arts, just to name but a few.

We were very pleased. Both these communities are just but two examples of such initiatives being undertaken. They are meeting with success and these communities are finding different ways to engage students this year as part of the rural equity action initiatives.

The more meaningful experiences that we can give students in high school in all of our schools, the more opportunities they have to find out what their interests are and the more opportunity that they feel more connected to their school communities, and the better that they are to feel that they are going to be able to produce better outcomes for themselves.

In terms of experiential learning going forward, as I mentioned, I don't have near the time. Maybe I will get to that, but in other communities like Old Crow and Teslin, there are initiatives underway looking at alternative high school being delivered in both of those communities — again, working very well. A number of those students have traditionally subscribed to coming to Whitehorse to continue to complete their high school diploma, so an alternative high school is but one additional option for a student who may not feel comfortable going to Whitehorse to complete their high school or to complete a high school course.

These are working very well under the leadership of the Individual Learning Centre and we're finding some great partnerships there. I commend the specific instructors and specific people in those communities for really giving it a great go and we're seeing some very impressive outcomes.

In terms of the REM — the rural experiential model — that was delivered for the first time in the City of Dawson, we're looking to follow the same model next year, in Carmacks next spring.

Again, hopefully we will be able to expand on success in Dawson, but actually lowering the grades from grades 7 to 9 instead of going to higher grades.

Again, we look forward to the opportunity to work with the Village of Carmacks and their school community on how we can really build upon those successful learning pathways for students using these particular models.

As we have already discussed in Question Period and somewhat in general debate here on Education, again we continue to also work hand-in-hand with First Nation governments, with the Council of Yukon First Nations and with other entities in being able to really come up with unique partnerships and programs in support of First Nation education as well.

I believe where we left off was talking about the MOU that was signed on the education partnership with CYFN earlier this year — and the federal government, I should add — to create and implement that joint action plan. That work is currently underway, as I mentioned. A working group has been struck and that work will be getting underway very soon. In the meantime, we continue to work with individual First Nation governments on other education agreements, again accentuating some of the work that has been done on a broader level through CYFN and others. As I mentioned before, we are also developing a Yukon-specific residential

school unit resources that we are looking pilot next year as well.

I was very honored to be able to attend this year's summer academies for teachers, and really be able to see supporting teacher awareness and understanding

I was very honored to be able to attend this year's summer academies for teachers and really be able to see supporting teacher awareness and understanding of First Nation perspectives, both of which were delivered through sessions that delved into the topic of residential schools and their legacy — again, thanks — being delivered by the Northern Institute of Social Justice. It was very powerful — individuals such as Bob Charlie and many other individuals — and very meaningful opportunities to be able to connect to a large network of educators throughout the Yukon through these sessions, so it's something that we look to expanding and being able to further deliver with our teacher academies, so it's really the first of its kind. It continues to build on other initiatives that are currently underway through the St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction as well as others through Vuntut Gwitchin government with on-the-land experiential programs.

I see my time is running low, so I will sit down and certainly look forward to debate on the very important Department of Education.

Mr. Tredger: I welcome the officials from the department and thank them for coming out again. I just had a quick follow-up to my previous question, which was on the memorandum of understanding with Council of Yukon First Nations. I understand from the minister's answer that the working committee has not yet met. Can she tell us if there is one scheduled and when that will be?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

As I alluded to earlier, I had the opportunity to actually meet with the Grand Chief of Council of Yukon First Nations just recently to talk about this and other matters of pertinent importance to student populations throughout the territory. As I mentioned in my opening remarks here today and the other day as well, a working group has been created of course. I understand that there will be a meeting in the new year — I believe in January, if I'm not mistaken; I don't have the exact date, but it will be an opportunity for senior-level officials to come together to be able to map out the future of the joint action plan going forward. But as I mentioned earlier, it does build on a number of specific initiatives that we have undertaken, whether it's developing curricula or educational resources and awareness programs to address the legacy of residential schools, as we've talked about on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

We have also been able to continue our work on integrating learning outcomes with on-the-land experiences to engage a number of learners, particularly boys. We are also continuing our work to develop high school accreditation for culture camps by First Nation governments. Of course, we're also collaborating and developing these specific MOUs, not just with CYFN but also working on specific agreements. The

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — section 17.7 education agreement — which was signed back in August by the previous Minister of Education, the Premier and the Chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation — that was another historic milestone in Yukon education. It very much isn't something that I have seen over my years growing up in the territory.

We have also been able to continue to work toward strengthening the language and delivery of cultural programs for individual Yukon First Nations and, again, expanding upon multi-disciplinary areas such as First Nation studies, fine arts, technology and applied skills. There is a multitude of different initiatives being undertaken on a number of different fronts within our various communities. I commend the work that is going forward, and we continue to work to expand those very tenets.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for her answer to that. I understand also that a memorandum of understanding was signed with Selkirk First Nation last spring, and it was agreed to work together to resolve the issues around education in Pelly Crossing.

Can I get an update on that as well please?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Just for a point of clarity — of course, there has been a multitude of different discussions between Yukon government and Selkirk First Nation. We agreed to, this past summer, develop a memorandum of understanding on education-related matters.

That work is currently underway. I had the opportunity to meet with the chief and members of his council this past fall in Pelly Crossing to discuss that very agreement going forward. We recognize this as being a priority — improving education outcomes for First Nation students in the Selkirk First Nation traditional territory.

We have been working alongside Selkirk First Nation reviewing, I believe, the latest draft and we look forward to being able to sign off that agreement in due time.

I had the opportunity to also meet with members of the school council at Eliza Van Bibber School. It was a great opportunity for me to see — I believe it's a fully staffed council, if I'm not mistaken. That's fantastic to see. There is a new administrator there as well. The principal is doing a great job. I learned a lot about the delivery of education in that particular community, some of the challenges and some of the opportunities. I'm very impressed.

There are a number of initiatives underway, being delivered in collaboration with Selkirk First Nation. In terms of formalizing that work by way of an MOU, that work is currently underway and we look forward to finalizing that work.

Mr. Tredger: I'll be pleased to provide Chief McGinty with an update on that. We were discussing that very issue this last week at the opening of the trades trailer, which was a fantastic opportunity and a wonderful initiative by the department, by Yukon College and by all parties involved — industry.

He was concerned that the memorandum of understanding take priority and he will be encouraged by the minister's answer.

I just wanted to spend a little bit of time on the staffing protocol. If I look over the staffing protocol that was issued on April 23, 2013, it says that candidates who are suitably qualified for the position advertised will be considered in this order: group 1, indeterminate teachers with three or more years of continuous service on the same school; group 2, Yukon First Nation candidates other than those in an indeterminate position who will be either a priority one above or three below and temporary teachers with three or more years of continuous service; group three, teachers both temporary and indeterminate with less than three years of continuous service; group four, all other applicants.

My questions for the minister are — we have a Yukon native teacher education program, which is graduating wonderful graduates. We certainly want to encourage them into our system. As well, our education system has a number of local grads who have gone off and received training in other institutions around the country and are wishing to return to their home territory, to their home schools. The third issue that has come up — and I assume the department is developing criteria around it and if we could get on it — is with respect to Catholic schools and the hiring of Catholic teachers particularly for the Catholic school system.

How do YNTEP grads fit into this? How about local grads? And where are we at with updating the Catholic school hiring policy?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As the member opposite has just referred to, the staffing protocol was just recently amended, dated in April 2013, and so it has been revised to reflect some of the changes in how we staff each of our schools.

With respect to the specific question that the member opposite raised in terms of YNTEP grads — and it was great to see John Wright come back to the Yukon after his announcement of retirement, and I'm glad to see his retirement was short-lived. He has now taken up the task of working to lend his expertise to the YNTEP program, and I think he's doing a great job. He's a very passionate individual and a very effective administrator in all of his years working with Elijah Smith Elementary School.

It was great to hear his updates and being able to talk with him on a couple of occasions about the YNTEP program. Of course, there was a review undertaken. There were some recommendations, many of which are being undertaken as we speak.

With respect to this current school year, as I understand — according to our officials — all YNTEP grads were actually offered a position. As I understand, four accepted and the two remaining declined jobs in the communities outside of Whitehorse. The staffing protocol does give precedence to First Nation graduates — YNTEP graduates — and it reflects the department's commitment to increasing First Nation representation with Yukon teachers. I am pleased to see those changes taking effect.

I believe the member opposite had made reference to a status update on the "one heart" policy, is that right?

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Okay, that's right — the staffing protocol with the episcopal corporations. Again, currently, staffing protocol uses the same level system for the Catholic schools, as well, so there is no differentiation so to speak; it is the same applied protocol as we do all others.

Mr. Tredger: Just for clarification then — you mentioned that YNTEP grads did receive priority, but I don't see that in the reading there. I understand that this past year most, if not all, were offered positions, but that is not always the case. I'm wondering, where in that do YNTEP grads fit? I also referred to local grads — people who go through our school system and graduate from our various schools. What priority do they have, if they wish to return to the Yukon? If I could just have a final clarification on the Catholic school board hiring — does that mean there is no requisite to have Bishop approval before the person can be hired?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Just getting back to YNTEP, just a point of further clarity according to the staffing protocol that was negotiated, priority is given to Yukon First Nation students. So it could be a YNTEP graduate, but it is under the Yukon First Nation umbrella.

With respect to the Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Whitehorse, this is another entity that we continue to work with in terms of ensuring the success of all of our student populations. Again, I do know that staffing is one of the protocol agreements being worked on with the episcopal corporation, but as I mentioned earlier — I'm not sure if I was clear enough — currently the staffing protocol uses the same level system for Catholic schools as well, so it's the same protocol being applied to the Catholic education. Hopefully that's clear now.

