



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, May 12, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

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Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Education; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Community Services; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation; Yukon Lottery Commission Government House Leader
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Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Yukon Energy Corporation; Yukon Development Corporation
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Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin
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Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 12, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF TABLE OFFICER

Speaker: Members, I am pleased to welcome Mr. Patrick Michael to the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Michael, of course, is no stranger to this House, having served at the Table for 30 years, and as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly from 1978 until his retirement in 2007 — or actually until today when we dragged him back out of retirement.

Mr. Michael will be an acting Table Officer for the remainder of our 2014 Spring Sitting, so please give him a warm welcome back.

Applause

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Police Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today to pay tribute to Police Week in Canada and here in Yukon. Police Week is an opportunity to reflect on the work police officers do to keep our communities safe. The role of RCMP members in Yukon communities is both rewarding and challenging. RCMP members enforce federal and territorial laws and protect all citizens. They are first responders to accidents, situations of crime and conflict and they often are the first ones to provide comfort to victims on the scene. At times, officers have to put themselves in harm's way when performing their daily duties. Their jobs also include working with citizens, and governmental and non-governmental agencies on efforts to reduce and deter crime. Because of the high level of responsibility and legacy of their profession, RCMP members often become role models and leaders in our communities.

The 2013 Community Safety Awards recognized the exemplary professionalism of several Yukon RCMP members and I would like to share three examples with you. Constable Tim Lynch, Constable Adam Lightfoot and Constable Bill Gossen were recognized for their outstanding community policing as positive role models for their involvement in organizing the Pelly River Hockey Challenge in Faro. Constable Andrew Greer was recognized for his outstanding contribution to community safety for his role in the search and rescue of a Tagish elder in 2012. Constable Paul Miller was honoured as a bridge builder for his work growing trust between the RCMP and the community of Carmacks.

I would also like to bring to your attention the heroic actions of Constable Susan Shaw-Davis. The constable was a first responder to a single-vehicle accident in which a mother

and her young son, who were visitors to the territory, were trapped inside a pickup truck that was billowing smoke. Using her baton and her boots, the constable smashed the windshield and made a large enough hole for the pair to exit the truck.

Even though their roles and responsibilities are complex and multi-faceted, RCMP members are dedicated to their work, courageous and professional. In Yukon, the RCMP employs 98 regular RCMP members, 18 civilian members and 20 public service employees. The RCMP does not work in isolation in our territory. They are supported by many Yukoners who volunteer as auxiliary constables, victim assistance volunteers and citizens on patrol.

Many community safety initiatives would not be successful without the collaboration between the RCMP and organizations such as the Yukon Women's Coalition and Mothers Against Drunk Driving. This year, during Police Week, the Whitehorse RCMP detachment will be holding a barbecue on Thursday, May 15 between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. and everyone is invited to attend.

Our government joins with all Yukoners expressing our appreciation for the work the RCMP does to keep our communities safe. I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in applauding our RCMP M Division — regular and civilian members — and support staff for their dedication to serving Yukon communities. As Minister of Justice, I cannot thank you enough.

In closing, it is my pleasure to announce that we will soon be seeking nominations for the 2014 Community Safety awards, which will be presented in October. If you know an adult or a youth community member who you believe should be recognized for his or her contribution to community safety, feel free to contact me for more information or visit the Department of Justice website.

I would also ask that all members of the Legislative Assembly join me in welcoming a few members of M Division to the gallery. With M Division is Jeff Ford from Yukon government, director of Public Safety and Investigations Services. There is also Constable Daniel Bray from Whitehorse detachment, D Watch; Sergeant James Giczi, who is in charge of the forensic identification section for Yukon; Leah Greenway, a public service employee supporting district policing and a volunteer auxiliary constable; Carrie Power, public service employee for Whitehorse detachment; Matt Shepalo, civilian member of the operation communication centre for Yukon; and the fearless leader, Chief Superintendent Peter Clark, commanding officer for M Division. Welcome.

Applause

Ms. Moorcroft: On behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party, I rise to acknowledge Police Week — May 11 to 17, 2014. Police Week began in Canada in 1970 as a way to connect with communities and increase awareness of the services that police provide.

Here in Yukon, the review of Yukon's police force, 2010, provided an opportunity for residents of Yukon to comment on the police services they want in their communities. The

final report coming out of that process, *Sharing Common Ground*, opens with the statement — and I quote: “Effective policing is based on a foundation of trust. In order to be effective, all police services must establish and maintain the trust and confidence of those who they police. Police officers have the special responsibility of enforcing the law and ensuring public safety. Parliaments and legislatures provide them with authority that other citizens do not have, including the authority to use force to arrest and detain and to search and seize.”

Police are given these special authorities in order to perform their duties and they are also subject to the rule of law and legislative accountability. Fundamental to policing is the premise that community support is required for effective and responsive policing. Police must engage in the community as partners. To gain public support, police officers must understand and accept the values, beliefs and culture of the communities they serve, and the community must also engage with the police.

During the period of the review, hundreds of Yukon residents attended public meetings, submitted written comments and participating in focused discussions to address specific concerns of First Nation governments and communities, women’s groups, youth and social service agencies. Twenty-three individuals and groups submitted reports that can be found on the review of Yukon’s police force 2010 website.

The review of Yukon’s police force, co-chaired by the Yukon government, the RCMP and the Council of Yukon First Nations, engaged in a process of dialogue with Yukoners to collaboratively develop solutions that encourage trust between citizens and the police force. This process of dialogue allowed citizens and the police to listen and learn about each other, promote respect for each other and build relationships among individual and agencies.