Mr. Tredger: That just leaves us with the local grads. Perhaps at some point in the future, the minister can help me with that one.

I just want to talk a little bit about temporary teachers. There are a number of temporary teachers in our school system. I had asked the question earlier of the minister in Question Period and she didn't have the numbers at hand, but I'm assuming she'll have them now. If not, I would request them.

Just a bit about temporary teachers — temporary teachers are usually hired on a term contract. What that means is that, at the end of June, they are no longer on contract. I don't believe — at least they haven't been in the past — they are eligible for employment insurance. Finally, they have no assurance that there will be a job in the fall. That makes it very difficult to buy a house, to get a mortgage or to make long-term plans.

Given the high number of temporary teachers in the system, the commitment they have made to coming to the Yukon or living in the Yukon — often in our communities — that level of uncertainty certainly affects a teaching force and the stability of the teaching — especially in our communities, where sometimes there are two and three temporary teachers on staff and, come the end of June, they don't know if they have a job in the fall; they don't know what kind of commitments they can make. It certainly affects us in the city,

as well, where there are a number of temporary teachers in each of our schools.

Again, these teachers are very valuable to the system. They have much to contribute. They have made a commitment to the system.

Does the department have any plans — I guess it would be plans — to incorporate them and take advantage of these people who are living and working in the Yukon, people we would like to encourage to stay in the Yukon, to participate in our communities and in our teaching system to work at getting professional development and further training? How is the department looking to support temporary teachers to help them through those periods of uncertainty? Are we looking at developing a pool of temporary teachers and making them indeterminate, realizing that there is a demand each year for temporary teaching staff? Has the department addressed this and what are their plans?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Just getting back to the staffing protocol that was negotiated, or struck, back on April 23 of this year, it actually does give precedence to temporary teachers. That was not reflected in the original staffing protocol.

When we look to filling vacancies, there are a number of different groups, starting with the indeterminate teachers with three or more years of continuous service. In group 2 — when we talk about Yukon First Nation candidates, and that also includes temporary teachers with three or more years of continuous service.

This is a change that was made just recently. There is — albeit perhaps not confirmation of full-time employment but they are given precedence in the group 2, so that is an improvement in itself.

With respect to the actual temporary teachers, as the member opposite referred to — and I will just again go over this. When it comes to secondments of classroom teachers to non-teaching positions — or I should say secondments — or when we talk about temporary teachers and their placement in various schools at any given time — it's a practice that has been occurring for many years, as I seem to recall. Again, these temporary teachers serve a very important purpose in terms of staffing up, replacement of permanent people who are in those positions — and those positions may take leave for various reasons. Their absences can be attributed to medical leave; it could be attributed to parental leave or education leave. There are a number of pieces of leaves available to our full-time teaching professionals throughout the communities.

Term positions are provided at any given time. Many of these term positions are moved from community to community when the time is needed. There are many different reasons for having term positions. They are all members of the Yukon Teachers Association, the member opposite should know that full well. They're covered by the benefits of the collective agreement.

They fulfill a very important role in terms of our overall education system. There are improvements being made, which

are reflected in the staffing protocol that was just recently revised.

I thank each of these teachers, but there are a number of various reasons for the use of these temporary teachers. According to the protocol, if a temporary teacher has three years of continuous service, there will be precedence provided by way of the staffing protocol in terms of being provided a full-time position within the department.

Mr. Tredger: I realize that if a temporary teacher is in the same position for more than three years, that's getting beyond temporary. My concern is that we have a number of people in that position. If the minister could tell me how many teachers are on temporary contract, how many of them have three or more years of service, and what is being done to include them in all of the activities to help them, perhaps, in times of purchasing a house or moving on to an indeterminate contract?

I guess when you're asking people who graduate, whether it's from YNTEP or from another university, to come to the territory and work in a temporary position for three years — and assuming that temporary position is in the same position for three years — that kind of uncertainty is putting a lot of potential teachers and a lot of people in a very precarious position.

How many teachers are we talking about? Could the minister tell me how many temporary teachers there are? How many have been in the same position for more than three years? Is that number increasing over the last few years or is it decreasing?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I don't have those specific numbers at my fingertips in terms of providing how many have actually fulfilled a term position for three years plus. I don't have that amount of detail at my fingertips.

As a point of clarity, just in terms of filling vacancies, staffing protocol has been altered. It does provide precedence to temporary teachers with three or more years of continuous service. They're in the second group. The first group — giving precedence to the indeterminate teachers with three or more years of continuous service in the same school.

It is something different from what we have had in the past, so I do believe that is an improvement and it is recognition of three years — and to be able to alleviate those different situations for temporary teachers.

In terms of how and when those temporary teachers — those positions — are required, that could be a maternity leave or parental leave. It could be an education leave. It could be a secondment to the Department of Education. There is a variety of reasons for utilizing temporary teachers, recognizing the importance that if one is a temporary teacher — three years and more of continual service — that the protocol does reflect that and does give precedence in terms of providing full-time positions for those who are suitably qualified for those positions.

In terms of access to services, I do know that through Yukon Housing Corporation there is access to housing available in our communities for temporary teachers — that I do understand. In terms of professional development, I'm not

entirely clear as to what — if that is in fact available. We work through the Yukon Teachers Association in terms of making those opportunities available to our teachers — those and others.

We recognize the importance of these teachers. We want to ensure that they remain engaged and that they continue to provide a meaningful contribution to our education system. But there are many different reasons as to why in fact their services are required on any given day in any given community.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. Temporary teachers indeed have a lot to contribute to our system. When I asked in Question Period about the numbers, the minister referred me to general debate on the budget. That's why I brought it up here.

I'm wondering if the minister could commit to supplying me with the number of temporary teachers on contract and the length of time they have been in temporary positions. It's just so that I can get an idea of the numbers we are concerned about.

I know that in many departments, after a person has been in a temporary position for a given number of years, they are offered permanent positions. I commend the department for starting to put that into the hiring protocol. That is recognized. It did come in terms of priority for First Nations and for local grads who have gone from a group 1 to a group 2 — and local grads, I don't even see on the list. It doesn't seem to be part of it.

The second part of my questions is, often temporary teachers are hired to replace seconded teachers — people who are seconded to other positions, particularly within the department. This is a wonderful opportunity for the seconded teachers and I don't want to be misunderstood here. It's a great professional development opportunity for teachers to go into the department for a limited period of time to experience the education system and get extra professional development.

However, it's my understanding that some of these positions have extended beyond one and two and sometimes even three years. I'm wondering again if when the minister is looking for the information, she could also tell me the number of teachers who are seconded from the classrooms into the department.

Behind that would be of course be a temporary teacher, so it's more how many we are talking about and the length of time that these teachers have been seconded into the department.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I want to reflect on a couple of teachers that I'm very familiar with, having worked with them over the years through my son's education and how they have since relocated to the Department of Education. It's a loss to the school, but it's also a huge benefit for the whole education system in the territory and how they're contributing in their different ways and using their expertise for the benefit of all Yukon schools. It's fantastic to see this and I can just only speak on a couple of occasions that I know about. So when it comes to many different aspects of education, by being able to articulate that from within the classroom — the experience

working in individual public schools is invaluable. It's great to see that experience being reflected through the development of curricula and development of very important programs and creative initiatives for early learning or in terms of technology and so forth. I just wanted to put my own personal perspective on the floor of the Assembly.

The member opposite has referred to secondments — when it comes to just temporary secondments, this is a practice that has occurred for many years.

Teachers have been seconded, on average, for a period of two years with the possibility of an extension for an additional year, as I understand it. Where the need exists, a business case has been put forward. As I mentioned, just being able to be seconded to the department offers a fresh perspective from the classroom and school levels to a particular position or a special initiative. It helps build capacity in the Department of Education for the benefit of all educators throughout the territory. In one instance I can think of, an individual who used to serve in the classroom is now out and about in every single classroom pretty much, being able to deliver — so not necessarily just being housed in the Department of Education building, but actually being able to share his particular skills and expertise with the classrooms in other communities. It's great to see.

I do have the numbers on this one. We have 11 seconded teachers who are working on a number of initiatives within the Department of Education. All of them, as I understand, are in either the first or second year of their secondment. This is also reflected as part of the staffing protocols. I can't say enough about our teaching professionals. I also want to add that it's 482 FTEs when it comes to teaching professionals in the territory, so 11 of those are not substantive amounts of teachers.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that and I congratulate the department. That has been an ongoing problem. In the past, teachers were seconded from the school for many years — in some cases, many years; not all the time, of course. While I can recognize the value of teachers participating in such programs, it does leave a vacancy at the school level, especially if that temporary position extends beyond two, three or four years. I'm glad to hear the minister say that there are no seconded teachers beyond two years within the department.

I guess a final concern around the seconded teachers is, are those seconded teachers counted as part of the classroom teaching load or are they extra to it? At one time, the minister had said — I guess we're talking two ministers ago — that there would be no classroom cuts. There was some concern that teachers were taken from the classroom and used in the department. As valuable as that is, that was diminishing the amount of FTEs in the classrooms. Are those 11 teachers then extra to the classroom allotment or are they included in it?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: They are in addition to that.

Mr. Tredger: The news continues to get better.

Chair: Order please. Mr. Tredger.

Mr. Tredger: Sorry, Madam Chair. I guess my next questions are around teachers on call. Teachers on call

perform a very valuable service to schools. Every day they are working in our schools. There is some difficulty getting teachers on call in rural communities, especially qualified teachers on call.

I guess what I'm looking for is, what guidelines are in place to develop a stable, certified and qualified casual on-call — or substitute — teacher workforce?

I know the minister was correct when she mentioned that temporary teachers are able to take advantage of professional development and all of the amenities and benefits of membership in the Yukon Teachers Association. However, teachers on call are not, and so I have a number of questions around that. I'm sure the minister recognizes the value of teachers on call and the service they perform on very short notice each and every day, working in our schools with our children. They are developing their abilities and their teaching skills. As a principal and a teacher, I can tell you how much our schools depend upon them, especially in the rural communities.

I would ask the minister, what is being done? What problems are being faced in the rural communities and in the urban communities, and what is being done to ensure a stable, qualified teacher on-call or casual on-call workforce?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite for his question on substitute teachers on call. Again, just to reiterate, we on this side of the House agree these are very valuable individuals and there are many different reasons why we do need substitute teachers in place. I can say that, even I had the opportunity to substitute teach when I first graduated from university, going back to the community of Watson Lake. It was a great experience, albeit I was placed into my brother's class, so I'm not entirely sure if that was a good move or not. That was many years ago and I try not to date myself.

In terms of when we do look to recruit and hire substitute teachers, there are a number of different categories. First, when the pool does exist, we look to certified teachers. Second of all, we look to a recipient of a bachelor's degree, not necessarily in education or teaching-related — and of course there are others. I know first-hand that there are others. When you look to the communities — not necessarily — there may be others who have those qualifications or certifications for a variety of reasons. They are hired as substitute teachers and they're a very valuable resource in our communities.

I believe the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission talked to this issue the other day in Question Period. We do provide a competitive rate of pay. It is indexed very similar to the rate of pay that teachers also receive. It is something that we continue to look at for how we can continue to keep and maintain a good pool of individuals to perform this role.

We continue to look at this issue and continue to look at across the country as well, as the minister responsible for the PSC alluded to. It's an issue where we need to take a look at all facets. If we were to implement a legislated regime similar to other jurisdictions in the country, that's a discussion to be had with other stakeholders. The Yukon Teachers Association

has raised it — we know that — and it is an issue that we have been looking to. It would require an amendment to the *Education Staff Relations Act* that's housed under the Public Service Commission.

I know that they are doing some due diligence on this front, but we have to look at the benefits and the shortfalls of making such a decision and what that would mean, impacting our teaching professionals and those who are not in the teaching profession in all of our communities. It is something that is of importance — having substitute personnel and, of course, ensuring that they remain a very important part of our overall education system in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: I guess there are two aspects to the question. One is that 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 and their pay scale is at the bottom of the barrel, but they are expected to be available on short notice. In 2006 in the *Education Act* review, one of their recommendations was that on-call teachers be given employee status. That's one problem, in terms of job security. As the minister recognizes with the importance of casual on-call labourers, it's important to build that force so that we have a teaching force that is qualified and able to benefit our children.

The one part is employee recognition, and the other part is the ability to partake in professional development and educational activities. As you know, we rely on these people every day. I have come across a number of very, very excellent teachers who have been working as substitute teachers.

They are not able to take part in professional development activities. They are not considered members of the union, so they have no representation. To me, one crux is that, when people want to improve where they are, the onus is part on the employer to ensure that they have that opportunity. It just makes sense in building a labour force.

So I guess my question is, does the department have a strategy to work with substitute teachers or teachers on call, both rural and urban, to make them feel like they're part of the teaching workforce, to include them in professional development day activities and to include them in school planning activities? Many of the teachers on call go to one or two schools a number of times and are considered part of the staff.

Will the minister consider giving them that recognition and allowing them to attend staff functions, professional development days, staff planning days and all those things that make one feel valued and a part of the teaching community but which are currently being denied to many of our teachers on call?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: When it comes to substitute teachers, I'll reiterate that they are an important part of our overall education system in the territory. I'm very familiar with substitute teachers and the very important role they do play.

I am also very familiar with the unique realities of some communities — not all — where they are not certified teachers or they may not have a degree in education or other, yet they are very good people. They're excellent; they do a great job. I've known many for many years.

Something that we continue to work toward is looking at that very fact of making professional development available for substitute teachers. We are even looking at opportunities through Yukon College — we're looking at those opportunities right now. I do understand and appreciate where the member opposite is coming from, but they are not part of the Yukon Teachers Association. It is something that the Public Service Commission is looking at across the country, in terms of jurisdiction — what that means and how they regulate that.

In the meantime, we are looking at ways of perhaps extending professional development opportunities. What that looks like I do not know at this time, but it is something that we are looking at and we'll continue to come up with different options or ideas available to teaching professionals.

We just talked about temporary teachers and other classifications of teachers. I know that, more and more, we are trying to reduce the amount of time that the Department of Education is taking teachers away from the classrooms. We recognize that as important as well. In fact, part of those changes recently — through the collective agreement, but also through the *Education Act* amendments — is being able to institute summer academies for teachers, for example, outside of the actual designated school year, so it doesn't take away from teachers' very valuable time in the classrooms.

As well, we have a number of education consultants who are increasingly encouraged to go into the classrooms — to be in classrooms throughout the territory — being able to encourage teachers to take less time out of the classrooms.

There are a number of initiatives being undertaken by the department at this time and we will continue to look at ways to strengthen what we have in place.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. I would encourage her to work with the Yukon Teachers Association to share information with them so they can contact teachers on call and casual teachers, so a database can be built up and they can be approached to see what type of training needs they need and how the Department of Education and Yukon Teachers Association can work together to ensure that this very important aspect of the teaching force be recognized, given the dignity of the positions that they are in and supported as they move to become part of the Yukon teachers.

I'd like to turn to residential school curriculum for a few minutes. The other day I was at a truth and reconciliation meeting and one of the elders came up to me and, in her talking, was asking, "When are we going to get a residential school curriculum into our schools?" I know that the department is working on that.

I know four years ago the governments of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut invited Yukon Education to be part of a task force that looked at developing residential school

curriculum. At the time, Yukon Education either declined or chose not to participate in that. Two years later, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut introduced into their schools a residential school curriculum. At the time, that was again offered to Yukon Education. Again, Yukon Education chose not to participate in that, saying they would develop a Yukon-made residential school curriculum.

All and well — I think that's a good idea that curriculum be geared toward local communities and such. The problem is that we are now another year later. I know it is being piloted in one school — or one form of a residential school curriculum is being piloted in one school. The minister alluded to several schools. I'm not sure which other schools are piloting it. Teachers are asking me — and community members are asking me — that if this is going to be put into our schools next fall as promised, is that curriculum available for consideration? Can other schools get a copy of the curriculum that is being piloted, so that they can see ways that it can be shaped for their school?

Yukon Education has made a commitment — the minister made a commitment — that it would be taught in all schools this fall. As an educator, I know that time is running short. I know this is still before Christmas but six months is not a long time to involve community, to train teachers, and to develop curriculum that could be delivered in all of our schools next fall.

So I guess my questions around this are, what schools beside Dawson are piloting it? Robert Service School in Dawson is piloting it. Is the curriculum that is being piloted available for consideration by school councils or First Nation education coordinators to look at and see ways that it could work into their community? Have elders been consulted on it? Are they a part of the development of this curriculum? I guess finally, is the minister still on time to deliver this curriculum for this fall?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just want to again go back to a number of years ago, when the Department of Education implemented its First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit.

That was a unique decision that was made by the previous government. The previous Minister of Education was really responsible for facilitating in a formalized manner the development of appropriate First Nation curricula and supporting resource materials. So just to be very clear, these materials are absolutely essential — and I don't think there is anyone in this Assembly who would take issue with that — in ensuring that all students learn our history, learn First Nation history, learn cultural traditions and learn about the important role of First Nations within the history of our territory and what that means.

We provide a number of initiatives and a number of different program funding initiatives, I should mention as well — cultural inclusion program funding, which involves individual schools, school councils, First Nation communities and how we can better increase this, recognizing that every school is very distinct and very unique unto itself.

I appreciate that there has been a great amount of interest, need and priority provided to this, but we also need to

ensure — and I was reminded of this the other day — the importance of being able to work with each of the individual communities, ensuring that they are ready to proceed with curricula in their respective schools. It perhaps isn't a cookie-cutter approach. The member opposite makes reference to going on board with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut with the good work that they are doing.

I commend those governments for the work that they are doing, but I also know that it is distinct and different from Yukon and what the history of residential schools meant for this territory — how we have to respect those differences and respect the unique application of any curricula or programming or initiatives that we introduce in our schools. Believe me, we are in contact with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and I commend Minister Lafferty for his work and his government's work as well. Likewise, we're also sharing with their governments as to what Yukon is also doing on this very important front.

I believe I have already spoken to this somewhat, but we have been working on a number of different fronts — individual and First Nation governments; Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, for example — on coming up with a workplan and implementing milestones and timelines associated with developing school curricula and programs pertinent to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation traditional territory. As I mentioned earlier, we're working with CYFN and the federal government creating that joint action plan in terms of improving learning outcomes for First Nation students.

On specific residential school resources, however — and I spoke about this before — we are looking to be able to roll that out next year. That work will complement some of the other initiatives underway. I mentioned just before, for example, the teaching summer academies.

It was a very interesting collaboration with the Northern Institute of Social Justice, for example, and being able to support teacher awareness and the understanding of First Nation perspectives.