This morning on CBC Radio, I was pleased to hear the Yukon RCMP commanding officer and the minister commit for the 2014-15 year to continue work on: reducing the victimization of children and youth; improving the response to sexualized assault and family violence; addressing community safety issues; building relationships with First Nations; and improving the police response to vulnerable populations — with the addition of the national impaired driving campaign.

Each of these priorities was identified as an area of concern by the public during the police review. Following the review, Yukon RCMP have been actively engaged in community outreach. I would like to commend all members of the police force for their commitment to that work. That is work that happens every day and not just during Police Week.

RCMP members in communities meet regularly with chiefs and council, with municipal councils and other groups. The Liard Aboriginal Women’s Society and the Watson Lake RCMP detachment protocol on community safety is a recent success of improved relationships between women’s equality-seeking groups and the RCMP. We are hopeful that a similar Whitehorse detachment and Yukon-wide protocol may soon follow.

The Northern Institute of Social Justice’s participation in developing curriculum that can assist RCMP in understanding the period of early contact and contemporary relationships between RCMP and First Nations, Yukon First Nation history and culture and northern policing is an important role. Increasing the numbers of women and First Nation recruits to the RCMP is an ongoing activity in order to make police service in Yukon communities more representative of the people it serves.

I acknowledge the leadership of Yukon RCMP, which is determined to live up to a high standard of policing. We look forward to participating in Yukon Police Week events.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming members of the newly formed Mobile Home Owners Association of Yukon, and special acknowledgement of the three founding members, Charles Behan, Michael Kasprzac and Michael Bryson.

Thank you for coming.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. Hanson: I have for tabling today copies of the 2010 Association of Yukon Communities’ motion relating to mineral claims and conflicting surface rights within municipalities.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 105: Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Moorcroft: I move that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act (No. 2)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act (No. 2)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 105 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to cooperate with the international community and their allies to find and rescue the abducted schoolgirls in Nigeria, Africa.

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

THAT this House urges the federal government to take necessary measures to help locate and secure the release of the more than 200 girls kidnapped in Nigeria.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize mobile home owners as a distinct category in the *Residential Landlord Tenant Act* in order that there be a maximum annual allowable rent increase for mobile home communities set out in the regulations.

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

THAT this government amend the *Family Property and Support Act* to make the appropriate amendments that reflect marriage equality for same-sex couples.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to follow the advice of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples by calling a comprehensive national inquiry into the “severe problem” of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Dome Road and Mary McLeod Road rerouting

Ms. Hanson: Placer mining activity on the Midnight Dome has been a source of contention in Dawson City for years. Recently the government announced its plan to reroute the Dome Road and Mary McLeod Road at taxpayers’ expense. The fact is, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is bending over backwards to help Slinky Mine operate at the expense of local residents.

I remind this House that this is the same mine operator who previously lost a court case against the city for trespassing and infringing on the same roadway. The government says rerouting the road is a public safety issue, but there has been no evidence provided to the public that this project will benefit public safety or how it will offset public safety issues created by allowing the road rerouting and full-scale mining to go forward in a residential area.

What needs assessment was done to prove that rerouting the road is a public safety issue and what is the cost to taxpayers to reroute and build a new Dome Road?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I’ve said previously on the floor of this House in response to a similar question from the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Yukon government, the City of Dawson and the owners of the Slinky mine are currently finalizing a multi-party agreement that will result in the realignment of part of the Dome Road and the Mary McLeod

Road. This project will enable not only much-needed country residential lot development in the area, but it will also allow for a timely end to placer mining near the road and residences as well as improve safety of the Dome Road.

When it comes to the costs — of course, we won’t know the costs until we get a tender on the project as proposed.

I should also thank the Mayor of Dawson City for taking me up the Dome Road this past weekend when I was attending the AYC conference in Dawson City. We also had the opportunity to stop in on one of the impacted residents and have a conversation with her as well. We’re looking for a solution here that meets the needs of the placer miner and respects the rights of the placer miner associated with those pre-existing claims as well as improving safety and allowing for the opportunity for more residential development in that area.

Ms. Hanson: The minister did not indicate what needs assessment or what safety issues are being addressed. The government claims its decision to work on the road is part of a wider initiative to resolve land use issues in the area. It is indicated that part of the justification for bankrolling this project is to allow the land to eventually become residential lots.

I remind this House that YESAB rejected both the proposal for mining and residential development on this land. Energy, Mines and Resources has stated that the tentative agreement would allow the miner three years to mine his claim, and then he would have to give it up.

What guarantee do the ministers involved have that the miner will give up his claims after three years and how will the government enforce this?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I indicated in my initial response, we’re working with the City of Dawson and the owners of the mine on a multi-party agreement — an agreement that will be signed — and includes provisions for the timely end to placer mining on that property that is in question. Just to remind the member opposite, those placer claims were pre-existing. Now you’re not allowed to stake new placer claims within a municipality. I know that in Dawson City there are a number that were pre-existing, such as these ones.

Again, we’re not in favour of expropriating any claims or any of the rights that owners of those claims have with respect to working them. We’re trying to find a solution here and we’re able to find a solution that not only addresses public safety, but will add increased lots to the country residential inventory in Dawson City. We’re looking for a solution and we feel this is the best way to move forward that respects the rights of all the property owners.

Ms. Hanson: It seems there are different rights for different folks. The minister has acknowledged that, when he was in Dawson this weekend, he did meet with one of the individuals whose life is being affected by allowing this mine to operate. This is a mine operator with a poor track record in this community who is getting support, while the local residents are not.

This issue is placing undue hardship on municipal councils and places local governments in an impossible

situation. This is part of a larger issue of mining within municipalities, an issue that this government has refused to address time and time again. The rights of miners continue to supersede the rights of municipalities to govern and the rights of citizens to a peaceful use and enjoyment of their property.

Mr. Speaker, what support is this government providing to help municipalities and Yukoners struggling to reconcile the realities of mining and, in Dawson's case, staking within a municipality?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe it accomplishes anything for members of this Legislature to personally attack any Yukoners who aren't here to defend themselves, including placer miners who are operating in the Dawson area.

I understand from colleagues that the Dawson City council passed a motion supporting this course of action to move forward with this multi-party agreement. When it comes to staking within municipalities, the government issued a prohibition order on quartz-claim staking for 74 percent of the lands within the City of Whitehorse on June 19, 2012. New placer claims are not permitted to be staked within municipal boundaries. We're trying to find a solution that not only works and respects the rights of the placer miner, but works with the municipal governments to ensure that we can bring the placer mining in question on these particular claims to a speedy resolution and move forward from there.

I just have to reiterate what I said off the top that it serves no purpose — and as legislators here in the House, I don't believe that we should be attacking individuals who have no right to defend themselves on the floor of this House.

Question re: Minto mine waste rock

Mr. Tredger: We have been informed that waste rock is being trucked from Minto mine to Tatchun Creek for bridge and road repairs. This waste rock is not mineral-rich enough to mine, but since it all comes from the same mineralized area, hot spots could still impact the environment. That is why, under the operating terms, Minto mine was instructed to cap and monitor their waste rock.

Can the minister responsible indicate what monitoring for contaminants from the Minto mine waste rock will occur, now that it is off-site and in our waterways?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to this type of information, I know the member opposite has time and time again brought incorrect information to the floor, so I'm sure that members of the House will allow me to look into what the member opposite is asserting and I'll be able to report back to the House at that point.

Mr. Tredger: The information comes from my constituents. Tatchun Creek is a salmon-bearing creek and the waste rock is from a copper mine. Research has shown that salmon do not return to waters where there are copper traces, as little as 10 parts per billion — minute traces of copper.

Under its operating terms, the Minto mine is supposed to cap and monitor the waste rock on its site. Now that the waste rock is being taken off-site, people in nearby communities are concerned about where that waste rock is being used and the

potential impacts the waste rock could have, especially on salmon-bearing waterways. The Yukon public has not been informed about what testing has or will be done. Will the minister commit to informing the public what testing has been done related to the use of Minto mine waste rock to fix the road at Tatchun Creek?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned previously, what I will make a commitment to do is have officials look into this matter further. At such time, I will either report back to the member opposite on the floor of the Legislature or through a letter.

Mr. Tredger: Yukoners want to have faith that environmental reviews and the requirements for licensing do indeed provide the protection of Yukon's environment. Waste rock from the Minto mine has been used on the Klondike Highway, in the Tatchun Creek, near Fox Lake, near Montague House and in the Nordenskiöld River. Yukoners want assurances that this government is properly overseeing and monitoring the use of mining waste rock, especially near creeks and streams and in salmon-bearing waterways.

In what other locations has this waste rock been used, and what is the permitting process for Minto mine waste rock to be used off-site?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I've committed to in my previous two answers, I will ask officials in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and I'm sure the Minister of Highways and Public Works will confer with his officials. We, of course, take permitting and environmental protection very seriously when it comes to anything we do, whether it's work within the highway right-of-way, work on existing mines, water licensing, or other aspects that are taking place — all things that the member has brought to the floor of this House.

I will take it up with officials, as I'm sure the Minister of Highways and Public Works will, and report back to the House.

Question re: Brewery Creek mine

Mr. Silver: I have a question about the Brewery Creek project near Dawson City. The project is owned by Golden Predator Mining Corporation. The company has owned the property for several years now and recently restarted their environmental screening to restart the mine.

As the minister knows, the company has spent a great deal of money on this project. The Government of Yukon has issued three placer mining leases on top of the Brewery Creek quartz mining project. Golden Predator has described these three leases as potentially fatal to the successful restart of the Brewery Creek mine.

What actions has the minister taken to resolve this issue?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to this specific issue, I did receive an e-mail with a letter attached from legal counsel and, as such, this is a legal issue so I cannot respond to any questions or supplementary questions about that specific project right now. What I can inform the House, though, is that, under Yukon law, the granting of placer rights that overlay quartz rights and vice versa — and we heard this directly from the president of the Klondike Placer Miners

Association when the Premier and I had the opportunity to meet with him on Friday — is something that is permitted and is common throughout the territory.

Of course, members will understand that, as the mining company in question has sent a letter from their legal counsel, it would be inappropriate for me to comment specifically on this issue at this time.

Mr. Silver: I'm very surprised with the minister's approach. This is a major project in the Yukon and it has the potential to create a lot of jobs, both in Dawson City and in Whitehorse. The company has raised this issue with the minister and his response has basically been that we are not going to do anything about it.

Golden Predator has a quartz mining licence, a water licence and a class 4 mining land use permit, and they have also spent \$30 million in advancing this project. That could be affected by these three new overlapping leases.

The company is of the view that these new leases pose serious jeopardy to the company's ability to maintain its licences in compliance with the regulations.