I had the opportunity to actually talk with a number of new teachers to the territory who were going to different communities. It was a great opportunity for them to hear first-hand some of the residential school survivors and to hear about, effectively, the good, the bad and the ugly. It is important to have that additional insight — that perspective — because it explains many of the things that these teaching professionals may or may not see in the classroom themselves. It is very critical to be able to articulate the story of Yukon First Nations.

Just recently, I know that the member opposite, I believe — or at least the Leader of the Official Opposition was there — when there was a screening of the unbelievable film which spoke of two individual experiences of residential school survivors, one from Manitoba and one from Saskatchewan. I believe that that's just another form of education that we should be able to take out to other school communities and be able to share it with Yukoners. I think that had we had that dialogue, that discussion and those resources in the classroom when I was growing up in the community of Watson Lake, I

think we would all have been better for that as individuals in our society and perhaps have had better educational outcomes as well.

I very much recognize the importance of this. I also recognize the importance of having meaningful, relevant, responsive curricula that is identified and that we do work with individual communities. That is very important. I was just reminded of that very thing, so I recognize the urgency and importance of being able to roll out Yukon-wide specific school curricula resources available to all schools. I also recognize that we have to work with individual school committees as well to ensure that they are ready and that we do have the resources to be able to accommodate the outcome of these teachings and that we're able to equip our teaching professionals with the ability and the tools to be able articulate on this specific school curricula.

I don't want to go on to some of the other initiatives being undertaken, but there are a lot of specific initiatives being undertaken in different communities around the Yukon. It's something that we continue to work on. The Selkirk First Nation, for example — we are working on that agreement and formalizing our partnership when it comes to education by way of an MOU and that is important to us. I know that there are other First Nation governments that will be looking to develop similar agreements that were basically modelled on the one that was agreed to with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

I would stress the importance of this. We are committed. We have hired additional staff to be able to help develop and deliver the curricula and the resources available. We are giving it great importance and priority, but it is one that takes time. We do have to be able to respond appropriately to each and every individual community as well.

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

It is a challenge to deliver curriculum to the school, especially on a subject such as this, which has a deep and meaningful impact on First Nation communities and indeed on the entire Yukon community. I commend the minister for putting extra resources into this initiative. It is a priority for First Nation communities. As somebody mentioned, our elders are not getting any younger; some of them are passing on. We are losing their experiences. The time is now to get those experiences into the curriculum and into the schools.

I commend the First Nation partnerships, and I think it's a wonderful initiative on part of Yukon Education to have such a partnership within the department.

It has done a lot to bring community perspective and First Nation perspective into the development of our education system, but because there are challenges does not mean that we can allow inertia to take place.

When the minister talks about rolling out the curriculum next fall, is she talking about in every school? Is it a curriculum she hopes to have developed by then so that I can tell Grandma Rachel that, yes, indeed the children in Pelly Crossing will get some instruction next year, or is there a timeline or a time frame? I don't have any visibility as to what this looks like for next fall.

It is a priority for our First Nation communities. I think it should be a priority for all Yukon citizens and I commend the minister for recognizing that fact, putting extra resources into it. But I guess I'm asking, do we have a timeline? Is it going to happen next fall? What do we tell the elders in our community?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I appreciate the importance that the member opposite is paying to this important subject, and I do appreciate that he has constituents coming to him and questions being raised to him as well.

As I mentioned, we are developing a specific residential school unit and resources that go alongside that. We are looking at piloting that next year. We are aiming at the high-school level to begin with, so that much I can say.

In terms of each and every individual school community, I don't have that information available, but it's something that we are working on and it is something that we are paying priority to. I have to be very cognizant that every school community is very different, and I'm pretty sure the member opposite knows that to be true as well.

Again, we are aiming to have Yukon-wide school curricula aimed at the high school level to be able to roll out next year. I don't have a specific list of schools, but certainly this is what we have targeted.

Mr. Tredger: All I can say is that the communities and First Nations are certainly looking forward to that, and I would encourage their involvement in it.

Last year the Member for Klondike introduced a motion that J.J. Van Bibber's book, *I was born under a spruce tree*, be introduced to our curriculum and into our schools. At the time, the Minister of Education committed that — and I think with unanimous consent — the book was indeed a valuable resource and that it and its curricula would be in all schools for this fall.

Can the minister give us an update on the status of that curriculum, whether it is indeed in all the schools, and an update? I would appreciate that.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, actually it was December 5 of last year when members debated a motion put forward by the MLA for Klondike. I seem to recall that the wording of the actual motion was to incorporate it as part of the curriculum. I know that it was later amended to explore the options in terms of adopting the actual memoir as part of the education curriculum for the school year coming forward.

I guess what has transpired since then are a number of initiatives. First off, I believe that every school has received copies of the book. In fact, there has been, I think, well over 150 books that have been distributed to a number of schools. Every school has received copies, but there are more schools than others that have received them. This is really following a review by Yukon Education staff, and it was recommended at the elementary level. For grades 8 and 9, the book will be placed in the school professional library as a resource for the teaching of First Nation perspectives, which included supporting staff in delivering the required First Nation grade 5 materials.

The book is available as a topic for professional development as a follow-up to summer academy presentations on residential schools that just occurred earlier this year.

I know that the Public Schools branch is also looking at ways in which we can utilize this great resource in the development of the grade 10 residential school unit. That is what we are currently working on with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

It is a very valued resource. There has been some review, but with respect to the specific grade 10 residential school unit, that is something that we continue to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation on. There have been a number of steps to incorporate and make that very important resource available to all Yukon schools.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. I also thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward. It is an important resource. I do hope that some curricula will be developed around it so it doesn't sit on shelves and that there will be enough copies for classrooms to be able to do classroom work on it.

I'd like to talk a little bit about native language and native culture classes that are offered in many of our schools. I know that over the last couple of years an evaluation was being done on the native language courses. I wondered whether there was a report done on that. Specifically, I'm looking for some understanding of how they're working in individual schools. What is their success rate? How many graduates have we produced from our native language system who can speak their language?

Can the minister give me an amount of time that is allocated to First Nation languages in elementary schools and in high schools? I guess it's very critical to our First Nation communities and the language is very precarious in many of them. There have been a number of endeavours to try to bring the language back to life, or to increase its use in the community.

What strategy is the government using in the native language classes? Are they looking at experiential native language classes? I know in many different communities there are a number of cultural activities and things like that. Has the government looked at an immersion class, which has been suggested in many places? Are there connections with early childhood and daycares in many of our communities? I heard various people speaking of language nests as having been a very successful strategy employed by the Maori in New Zealand.

There have been a number of thoughts around this and it seems there are a lot of pots, but no overall strategy. Coming out of the evaluation and the work that was being done to understand native language in our school system, what can the minister tell me? What progress have we made and what changes can we expect to see within our native language classes to increase the success level?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'd like to thank the member opposite for his question.

There are a couple of things on this front. First of all, I just commend all of the various language programs that are

being offered. We are offering those programs in 21 Yukon schools and for seven of the eight Yukon First Nation language groups.

We provide in-service training in second language methodology and the use of technology, such as Promethean boards. I actually had the opportunity to see this about a couple of years ago in my son's own class at Whitehorse Elementary School and was able to meet the First Nation teacher and language teacher. It was phenomenal, the work that she was doing in that classroom and how she was able to really engage with students. My son has really taken to First Nation language. I commend the teaching methodologies and the teaching tools that are being delivered in a very modern way in the 21st century learning environment.

We have language programs offered throughout the Yukon — in some 21 Yukon schools, including Teslin and Carcross. We have a couple in Old Crow and in F.H. Collins. We have three in the Northern Tutchone area — the Eliza Van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing, Tantalus School in Carmacks and J.V. Clark School in Mayo, as well. We have one in the Robert Service School in Dawson, and three in Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake, as well as Watson Lake Secondary School and the Ross River school, Ross River. We have nine programs being delivered in Southern Tutchone territory, including Haines Junction and Destruction Bay, and we have several in our Whitehorse schools. We also have one being delivered in Beaver Creek. We continue to work on how to enhance delivery of First Nation language programs.

In terms of our support of the Yukon Native Language Centre, this is also very critical — in also working with the centre — as the member opposite knows full well. We do provide funding to this particular centre through the Council of Yukon First Nations. It is an area of importance and it's a topic that we have been engaging, and continue to engage, with CYFN on, especially as we go forward on this joint work plan to more formalize that work and as to how we can better integrate the delivery of services. As the member knows full well, while we deliver programs and teaching professionals in many of our schools, there is also delivery of programs through the Yukon Native Language Centre.

So there are greater ways, I believe, that we can strengthen the delivery of programs available through the centre and that is why I think that it is critical to work with CYFN in being able to heighten awareness and being able to better integrate the delivery of those relevant programs.

With respect to the individual hours being allocated to every school, I do not have that level of detail with me.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. I guess native languages — I can't stress their importance and my concern is — I've talked to a number of native language instructors who are excellent educators and excellent instructors, and their concern is they're not producing speakers. That's not just a problem of the education system; it's a failure of our whole society to perpetuate the importance of that and to work with First Nations in doing that. I was hoping that out of the evaluation of the native language

teaching program, there would come some strategies that would bring it all together under one umbrella, as it were, to work with the First Nations, to work with the teachings, to work with YNTEP, to work with anybody that they could to set some targets, to put some energy and focus on this so that, in 10 years, we can say we have graduates from the system who are fluent in their language, so that we can say that there are Northern Tutchone speakers and that there are Southern Tutchone speakers and there are speakers from all of the various — Tlingit — language groups in the Yukon.