Is the minister not concerned about the potential impact that these leases have with the reopening of the Brewery Creek mine?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I didn't mention that I wasn't concerned about this. I did mention, though, that the first I heard about this issue was in a letter from legal counsel and, as such, that it has turned this into a legal matter. I referred that to the department for a response and I believe a response was sent from one of the Yukon government's lawyers to the lawyer for the proponent.

As I mentioned, I cannot comment further on this specific issue until the legal aspects are resolved. All members under that, no matter what issue it is, if it's something that's before the courts or has been determined to be a legal matter, such as this, when there are aspects coming from the lawyer back and forth, it's something we don't comment on.

Again, in general under Yukon law, the granting of placer rights that overlay quartz rights and quartz rights that overlay placer rights is something that's commonplace and is permitted throughout the territory.

Mr. Silver: As far as I know, this is not before the courts. Also, through correspondence from the minister's department, they're not prepared to do anything about this.

Mr. Speaker, let's change the tack here; maybe we'll get an answer on this question. It's my understanding that the *Placer Mining Act* says that proof of financial ability is required in order for the Government of Yukon to issue a lease out to someone. The act also requires a company to provide some type of security or a security bond.

Can the minister tell the House whether these leaseholders with the three new overlapping claims have provided this proof and the required securities?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, the member opposite, in trying to spin my answer into his next supplementary question, failed to recognize that I said it's not commonplace for us to comment on anything that is either before the courts or that has been raised by legal counsel. The first that I heard about

this issue was in a letter from the company's lawyer. Again, I'm not going to comment any further on this issue until the legal issues are resolved between the professionals who are involved.

Question re: Mobile home owners

Ms. White: Mobile home owners are a hybrid class: part homeowner and part renter. They own their home. They pay home mortgages, property taxes, expenses and upkeep and, unlike other homeowners, they also pay a rental fee for the land on which their home sits. Under the new landlord and tenant legislation, this Yukon Party government views mobile home owners in the same light as they view the average apartment renter. Like renters, mobile home owners are vulnerable to decisions made by their landlords, including unlimited annual rent increases. But unlike renters, they also have no options if they disagree with their landlord's management.

Does the minister believe that someone who owns a mobile home should be treated the same as someone who rents an apartment?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: One thing I do need to remind the Member for Takhini-Kopper King about is the context to this. In fact, the legislation — the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* — has updated legislation that was 50 years old. Previous governments, including three NDP governments, did not take action to update the act; we did. We began with an all-party committee that conducted public consultation. That led to a report and, following that report and building on it, there was additional consultation conducted by government in the development of the legislation. Following that, in the development of the regulations, there has also been additional consultation, which has recently concluded. The important part that the member should recognize is that the act is intended to balance the interest of landlords and tenants and consider the interests of all involved in coming to a determination of where a fair balance is.

Under the provisions of the act, if a tenant renting a mobile home pad receives a notice of a rent increase from the landlord, the tenant may choose not to accept it and so has 12 months to vacate the mobile home pad. I recognize that can be a challenge for people, but again what the member consistently fails to recognize in providing her comments at this late stage in the development of the legislation is that there has been extensive public consultation and opportunity to hear from all viewpoints in developing this.

Ms. White: The failure of the minister to acknowledge the differences between renters and homeowners shows poor understanding of the facts. Mobile home owners are in a Catch-22 situation. If their landlord is raising the rent too much, they have no options, as there are next to no other lots to move to, even if they could move their trailer. The minister wants to leave mobile home owners in this Catch-22 because he is ideologically opposed to what his colleagues in P.E.I., Nova Scotia, Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Manitoba are doing, which is placing a reasonable limit on annual pad rent increases. The minister keeps referencing

unnamed studies, but he has refused to recognize the evidence in other jurisdictions.

Will the minister responsible either implement a reasonable limit on annual pad rental increases or commit to working with the City of Whitehorse to make more affordable trailer lots available?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I would point out that the City of Whitehorse has jurisdiction to choose how lots are zoned, and that includes whether they are designated and set aside or specifically intentioned, as the member seems to favour, for mobile homes. I would also remind the member that, in fact, options for mobile home owners exist. They're not confined to within the city; there are also options in rural areas where it is perfectly legal to move a mobile home to a property.

Recognizing that any move can have an impact on families, I would again remind the member that the entire development of this legislation was based on hearing from all affected people in this — both renters and tenants. Consideration of the effect on mobile home owners was a part of this. There has been extensive public consultation that began with an all-party committee doing the work, followed by consultation on the legislation, followed by consultation on the regulations and we are still waiting for a final report on consultations on provisions to the draft regulations. Once I have received that, of course, Cabinet will be reviewing that and making a decision about what to include in the final regulations.

I can very much appreciate that any time rents go up — whether it be rents for apartments or pad rental fees — there is an impact on citizens. I would remind the member that rent controls have not only failed in other jurisdictions, but have been removed in a number of provinces.

Ms. White: The mobile home owners in the gallery hoped for more from this minister.

The Mobile Home Owners Association represents all trailer courts in the Yukon and they recently wrote the minister and I quote: "We are looking for results. We cannot just up and rent somewhere else. The cost of moving a trailer is way above what most people can afford. Even if they could, most units cannot meet the new building codes required to re-settle in Whitehorse. Mobile home ownership provides a needed housing solution to the middle class. The new draft of the *Landlord and Tenant Act* unfairly classifies mobile home owners as renters. We need this changed. Unless we begin to get support from the government, there will be a housing crisis like no other when 1,200 families come looking to you with nowhere to go when they are priced out of the trailer parks."