I know that we're looking at a territory-wide literacy strategy. Can we look at a territory-wide language strategy, so that the First Nations can put their resources and everybody can target their resources to this very critical element of passing on the culture and the world view of our First Nations — to take advantage of our elders?

I'm just wondering if there are any new strategies that we're trying. I know we're working with a lot of people. I know there are a lot of well-intentioned people out there. I know there are pockets of excellence and excitement. Does the minister have a vision for First Nation languages in the future through our education system?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I want to reassure the members opposite that the government remains committed to supporting First Nation language programs in our schools. As I mentioned, we support programming in 21 of the 28 schools. We understand the very importance of this issue to Yukon First Nations and to all Yukoners. That's why, in fact, we continue to invest significant resources to the training of language teachers and trainees.

We have been increasing and we will continue to increase our effort in training those teachers to fill those very important teaching positions as retirements come. As I mentioned before, we are carrying out those discussions with the Council of Yukon First Nations and their education department, as we speak, in terms of conducting a review of the language programs — these are Yukon First Nation second language programs — that will help strengthen the delivery of what is working and what isn't working in terms of training programs.

It is timely — the member opposite referenced a literacy strategy. I think it's really important. I think that we would all agree that it's not just within schools — in order to sustain or revitalize or to keep the language going. It's certainly is a huge factor — there is no question — but it's a lifelong learning. That is why, through the literacy strategy, when we look at the lifelong learning paths from early learning within our homes, to early learning in public schools, to advanced education, to our workforce, and so forth.

Those are all initiatives that we are discussing with CYFN at this time — where we can better integrate the delivery of programs, and perhaps strengthen those ways, or come at it a different way. But we agree that just the delivery of those programs in public schools is not the panacea to sustaining the language as well. It is a very big factor; there is no question. I believe that we will continue to enhance those efforts. There is no question about that as well.

Some of the other things, as the member opposite referenced, when it comes to language labs — language nests as they have otherwise been coined as — again through CYFN — we are working with them. We're looking at master's programs as well available for teacher training purposes — again, right through the literacy strategy as well. There are a number of different ways that we are coming at this particular initiative.

Recently we signed off a three-year funding agreement with CYFN on the renewal of funding for the Yukon Native Language Centre, and resources have been enhanced to reflect on this review and how we can really look at the lifelong learning curve in terms of being able to strengthen delivery of these particular programs.

Agreed — I think that we have to think outside of the box and I do think that we're way too small of a territory to be working in isolation of each other, so we do need to work in collaboration with all First Nation governments. This is the responsibility of all respective orders and levels of government.

We do need to work closer together. As I mentioned, this is why we have begun the process of conducting a review.

Mr. Tredger: I'll keep on going. I noticed there was an \$895,000 increase in a request in the supplementary budget for the Commission scolaire francophone. That was for legal fees, secretarial/treasurer position, office renovations, value management study, core staffing previously funded by Canadian Heritage, and operating costs.

Can the minister tell me how much to date has been spent for legal fees for the case with Commission scolaire francophone?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just recently had the opportunity to sit down with the newly elected board for Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and I commend them. As you can appreciate, it's a significant responsibility at their footstep, and I would like to also just take the opportunity to thank the outgoing board. I think that the Department of Education in Government of Yukon has been able to strengthen its relationship with CSFY in the past year, and specifically in terms of being able to find ways to work together. That said, there is a very important matter before the courts, but communication is everything and we continue to communicate with the board and are very much committed to working with them on ensuring that we are able to continue our support of French-first-language education. It's all very important to be able to provide that high-quality French education to right-holders' kids.

In fact, I was just up at l'École Émilie Tremblay last week for their Christmas concert. It was great to see the actual administrator and to be able to see many of the teachers who I worked with over the years. So in this regard, the member opposite made reference to dollars allotted in this supplementary budget, and it really has to do with the installation of a couple of portable classrooms. I believe they are just about nearing completion — if I'm not mistaken — on those portables right now to facilitate the growth of the

secondary school students. So that work is currently underway.

We continue to work with them on a number of fronts to build our relationship with CSFY. We have been able to provide enhanced translation of various policies, manuals and job descriptions on a regular basis. We have just recently added — within the last year, as I mentioned during my debate with FLSD — a representative of the school board on the Advisory Committee on French Language Services. In addition, we have also added the deputy minister of Education to work on continued fronts, including a new financing formula for CSFY, which will help bring clarity and further finality or — what's the word?

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Closure, I guess you could say — and certainty, which is the word I was looking for.

We have been working on a number of fronts, and I do believe that the relationship has grown and been strengthened. I was also very pleased to see their new office opening on Range Road. They have a great space there, at which we had the opportunity to meet the newly elected board of directors for CSFY.

In terms of ongoing legal costs, we have to date dedicated \$2.6 million, and that includes \$400,000 for the CSFY's legal fees. We have and we will continue to work to strengthen that relationship. I commend the newly elected board. They are all, with the exception of one individual, new members, but they are very committed. They are taking their jobs tremendously seriously and they want as much information and to be as well-informed as possible. So I have very much committed, as Minister of Education, to continue that dialogue and to keep those lines of open communication. It is very important, especially as we go forward here. I recognize the importance of delivering French first language education in the territory, and we are also committed to continuing our support for other groups of students when it comes to French immersion, and all students in the territory in terms of how we can also strengthen those partnerships.

Just recently, I had the privilege of being able to attend the francophone centre and it was actually an evening dinner. It was the traditional taffy pull that was sponsored by our own Department of Education. Thank you to our staff who were there administering some fantastic food by being able to collaborate with the Canadian Parents for French students as well. It was a great collaboration to be able to network with francophone members of our community and to be able to strengthen those deliveries.

Likewise, the opportunities between French immersion students and French first language holders — very important to be able to help strengthen those programs as well. I know that that work is also going on. It's a very important file and it is one that I'm very much committed to keeping a good dialogue on and keeping a relationship with CSFY as we go forward.

Chair: Is it the wish of the members 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. We are resuming general debate on Vote 3.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for her answers. There had been some discussion on building a new school, as the judge ordered in the lawsuit. Is the location still being considered at the F.H. Collins building? Does the government have a plan B to address the needs of the francophone community and to meet the court order, if the F.H. Collins annex — I guess it would be — goes ahead or not? What is the state of negotiations there?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: With respect to a new school, that has been the issue of discussion for some time now between the Department of Education and CSFY — and we continue to engage in this discussion with CSFY.

As I mentioned, there is a new board of directors. It is something that is obviously top-of-mind for each of those individuals. It is something that we have provided some assistance — some in-kind and financial assistance — in terms of providing support for a value management study for CSFY. They have had some discussions with the community. There will be more discussions with the community. I know that there have been a number of options put forward for some time now. Those options will be explored greater. We do have a new school board, and they are working very hard to even understand the amount of responsibility that they have under section 23, when it comes to responsibility for French language — first French education in the territory.

We'll continue to have those discussions, as I mentioned, but we have assisted them, as I mentioned, with a value management study. There have been some initial discussions, but in our first informal meeting that we had recently, they will engage with us when the time is right and we will continue those discussions, but one of the options being put forward — I know that at the time, in some discussions past, there have been possibilities of having the school situated right at the current site of École Émilie Tremblay.

There have been other options put forward in the past of having a separate school in the downtown core — perhaps even in collaboration with the francophone centre. That was at one time put on the table. More recently there has been some discussion as well among the previous board members about having it on the same property as the F.H. Collins Secondary School — the replacement project, understanding, however, that it would be a separate school and unto itself. It could be situated right beside it but it would be its own stand-alone, separate school.

Those are very important discussions that will have far-reaching implications. We support that dialog going forward but it is a work in progress.

Mr. Tredger: The Commission scolaire francophone has set a wonderful example of community involvement and what a community school should be. Their parent

participation, their student participation, their community participation has been excellent, and they are to be commended for that.

I know there has been some concern from the department at the last school council elections about the lack of officials or people who came forward to volunteer. I believe the department was looking at ways to increase community participation and bring communities into school councils, as well as to help build community schools. I think one of the lessons we can learn from the francophone school community is that they have more say and thus they feel more valued and more involved in it.

Has the minister looked at ways to achieve more community involvement, to learn some of the lessons from the francophone school community and translate that into our schools so that we can have more community participation, not only on school councils but within day-to-day activity of the school?

Have we come up with any strategies to encourage participation, to value the participation, to get ready for the next school election? I know that one of the things has been the change of the school calendar, or the time that school councils serve, so the elections will be in the spring rather than in the fall. That is one good step. What other strategies is the department looking at to involve Yukon citizens in the very important roles in their school?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would have to agree that the francophone community here in Whitehorse and in the Yukon is all about being very inclusive in the community. I've always taken great pride in being able to work with the school board, with the school l'École Émilie Tremblay, and they have a lot to celebrate. When they do come together they come together in a very large way. The school has always been the heart of the community when it comes to the francophonie and it's something that I've always been very impressed with and have always been heartened by the community uptake, and obviously the importance that the families pay upon education and the role that education plays in terms of sustaining our community and being able to grow in a very vibrant way.

I made reference to the recent taffy pull, which was an initiative — I think that was a very innovative and creative way. I know it's something that we're looking to expand within the Department of Education. I just put that out as a recent example because it's something that our family got engaged with. It's an event that has occurred on a routine basis, but this time I know we've had events at schools.