Does the minister recognize the distinct status and needs of Yukon's mobile home owners?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would have to ask the Member for Takhini-Kopper King if she recognizes the contradiction between when she stood recently in this House on building code matters outside the city and her assertions and her question today.

Does she not recognize that the very energy efficiency provisions she argued for and criticized the government for suspending for a year are the same energy efficiency provisions that make it difficult for mobile home owners to relocate to other areas in the city because of the building code? The member needs to recognize that energy efficiency provisions are having a negative effect on affordability of construction.

Again, I would point out that when it comes to rent controls, they were in fact abolished in Alberta in 1980, in Saskatchewan in 1976, and in New Brunswick in 1983. The changes that have been made in this area is that in the long-term, rent controls have been found — in a number of jurisdictions, both in Canada and outside — to have a negative impact on the availability of housing stock and available housing options over the long term.

The provisions that are in place are the result of extensive consultation that began with an all-party committee that had a participant from the NDP caucus on it. It involved consultation on the legislation and consultation on the regulations. Once we have received the final report and recommendations on the regulations, Cabinet will make a decision and put those in place.

Question re: Communication infrastructure

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, for a number of years now, this government has been considering the construction of a secondary fibre optic cable to the Yukon to provide continuity of service in the event that a current link is ever severed. In the past, the loss of Internet services has had a negative impact on Yukon businesses and communities.

The current option for a secondary Internet connection would see a link from Whitehorse through Skagway to Juneau and then on to Seattle by an undersea cable.

Recently an announcement was made that a fibre optic connection was going to be established from Yellowknife to Inuvik, opening up the possibility of creating a link from Dawson City through to Inuvik including southern Yukon. It is our understanding that Northwestel has been in touch with the government regarding this second option for a backup connection. Can the minister confirm that they are considering this second option?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: There is a proposed project that we are aware of in the Northwest Territories that involves fibre cable being run from the south, up the Mackenzie Valley to Inuvik. My understanding is that the driving force behind this particular project is the potential activity in Inuvik. My understanding is that that project should be tendered later this year. Obviously we are watching this with great interest. We've noted it in previous studies that we have done. We've taken into consideration the development of this project and we are monitoring what happens in the Northwest Territories.

That being said, we are focused on moving forward with the project that we've discussed previously, which is the fibre line from Whitehorse through Carcross, down to Skagway and underwater to Juneau. As the member correctly noted, I think the inclusion of redundancy through an additional fibre cable

to the south from Yukon would bring significant economic benefits to the territory as well as providing safety and security for all those who use that particular service.

Mr. Barr: The second option that is currently being proposed by Northwestel is to create a connection between Dawson City and Inuvik along with southern Yukon — an all-Canadian loop. Because this link would connect Dawson City to Yellowknife, it would provide Dawson City and other Yukon communities north of Whitehorse with a redundancy that a link through Alaska would not offer.

Yukon's northern communities have seen a steady improvement in their Internet services over the past few years, but if the Alaska connection is chosen, their connection would be vulnerable, as there would be no secondary connection to the communities.

Will the minister consider the Internet and telecommunication needs of Yukon's northern communities when it comes to selecting the backup broadband connection?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit that I missed some of the last part of the question, but I believe, to answer the general theme here, a redundant link from Whitehorse down to Skagway is certainly not a panacea or a silver bullet for all things to do with redundancy. It will provide redundancy for the City of Whitehorse and all communities south along the Alaska Highway as well as south along the south Klondike Highway. It will provide an increased level of redundancy for those communities north of Whitehorse by decreasing the likelihood that a single cut south of Whitehorse would impact their services.

That being said, it is not a be-all and end-all. It's not a silver-bullet service and we recognize that. We do think that the increased capacity, increased redundancy and, hopefully, the downward pressure on prices — thus improvements to affordability — would be a net impact on Yukon, and we are pursuing that.

Like I said, we are monitoring what is going on in the Northwest Territories. This is a project that has been proposed for some time, and we are approaching it with a certain degree of scepticism, but we know that Northwest Territories has committed to it and we are watching very closely to see how that project advances.

Mr. Barr: The Alaska connection that is being considered has a number of drawbacks that a Canadian loop would solve. The Alaska loop would not include cellphone services, would not provide redundancy to Yukon's northern communities, and raises privacy concerns by routing Canadian information and services through the United States.

The fact is that an all-Canadian loop would provide certainty to southern and northern Yukon communities for essentially the same amount of money as the Alaskan connection, while at the same time providing better and more services.

What criteria will the minister consider when choosing between the Alaska connection and the all-Canadian loop?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: If the member has seen cost studies of a lateral fibre line from Dawson to Inuvik, I would encourage him to share them with me. I haven't seen any

formal proposal of that nature. My understanding is that a potential link from Dawson to Inuvik would be more costly than a link to Skagway, but if he has some estimates that I am not aware of, I would be happy to review them.

With regard to this particular project, I've been very clear. I think that this is a good project — that increasing our redundancy, our capacity, and improving affordability aspects are something that Yukoners will welcome. It'll provide opportunities for economic growth within this particular field. It will provide a sense of diversification to our economy that is currently somewhat lacking.

I personally have been approached by a number of businesses that have expressed that, should there be a redundant line to the south, they would be in a better position to increase their services or grow their businesses. Other businesses from outside the Yukon have indicated that they may consider moving to the Yukon should there be the adequate level of infrastructure and service here in the Yukon.