For French-immersion students, for families, Canadian Parents of French Students — the organization itself is a great partnership. We talk about sustenance of First Nation language, the sustainability and maintaining those languages, and growing those languages. It's the same thing when it comes to French language services. The more we can speak it at home, the more we can incorporate that into our day-to-day life in our homes, at our workplace, and provide that welcoming environment, the better we can actually sustain it.

What happens at schools is one part of our life, a very important part of our life — we spend a lot of very important time there — but being able to see how you could actually sustain that in and out of school is very important. This was an event — the traditional taffy pull — that was held recently at the francophonie centre. It was deliberately held there to be able to have members of the francophone community come and meet with parents such as ourselves.

My husband, who does not speak any French at home and cannot speak it — I shouldn't say he cannot. He just chooses not to, as much as I would prefer him to. How's that?

As you are very much aware, I too am learning. I am a student learner as well. It is important for me, and it's important for my son's education and how well he does. Making more of an effort to speak the language at home, in the car when we're driving to school or to events — I think that events such as this — we're not asking the community to come to us, but we're actually going to the community to have events like this.

Being able to connect with other parents strengthens our student learning outcomes, I think. That is really the impetus for having programs such as that.

I know in the spring Whitehorse Elementary School, for example, will be again celebrating the kickoff, just prior to Sourdough Rendezvous, by having a winter carnival and having a number of events also being held as a way to bring families together — whether it's taffy, whether it's dinner, or whether it's having hot dogs at student sport day. There are many different ways — it is just but one example. We are looking at ways of engaging the community on so many different levels.

I think that when it comes to school councils — and I have had the privilege of meeting with a number of school councils so far and I have a lot more to do — but school councils — it's interesting, as I learn, they are also learning their roles and responsibilities. School councils have a tremendous amount of authority and power under the *Education Act*, but I believe we need to do a better job in providing that information as to how we inform councils on what their roles and responsibilities are, so that they can be more of an influence and able to completely fulfill their responsibilities under the act itself.

That is something I have talked about to our department, and we are working through administrators on being able to spell that out. It's very important, especially as we go into the next election. One of the changes that was made in the last sitting was an amendment to the *Education Act* and that has really resulted in election dates being altered to the spring instead of the fall.

That will provide more of an opportunity for school councils to become engaged sooner rather than later in the school year. They will be able to help set the agenda for the next school year coming in and have more of an influence, which will also have an impact on how they're able to engage better with the community.

School councils, as I mentioned — we're looking at any and all opportunities for enhancing professional development,

for example, to be able to articulate their roles in the school communities. Being involved in the school growth plans is one thing that I've heard by many of the school councils — being able to help inform those school growth plans and to be able to help set those priorities by having a formalized way. That is something relatively new in the department, and Yukon, as well — it is really enhancing the way we develop those school growth plans.

I mentioned earlier — just cultural inclusion and how we continue to support many different activities on the land, outside of the traditional classroom setting, and that too is another way of engaging with the community on many different fronts. It is something that is of importance, because I think that the better engaged that we as community citizens can be in our schools, in our school communities, the better off our children will be — our student learners. Being able to have that added focus and strength and connection to our communities is absolutely essential for everybody's success.

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

Last year at this time there was considerable consternation around the school calendar. It was seen by many communities as one of their contributions to their school and to their school community. The minister chose to go ahead and impose a school calendar with minor variations. I notice this year they have decided to go to a three-year calendar. However, the point of contact for information is no longer with the school councils — although the school councils sent out the information sheet. The point of contact is through the Department of Education. To me, this is just one way that the school councils felt valued and a part of the contributing system.

There were a number of reasons given for this — one of them was to facilitate the delivery of distance education courses through a common school curriculum. Has the minister received any comments or responses from school councils around this new way of determining a school calendar?

I know with this year's school calendar, Whitehorse parents especially were very concerned about the discrepancy and the length of time between the primary or elementary schools and the high schools. It just did not work for them — the two-week break or difference at the beginning. I know that a number of rural schools were quite concerned that this was a first step on the road to a common calendar that didn't take into the account the needs of the rural communities.

Could the minister tell me how many more students and how much more successful those students are that are enrolled in distance education courses? Has there been any feedback from school councils — rural and urban? Is the minister planning to determine a common school curriculum for the next three years?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I don't have that information — how many students are actually engaged in on-line distance learning. What I did say at the onset of my remarks is that we are looking at a variety of different learning approaches when it comes to teaching and delivery of education in each of our 28 schools. We are doing some very progressive work and I

am heartened to hear some of the good feedback in our school communities.

School calendar consultation is underway. I have not received any responses thus far. The consultation period closes on January 17 of next year. It can be completed on-line on the Department of Education's website; it can be completed also by way of paper copies that could be sent directly to the school councils.

I know that Whitehorse Elementary — for example — I will be going to the school Christmas concert tomorrow for the younger grades. I know that the school council will have a booth set up and they will have information distributed there. Parents can actually take a copy, fill it out and submit it directly to the school council.

I'd like to say that I just recently attended a Whitehorse Elementary School Council meeting the other evening at their invitation. I was accompanied by the Leader of the Official Opposition, who was also there. It was a great discussion and a good debate. I do believe that we have learned some lessons from the initial consultation that was held within the past year. Knowing full well that, up until this last year, we've had a multitude of different calendars, we're not looking at a common calendar. We are, however, looking at a more standardized way of delivering that.

Right now, we have a couple of calendars. Primarily we have one for students in Whitehorse — and of course that varies from high school to elementary, with different start dates and end dates — but we do have the common spring break this year. Likewise for the school communities outside, we have a variation as well. It is important to be able to reflect upon the unique realities of rural Yukon, so that is why there is a consultation out right now.

We're looking for feedback on the three-year school calendar going forward, the school start dates and the length of the spring break, and we look forward to hearing that dialogue.

One thing that was perhaps not as clear as it could have been during the initial consultation was who was responsible for consulting with the teaching professionals and the administration. For this consultation, the Yukon Teachers Association has offered to consult directly with the teaching staff on the school calendar, so they are undertaking that consultation now.

The school councils will receive all the on-line feedback in order to help inform their advice to myself as the minister responsible. That has been an education in itself in explaining the role of the school calendar and the roles of the minister and school councils and so forth. It has been a learning curve for everyone and I appreciate the diligence by everyone in the school councils and their patience as well. I'd like to thank all the school councils for doing their work and taking this very seriously. A three-year calendar is something that everyone welcomes. We look forward to receiving the feedback. As I mentioned, January 17 is when that period closes, so there are a lot of important decisions ahead of us and we look forward to proceeding with all that we receive.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. Again, I just stress that it was one way communities can develop and participate in their school's life.

I've talked before about the value of superintendents in the school system and the value of them being a window into the community for the department, as well as for the school community into the department. I know that the department was looking at ways — the previous minister mentioned looking for ways to ensure that superintendents spend more time in their schools. What happens is that they tend to get busy. Like most people, their desks fill up and their desks happens to be in Whitehorse. They don't often get out to a rural community to see the school and to interact with the teachers. Often when they do get to the schools, it's an occasional visit. They visit the principal's office, they may walk down the halls a little bit and then come back. Teachers value that opportunity for superintendents to sit down to discuss with teachers things that are happening in the school — their perspective. It certainly allows the community a window as well. I know in communities where there is changeover of principal or teaching staff, the continuity that a superintendent might add is very, very important. I guess I could ask the minister, has the amount of time superintendents spent in the schools increased since last year?

Is there a concerted effort to ensure that they are there? Is that being tracked and being kept track of? Is it part of a strategy? Does it remain important to the minister that the superintendents get into the schools?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just want to correct the record. When we were talking about the school calendar, I was talking about one common spring break and, in fact, right now we don't have the common spring break. We do have one or two weeks. The way that it is geared, spring break is administered so that one or two weeks must be within the same two-week period. I just wanted to correct the record on that front.

With respect to the member opposite's questions surrounding superintendents, this is something we feel very strongly about — and the Department of Education as well. One of our superintendents' very important functions is to be able to collaborate with each of the school communities, and what better way to do that than by getting out into the communities.

A couple of things have occurred in the past number of months. We actually have an additional superintendent. Actually, our assistant deputy minister is the chief superintendent but is actually also the superintendent for three schools. We have actually reorganized the school communities into four different families of schools. We now have four superintendents for the territory. As a result, we are having a lot more time in the schools by the superintendents.

I have been reassured by our staff here who have joined us — by my deputy minister — that time has been increased significantly as a result of having an additional superintendent for all of our schools. Likewise, we have also had the benefit of having an added resource in the department to help assist

our four superintendents so that they are able to actually spend more time in the schools in the communities.

They are on the road a lot more — a significant increase of time being spent in the schools. I know that our ADM for public schools, for example, who, as I mentioned before — I know that the member opposite may have been busy collaborating with the MLA for Klondike. But the ADM is fairly new and came on board about the same time as I did and has really made a huge effort to get out into many of our schools from Old Crow to Watson Lake and everything in between. That has been duly noted by many of the school communities that I have spoken with as well. Like I said, we do have an additional superintendent and we do have an added resource in the department to assist those superintendents so that they are able to spend more time on the road in our school communities.

Mr. Tredger: Student information systems — the last few years the department has used YSIS.

It hasn't been very successful. It has been very costly. It has been very time-consuming on the part of the teachers. The information that is delivered has not been sufficient and it has created a lot of problems. We followed B.C. in getting into YSIS. B.C. is now no longer supporting YSIS, and I know that they and we are looking at new systems.

Can I ask the minister what kind of thing she's looking at from the new system? What strategies is she using to determine what system we're going to use? Will teachers be involved in selecting and piloting that?

For our schools, one of the critical parts might be the connectivity. I know there are a number of things that don't run as well in the rural communities as they do in Whitehorse. We have a lot of communities without full Internet — or adequate Internet access to run the YSIS program. Will we be able to upgrade our programs and our systems to handle a new system? Where are we at with the whole choosing of a new student information system? Finally, what is the minister looking to get from a new student information system? What criteria is she asking for? What kinds of information will we be able to track?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As the member opposite just referred to, we are working on a transition to a new student information system. We'll be looking to do that after January 2016. That is when the current system will cease and come to an end.

We have developed, or reformed, a technology advisory committee with a student information systems working group, and it is comprised of many different representatives of different stakeholder groups, including the Yukon Teachers Association, Northwestel, Education — I think I've mentioned ICT already, but others. It also includes administrators, school and administrative assistants — so those who are actually inputting and doing the work.

As the member opposite made reference to, we are continuing to make those connections with Northwestel and we are also working with Highways and Public Works through government ICT as well — just ensuring that we can

learn from the current system and how we are able to strengthen that system going forward in 2016 and beyond.

Part of the mandate of this particular committee will be to look at those strengths and challenges, and also pretty much doing a SWOT analysis on what they would like to see in the new one. We're also seeking input from partners including parents, school councils and Yukon First Nations as well.

We have received feedback about the current system, so we're reviewing potential systems in light of that information coming forward from the school community. We'll be looking to moving forward into implementation planning probably mid-next year, with the implementation process to be fully launched next fiscal year and completed and essentially implemented by the end of December 2015.

We have been asking those questions. What are the strengths of the current system? What are the challenges we face in deliberating the current system? What specific features would you like to see in this particular system?

In particular, we're looking at teacher use. We received a significant amount of feedback from teachers, how user-friendly it is — the bandwidth, as I mentioned, from Northwestel. Part of the problem was not having the capacity to be able to deliver an effective system. We are talking to Northwestel and they are represented on the technology advisory committee, contributing to those discussions. This is very important.

Likewise, ICT — through Highways and Public Works and through our own Education department — is absolutely critical. Having access for parents to the system is critical as well — being open and transparent. Everything from grade book input — and having the ability to have that both in French and English — is critical — being able to take that data from the existing system and being able to transition that into the new system and make that relevant. Basically, trying to find the most cost-effective, efficient system — learning from challenges of our current system — finding out what is working and what isn't working. We are very much engaging with the entire community. It is very inclusive and will continue to be very inclusive as we launch into implementation mode later on next year.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. I do appreciate her involving various players in that. We just can't have another fiasco like the YSIS program.

The minister mentioned bandwidth. That continues to be a really serious concern in many of our rural communities. Watson Lake has developed a blended learning program. It has a lot of potential to be used in other rural communities. However, not all rural communities have the Internet access to support that type of a program. We run into that with the student information system. We run into it with the different kinds of programming. It's becoming increasingly important that our rural students have access to some of the modern technology that is currently being offered via the Internet. You just have to go on and see the variety of courses or variety of options that are available to students through the Internet, particularly in a small school, where you may have one teacher for four and five grades and students at different

levels. So, reliable and efficient Internet access bandwidth is critical.

Is the minister working with her colleagues in Northwestel? Are they considering, if necessary, paying Northwestel to ensure that all of our students have adequate connection speeds and bandwidth so that we don't have some schools with access and some schools without, some students with and some students without, further increasing the urban-rural divide?

As I say, in Whitehorse, students have access to many different teachers, a larger library system and very good bandwidth and interconnectivity. That's not always true in the rural communities, so is the minister working with her colleagues and working with Northwestel and have they considered, if necessary, paying to ensure that our schools, all of our schools, have that bandwidth and connectivity?

I believe that the member for Mayo-Tatchun participated in the Association of Yukon School Councils AGM recently. In fact, we had one of our officials from the Department of Education provide a briefing or an overview of the rural equity action plan and she did a fantastic job — I will say that publicly again and again. I believe that in her presentation, she said — and it is something that we are very cognizant of — that as we approach education in different ways in different communities, we have to be mindful of the unique realities in each of the communities.

For example in Old Crow, there is satellite that we use in terms of access to learning opportunities to administer the alternative high school. That is different from Watson Lake, where we were able to work with Northwestel to be able to expand bandwidth. What I'm trying to say is that every community is very different and has its own unique realities and challenges as well because of its geographic location.

We do have a technology learning committee or digital learning group — call it what you will — and we have ongoing discussions with Northwestel. They are at the table and of course we have an upgrading schedule for the communities on a go-forward basis, and we are working with Northwestel to be able to roll that out. It is an important part as we deliberate it and continue to implement the rural equity action plan.

It is important, because I talked about the rural experiential model through the northern hub that was just delivered in Dawson. We have a blended learning approach in Watson Lake and we have an alternate high school approach being delivered in the communities of Teslin and Old Crow.

With the advent of technological progress and advances, things are changing quickly. The demand is very much increasing. It is key to the success of how we continue to develop and be able to develop and implement the plan that we have, comprising new and existing programs, when it comes to alternative programs being delivered. It is something that I've talked about in a number of different communities at school council meetings and with administrators, and it will continue to be top of centre.

Through our digital learning group, we are working on a number of different fronts through the Yukon government. Of

course, the Minister of Economic Development is pretty much the lead when it comes to IT and is working to be able to enhance the delivery of programming available. It's unfortunate the Minister of Economic Development couldn't speak to this very important matter, but I understand he is busy.

Madam Chair, we are working on that rollout, community by community, recognizing that every community has its distinct challenges.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. I know that our schools and our communities are working to find solutions in delivery of programming. In the 21st century, the availability of bandwidth and interconnectivity is of critical importance, not only in our education system, but in our health system as well. In many of our departments, it's a way that rural people keep in touch with the world. It's become a fact of life. The reality is that there is a gulf between the bandwidth and the connectivity available in rural communities and that in urban communities.

What I'm wondering is, will the minister work with her colleagues and Northwestel — not only for educational purposes, but for other purposes and if necessary committing funds — so we don't have a continuing gap between rural and urban students? So ensure that the funding is there and that the students and citizens of the Yukon who happen to live in rural communities have access to the interconnectivity, the bandwidth and the Internet that is so necessary in 21st century Canada?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: This government does recognize the importance of technology and bandwidth when it comes to classrooms throughout the territory, particularly in rural Yukon. It's one of those items that have been identified as an issue in terms of resolving rural equity initiatives.

As I mentioned before, we are committed. We are not only committed, but are actually doing the work. We're looking to enhance the IT capacity, even in our own department, to be able to better respond to some of these unique challenges, in terms of being able to fully implement the rural equity action plan. We are working on the use of Promethean boards — for example — in our classrooms. It is a very unique initiative and is becoming the norm for classrooms throughout the country. We are increasingly using more iPads and laptops, as well as connections to all kinds of electronic resources throughout — in support of enhancing skills among our student populations.

We are expanding on-line learning options for rural students, as well as those students who are being home schooled through the Aurora Virtual School. We are working with our own curriculum developers, incorporating First Nation content with Yukon First Nation involvement. We are working on those infrastructure-related issues and challenges. We are coming up with creative ways in being able to develop those very systems.

As was expressed by the officials during that Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees AGM recently, they did talk about how we're doing the best that we are able to, to be able to get around some of these unique

challenges, while we are able to work on the longer-term infrastructure initiatives with Northwestel and others. We are working on human and fiscal resources within our own government, enhancing our own capacity, our own ability to be able to develop and provide that enhanced technology — again, that includes the bandwidth and the infrastructure.

When it comes to specific IT questions, I would ask that the member opposite raise those during Economic Development debate with the minister responsible for Economic Development, but I can assure you that it is top-of-mind for that minister and for our government, in terms of making available on-line services and programs and the delivery of important day-to-day skills and resources.

We are working to expand the amount of on-line content throughout the Yukon on many different fronts but, again, I can only speak to the schools. That is what we're debating right now. Again, we are working on that with Northwestel on a number of different approaches, as the member opposite just referred to — blended learning approaches, models to alternative, rural experiential models and so forth. Recognizing the importance of training and implementation abilities among our staff to be able to help deliver some of these new approaches — that too is important — just as important as the infrastructure and the actual hardware itself.

It is a work in progress, but it is a priority for the government and it is top-of-mind for the Minister of Economic Development. We will continue to work on cross-departmental initiatives such as this.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. Rural Yukon people are looking forward to the day when they can participate fully with the Internet in many of the programs that are being offered. I would encourage the minister to continue to lobby for that to happen.

The Auditor General's report of 2009 talked about the industrial arts component of our schools and the fact that — especially in rural Yukon, but even in urban Yukon — many of the shop facilities were underused, poorly maintained and inadequately staffed. I know that skills training and development of skills in our school system is of utmost importance. We've debated that many times in the House and the government has committed to that. Yet I still see in many of our rural schools empty shops, underused shops and shops where there's no one in the school with the qualifications to run the equipment.

I understand that there are challenges to delivering such programs in rural schools. However, given the importance of encouraging our students to get into the skills, into the trades, it becomes doubly important that they have access to those, especially students in grades 7, 8 and 9.

I would like to raise a couple of concerns around that. One is that professional development and training for staff in our rural communities — also recruitment of staff in the rural communities — around fulfilling the teaching positions. Maintenance of the equipment — in the past, Property Management had a person who went around from school to school to sharpen the equipment; to make sure it was maintained in a safe and reliable manner. They would often

work with the local instructor on how to best use the equipment and maintain the equipment.