I'm committed to this project. We have identified, I believe, \$600,000 in the budget to advance the business planning for this particular project and I look forward to seeing it go forward.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Point of personal privilege

Speaker: Minister of Justice, on a point of personal privilege.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I would like to stand on a point of personal privilege. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a gentleman who I know is listening to the proceedings of this Legislative Assembly in his office. This gentleman is a policy analyst with the Department of Tourism and Culture who specializes in legislative support. Among a host of other functions, he diligently coordinates all support materials for the session and carefully monitors daily proceedings. Mr. Tony Gonda joined the Department of Tourism and Culture in 2003 at devolution and will be retiring before the Fall Sitting. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Tony and to thank him for his service and to wish him well in the future.

Applause

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education in Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 14: *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate in Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 14, *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

Department of Education — *continued*

Chair: Ms. Taylor, you have the floor.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I see I only have a number of seconds, so I will just take my seat and receive any further questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Tredger: A lot of people spend the better part of their day in Yukon schools, whether they are students, teachers, staff or volunteers. That is why it's important that the Yukon's air quality monitoring is up to date and accessible, especially in light of the sensitivities of students and teachers to allergies and various qualities of air. What type of monitoring for air quality is being done? How often are the tests taken? What is the threshold for air quality to prompt either maintenance or school closure? How often are these tests done? What is tested for?

The second part of this is: I have talked to a number of teachers and parents who are concerned. If there are complaints or concerns about air quality from parents, teachers or students, what steps are taken to make sure their concerns are heard and replied to? Is there any formal process for a response to air quality complaints?

What reports are available and are these available to the school councils? Is the data for air quality in a form that could be relayed to the public? Many people in our schools are becoming increasingly concerned about air quality, as teachers and children spend a long time there.

Is the data or readings from the air quality tests available to the public in layman's terms? Is it provided upon request and is it shared with school councils and in school newsletters?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite for his questions.

There are occupational health and safety committees struck for every school throughout the territory. That comprises representatives of Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and it also comprises representatives from Highways and Public Works, but primarily from the

Department of Education. They work in collaboration with the school community and there are a number of schools that we work with specifically in response to concerns that are raised at the school level when it comes to indoor air quality.

Depending on the extent of the issues in question, then there would be steps undertaken at the direction of the committee to undertake assessments and tests and so forth. As I understand it, all reports are made available through those specific committees — through Occupational Health and Safety. They are available to the school community administration and can be made available to the school community through school councils, depending on where the request came from, so that certainly would be shared.

Mr. Tredger: It's important that such a process be transparent and open. I know I often hear concerns from parents and teachers regarding that — the regularity of the tests and how often they are shared. It is important that that process be as transparent as possible so that the onus isn't on individuals to ferret out the information, but it is shared with the occupants of the building.

For my next question, I would like to talk a little bit about facilities and long-term planning. We have a number of aging buildings and I'm almost reluctant to talk about school replacement in light of the — I was going to say "recent", but the 12-year history of F.H. Collins.

The Auditor General's report in 2009 stated — and I quote: "...that the Department does not have a current long-term master plan in place to effectively manage school facilities." It went on to say that the — and I quote: "...estimated lifespan of 40 years and that some schools are nearing the end of their estimated useful life."

"Seven schools" — and this was in 2009 — "have a remaining estimated lifespan of less than four years and four have a remaining estimated lifespan of less than nine years."

Do we have any plans for a replacement of those buildings? Do we have a priority list for the replacement? What are the next schools to be replaced? Will the minister share the long-term plan for school replacement with the Legislature please?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, the Department of Education has been working for a number of years with the Property Management division, which is housed within the Department of Highways and Public Works, to ensure that all of our facilities across the territory are safe and are utilized to the extent possible for many years to come.

As the member opposite correctly pointed out, in 2009 the Auditor General did make a number of recommendations — two specifically — one of which included that the Department of Education work with Property Management division to conduct regular and comprehensive facility audits to ensure that our major deficiencies are identified. That work is underway.

The second recommendation is to do what the member opposite clearly identified and that was to develop a comprehensive, long-term facility plan, taking into account the age, capacity and location of facilities and student enrollment trends.

Since that time, we have had a number of building-related audits that have been completed or are underway, covering a number of systems in our school building roofs including those that were completed recently. We continue to work on issues that are addressed in each of those facility audits.

We were also able to complete a report on the overall facility based on the assessment completed. That dealt with mainly the electrical, the heating and the ventilation systems. Many of the issues that were identified have been addressed. It is an ongoing item of importance and we continue to pay the utmost attention to what is required to maintain our facilities and ensure they remain safe and available, as I mentioned, for use for many years to come.

As I mentioned last fall — I believe we had this very debate in the Assembly — one of the pieces that we are waiting on is the ongoing work as it pertains to seismic assessments in our schools. That work is still underway and we await the outcome of that work to be completed over the course of the coming year. That really is one of the final pieces of the equation to be completed and will help inform where we go in terms of overall replacement and overall upgrades to our respective schools.

It will take into account all the results of the building condition audits and assessments that have been completed over the years, and will help us identify items for prioritization and ensure we address them in a systematic, reasoned and methodical approach.

I am pleased to say that we are undertaking a lot of that work. I know the Minister of Highways and Public Works probably could have a little bit more to report on in this regard. Again, there has been a substantive amount of work that has been done, including the seismic assessment and ongoing work in terms of helping inform the longer-term plans for the facilities and their replacement within their overall life cycle.

I suppose I would be happy to answer any other specific questions, but that is perhaps the most recent update I have at my fingertips.

Mr. Tredger: I guess I'm concerned when, according to the Auditor General and the department's own information — five years ago, when the Auditor General reported, seven schools would have reached the end of their expected lifespan already. We've passed their best-before date. That means we are incurring extra expenses and costs in terms of maintenance.

We talked about air quality, but there are a number of innovations that have been made in the last 40 or 50 years around management of school facilities — of all buildings — in terms of energy efficiency, healthy buildings and new materials. I'm a little disappointed. The minister mentioned another study would be another year, so we're talking six years now and seven schools. That's a lot of schools to build. I would hope that very quickly we will have a concrete plan with some targets and some measureable goals that will enable us to say this school, that school and that school, so that we can begin the planning process. As we saw with F.H.

Collins, it takes a while to build a good school and we're still not there yet.

I will move on to shop, industrial art facilities and home economic facilities. We've heard a lot in the Legislature from businesses about the importance of preparing students for the workforce. Skilled labour has been talked about many times. Yet we see our shop or industrial arts, our applied arts facilities, our home economics facilities and our cooking facilities not keeping up.

I mentioned many times the need for a shop and a home economic program for students in grades 7, 8 and 9 when they're just being introduced to the various trades and a general course at that level, one prepares them better to be citizens, but it may also spark an interest so that when they get to the older grades they have some exposure to various applied arts like welding or carpentry or something. Yet there are very few planned shop or home economics courses for our younger or mid-aged students.

I'm also very concerned about the delivery of programming in the rural communities. In many cases, we don't have qualified shop instructors or home ec instructors, so it falls on teachers who have an interest in that area. Sometimes schools get innovative or creative and bring in tradespeople from the community to work within the school. My concern is that many of our schools no longer have up-to-date facilities. Is there a plan to upgrade them? Is there a plan to ensure that they're inspected annually? Does Workers' Compensation attend all of our facilities to ensure that they are safe for our students? Are those Workers' Compensation reports that are done available to the school council and to the school community?

In terms of maintaining the shop, are there things like ensuring that the equipment is in good working order or that everything is sharp? Often it is done in an ad hoc manner. I know that the department hired a person a couple of years ago who would oversee the applied arts management, but that doesn't address the maintenance. One person for 27-some shops is stretching them pretty thin. If it is to be more than window dressing, he needs to be given the opportunity to work with individual programming needs rather than to spend his time maintaining the shop equipment.

I guess what I'm looking for is a regular inspection of all of our shop facilities and that the report is shared with the school community and particularly the school council to assist them with their programming — also ensuring that Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board visits all of our buildings and reports to the school council and to the staff as to the safety therein.

What plans does the department have for training or meeting the needs of teachers in our rural communities who, through the goodness of their heart or goodness of their position, take on these positions to introduce the students to some shop, cooking, home economics, facilities and experiences?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I guess I take issue with some of the terms or the language used by the member opposite. In terms of what I would call concrete actions being undertaken

by the Department of Education to ensure that we have compliance with standards and orders — that's not just "window dressing". That is actually taking substantive steps to ensure that we have a safe and caring environment in all of our facilities, programs and activities. Likewise, when we look to the ongoing facility assessments, I wouldn't refer to that as "window dressing" either. There has been a substantive amount of work. It is an ongoing work in progress. We have 28 schools in the Yukon.

There is a significant amount of individuals tasked within the Department of Education, Highways and Public Works, Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — there are a number of different stakeholders involved in the ongoing assessment in our facilities.

In terms of recent steps that we have been undertaking when it comes to school shop safety — I have had the opportunity to travel to many of our schools throughout the Yukon, primarily in rural Yukon, and to a great degree here in the City of Whitehorse. I can say that we are making considerable progress in the area of equipment maintenance in our shops, housed within those schools. We have hired a millwright to ensure the safe operation of equipment in our school shops. Primarily, we are working in Whitehorse. We are also working in rural Yukon to expand those very efforts. Those efforts include replacing old table saws with state-of-the-art equipment — many of which I was able to see firsthand when I toured some of those shop facilities — and also lockout/tagout of all machinery that has been deemed to be unsafe.

In addition to that individual, there is a new individual who is responsible within the Department of Education — the manager of operations — who was hired specifically to develop and implement a health and safety management program for the Department of Education to help ensure that every shop is in compliance with our regulations.

When I say regulations, those are the ones administered by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — this program — with the intent of being expanded to each and every school. We continue to work with our schools to perform monthly inspections, as prescribed by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and inspections are to be reviewed by our joint occupational health and safety committee in every school, which will provide our administration of those schools with information regarding safety concerns. Then we work with the actual administration at the school level to address those concerns.

As I mentioned, we have almost 30 shops in our schools and that is a big undertaking. We also continue to work when it comes to teacher capacity in our territory. The member opposite knows how very important that is when it comes to the trades and expanding our skilled trades in the territory — how much of a demand there is. I'm very pleased to see there are a lot of partners undertaking a lot of work. The dual credit welding program, for example, that was enabled through the development and creation of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining — this government has invested well

over \$11 million over five years in support of the ongoing operations of that particular school.

That was really developed to be able to prepare our students — not just adult learners, but also learners in each of our schools — to be able to equip themselves with the skills required to undertake more trades training in the territory.