I know that the department has hired somebody to work in all communities. There is one person who is working with instructors. But I have yet to see someone who is sharpening equipment and maintaining equipment. It used to be a full-time job just to do that, let alone looking at the professional development and working with teachers in the communities, who often do not have specialty training but are looking for ways to involve the students. I know that person is excellent at that. He has a background in it from his teaching days at F.H. Collins.

There are a number of areas there: the maintenance and upkeep of the shop equipment, the safety standards and whether we're meeting Workers' Compensation criteria, the training, working and facilitation with the staff and, finally, the encouragement of students to get involved and have active opportunities to participate in shop and, I guess, in food education programs.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The issue of school shops being up and running, working and functioning — and that's part and parcel with them complying with occupational health and safety regulations. As the member opposite referred to, it also has to do with the capacity of teachers and their ability to be able to deliver programs in support of the trades. We recognize this as being very important. It was really heightened when we delivered the REM session — the rural experiential model session — in Dawson City.

I got to see that first-hand and it is important — and I heard this directly from the Robert Service School Council. We place great emphasis on promoting the trades and promoting programs such as this, and one of the sessions delivered by the department during the REM session in Dawson was that of woodworking and that of the shop. In that particular instance it was creating skateboards.

I had the opportunity to speak with some of the members from rural communities, recognizing that there is work to be done — there's no question to be made, and that's in fact why we have recently hired a new manager of operations to work specifically in every one of our schools primarily to continue the development, implementation and COR certification of our programs that we deliver through the schools, and being able to work effectively identifying shortfalls in our shops and how we can certainly ensure that they are up to speed and in good working condition and that they comply with our act and regulations associated with that.

We continue to work on this issue — again, standardizing the supply and the servicing of equipment used in all of our school shops. I've learned, in talking with some of the school councils, that there have been upgrades to a number of our shops in recent years — the past couple of years in particular. There has been a lot of equipment that has been replaced and upgraded, and there have been a number of ventilation upgrades as well.

We will continue to work with Workers' Compensation, and we will continue to work with each and every one of our

school communities because we recognize that investment in skills training is so important.

I was also reminded by an official in our department the other day at a breakfast that I went to — Share the Spirit breakfast fundraiser at Vanier — that the school shops are important, but just being able to use basic skills, like carving and just your basic fundamental tools, never mind all of the mechanical tools and electricity-driven tools and so forth — it's application, being unique and creative, but that is what we are working toward.

Recently, last week, I was very pleased to be able to launch that new mobile trade trailer, the supply trailer and the actual training lab itself. That is going to be great. That's going to help in terms of enabling and widening our capacity to get into the communities like Dawson. We'll be heading up there any day now, I understand, and it will be ready for the semester starting in January in Dawson. That will be critical because it will offer adults pre-employment welding, and high-school students will have the opportunity to take a dual credit welding program, meaning that a student enrolled in that pre-employment course would also earn credit toward graduation on the successful completion of their course work.

That tool in itself, just being mobile — not unlike the new fire-training mobile unit — is going to help expand the opportunities available to rural Yukon in particular. We look forward to the positive outcomes as a result of that investment.

The Yukon government was very honoured to invest \$1.1 million in collaboration with the Government of Canada, which contributed the remaining \$700,000. I'm sure that for every one of us who might have made that ribbon-cutting ceremony — it looks fantastic. There are pictures of individual students from Yukon College. It's quite the facility. It's huge and it has capacity. It's not just in support of the mining industry. It's going to support so many different industries.

Again, it's outfitted for classes in welding, electrical, millwright and piping, with onboard diesel generators to provide for heating, lighting and everything you can imagine. It also provides wireless Internet. It could actually probably even serve as a mobile command centre, if need be.

It's a tremendous asset and will enhance the ability for us to be able to help open those doors in terms of dual credit programs available for Yukon students, both young and older and everyone in-between.

That's something that has been identified by industry needing more skilled workers and tradespeople on the ground. It's something that I think — with the use of this facility and also the use of sessions, such as the rural experiential model — it's another great opportunity for us to have students from different communities come together in a common place such as Dawson — it will be in Carmacks next spring — to be able to try out different things. We're already engaging with industry on how we can expand the selection of sessions to be taken.

Woodworking or working in the shops, working in the food services — I believe I referenced the FEAST program as

another program that is successfully being delivered through Porter Creek Secondary — it's something where we actually had the person who is helping facilitate that program here in Whitehorse go up to Dawson and share those skills and build capacity in the Robert Service School, and for other schools to take that and learn from that success on how to rebuild that.

There are lots of opportunities and we deem this to be very important. We need to take a more systematic approach in terms of how we administer shop, and that includes building capacity among our instruction.

The member opposite made reference to difficulties and challenges and I've know this to be true for many years. It's one thing to find a person who is duly qualified in the trades, but it's another thing to couple that up with teaching qualification certification and being able to combine the two. Not everyone is built that way — to be a teacher or an instructor — but we have some incredible people in the Yukon who are doing some really good things and are making the trades a very viable choice.

We have seen an incredible increase in apprenticeships made available through Yukon College. In fact, I think the number of student apprentices registered right now has grown over the past 11 years fourfold, if I'm not mistaken. It's significant and shows that the of growth in our economy is definitely driving that demand through our schools — hence the investments in the northern innovation centre in mining, for example, and the new mobile trades training lab and the supply trailer that goes along with that.

These initiatives are in the works. We recognize that there is always going to be more to be done, likewise on other fronts. Skills Yukon just recently had the ability to go to F.H. Collins and see first-hand some of the work they are doing with skills clubs that they have implemented — working with individual schools. That's a great thing. We had a meeting with them just recently looking at ways of how we can expand those options in the communities and being able to pull in industry in a more cohesive, integrated manner.

There is a tremendous amount of work being undertaken, but we recognize that there is always going to be demand and we need to continue to rise to the occasion.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. I appreciate what's being done and I appreciate the challenges. It's important that we do set some targets and that we do look at strategically engaging our students in trades and exposure to the trades. The minister mentioned hiring another individual this year. Was that in addition to the individual who was hired last year, so that there would be now two people working on the program? Or does it remain one who is responsible for maintenance, as well as working with the individuals, or are there now two people?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Yes, this is an additional individual. The individual the member opposite may have been referring to is a trades coordinator, so that's the role and he is doing some fantastic work. He was actually part of the REM session in Dawson this past fall. He was there providing the oversight and actually delivering the instruction in the construction of the skateboards, and he was doing a great job.

He has a good way about himself, in the way he delivers programs and the way he is able to connect with students. He did a great job. So that is a trades coordinator and that individual is working with the Department of Education on developing curriculum, being able to approach trades training in all of our schools with a more systematic approach.

The individual I just made reference to, the new individual manager of operations, is responsible for the maintenance and safe delivery of trades, ensuring that all of our equipment is working, is in compliance with regulations and just ensuring that we adhere to all the outstanding issues of safety — for example, in our shops — and, as I mentioned before, standardizing supply and servicing of equipment in all the school shops.

There's a tremendous amount of work being brought to light and we have just enhanced the capacity in our department to be able to rise and pay attention to these issues, which is critical if we want to continue to be able to deliver on trades training and to be able to continue to deliver on some of these very important programs — and how we can enhancing that programming. I think that will come part and parcel with us being able to attract individuals who have the qualifications to do the trades training by having a more cohesive, integrated program delivering trades in the schools.

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

The Auditor General also recommended that a facilities audit be done of all the facilities. I know that the minister has undergone a number of them, most recently completing a seismic one. The results of the seismic one in particular, but many of them, have identified that many of our buildings are aging and I have a couple of questions around that.

Air quality is becoming increasingly a concern at a number of our schools. I know that F.H. Collins has had a number of tests done. There were some done in the spring that indicated some serious concerns. They were to be followed up this fall. I'm not sure whether or not that has been completed and whether the information has been shared with the staff and the parents, as well as the students of the school.

I know that there are health and safety committees at all of our schools. Are they active? Who do they report to? When tests are being done — say, on air quality or structural concerns — are they being shared with the school council? Is it being shared with the public? Finally, do we have a long-term facilities plan for the eventual replacement of the aging building? The seismic test identified a number of short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives, but I guess the bottom line is that we do have a number of buildings that are reaching, if not, exceeding their expected lifespan. Do we have a facilities plan that will replace these buildings?

Air quality — what's being done? Who is getting the reports on it? How often is it being done? How are concerns being responded to? Are the school councils, parents and staff aware of the results of the air quality tests? What is being done to maintain the structural integrity of our schools? Finally, what is the long-term facilities plan?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, this is a very large question, so I will do my best to try to address some of the questions brought forward.

As the member opposite referred to, there was an Auditor General's report back in 2009, and one of the recommendations that was made was to work with the Property Management division to develop a long-term facility plan that takes into account the age, capacity and location of the facilities and student enrollment trends.

That work is underway — has been underway — and will continue to be underway for some time. There is a multitude of different initiatives that will contribute to this long-term facility plan and a tremendous amount of work has been completed by Highways and Public Works through the Property Management division to ensure that our facilities are available for use for a few years to come.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that we report progress on Bill No. 11, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor that the Chair report progress on Bill No. 11, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, 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. 11, entitled *Second 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.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to recognize His Worship, Mayor Dan Curtis, who has just joined us today. I'd like all members of the House to recognize him.

Applause

Ms. White: In that same vein, I'd like to introduce both Emily and Rachel Tredger, two number one fans of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. Thank you for coming, ladies.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled December 16, 2013:

33-1-99

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Ninth Report (Hassard)