I know that when you look back over the course of the last decade, the amount of industrial trades training has more than quadrupled at the college. In fact, that's a good thing. That's why a lot of that capital — \$10 million in joint funding capital — in support of CNIM developed through Yukon government and the Government of Canada, is going toward expansion of the trades. It will give us the opportunity to work with the college to expand, for example, the electrical program. Currently we don't have the capacity to deliver that full four-year apprenticeship when it comes to electrical. With this expansion in funding in the capital and the dollars to facilitate that training, we will be able to deliver just that.

We're looking at other programs to deliver. In Dawson City, for example, we've just had a recent graduation of several students, which included students at Robert Service School as well as adult learners who were able to subscribe to and take advantage of the brand new mobile trades trailer, which was part of the CNIM initiative administered through Yukon College. It's a tremendous facility. It's a facility on wheels, and it was meant to do just that — to be able to expand our capacity in our communities.

Thanks to that and thanks to making available a dual credit welding program, we have been able to see high school students be able to take that to earn their credits toward their high school diploma while at the same time earning their credits toward their first-year apprenticeship. That is another example of how the government is working to expand trades training.

Whether it's through Skills Canada or Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, Yukon College or the Yukon Mine Training Association, there are a multitude of different partners when it comes to working with the Yukon government to readily focus our efforts on encouraging more students to get engaged in the trades and to be able to contribute to the economic success of our territory.

I also wanted to make reference that, through Yukon College, they are also working with Skills Canada. They're working with public schools as well in the territory to identify all of the youth trades-related events that are happening throughout the territory. We are also looking to identify all of the different programs operated within all of our public schools associated with the trades and with respect to the ongoing skills training. I know that Yukon College is also looking to identify which have active trades programs and who the partners are and to take that information to the CNIM governing council and really complement and build upon those existing initiatives to introduce more youth to the trades in industry.

There is a heightened awareness of this issue across the nation right now, and it will be the subject of a specific national symposium on skills and trades training in P.E.I. this

summer. We will be taking a delegation with us comprised of many organizations and businesses that are delivering trades training in the territory as we speak. To be sure, we recognize that there is always more work to be done. Through the Department of Education — through Advanced Education in particular — we offer a number of programs in support of Yukon apprenticeships and trades qualification programs. We're really proud of the amount of financial incentives and financial support — but the programs being able to be delivered in collaboration with a number of institutions, which include our own Yukon College.

There is a heightened awareness. We were talking about oil-fired appliances and that is another example of oil-burner mechanic training, and we have worked hard over the last recent years to earn their certification through that particular program — whether it's partnering up with in-school technical training made available in other provinces or other territories or continuing to expand our capacity here at home. Like I said, whether it's through electrical, oil-burning mechanic or working individually with our partners to showcase trades as a career option in our communities, it is very important and vital to the continued operations.

I was at Shipyards Park over the weekend. On Friday I had the opportunity to lead student tours of grade 6 students from Selkirk Elementary, for example. I was able to join them at the discovery and exploration camps sponsored in collaboration with Yukon Mining & Geology Week. It was an interesting eye-opener for me to be able to see first-hand and to hear from a company, such as Capstone Mining, which operates the Minto mine in central Yukon. They talked about how 18 percent of their workforce requires the operations of tradespeople, whether it was sheet metal workers, welding, plumbing, electrical, carpentry — the whole gamut. I remember asking that group of students I was with whether or not they were interested in the trades and why they should be interested in the trades and where they can receive their trades training.

Yukon College is a natural place to start and to finish as we expand our trades training complements in the territory. Being able to showcase some of the recent examples, it's something we do need to do a better job of when it comes to public schools. We do need to do a better job. I just had a discussion with the Yukon College Board of Governors about this very issue on Saturday morning, about how we can better communicate the programs being made available through Yukon College and the efforts being made by industry working with the college and public schools to really bridge those gaps and be able to communicate that Yukon College is a very viable option in terms of receiving your education here at home and being able to really promote the college as a viable educational institution.

There are a number of efforts underway and we continue to work with all of our partners in education.

Last week, we wrapped up the rural experiential model that was building on the first REM that took place in Dawson City last fall. We had the second complement of REM in Carmacks, and we were able to reach out to a number of

students throughout rural Yukon, grades 7 to 9, in a number of different sessions that were being sponsored and held in the community of Carmacks at the Tantalus School.

As I have talked about at great length over the course of the last number of months, the whole purpose of REM is to be able to not only share the expertise of our teaching professionals across the territory, but to be able to expand their capacity so that those teachers who do not necessarily have that expertise or do not necessarily have that background are able to take that back to their home community and share that in their school community.

The sharing of experiences and sharing of different trades training, for example, being made available through a session such as REM — which we hope to be able to sponsor a couple of times a year on an ongoing basis.

It's really critical in terms of making that kind of programming available to students who don't necessarily have that opportunity in their school communities because of capacity-related issues. We are working with our trades coordinator and working with every school as we know it, and we recognize the importance of bringing a more methodical and more rationed approach to trades training in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: I guess I wasn't quite sure if I heard this there, but I would hope that schools are compliant with all of the suggestions in the inspection reports and Workers' Compensation reports, especially around air and safety standards and storage of sometimes hazardous materials and when they're not. I would assume that the school councils are made aware of those variances so that as a community they can make decisions around that.

In the budget book, page 8-17, it mentions that there are there 550 registered apprentices in 48 designated trades. Could the minister tell me how many apprentices are working for the Yukon government in all trades? Can she tell us how many YG tradespeople there are?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I don't, obviously, have that information at my fingertips. I would assume that would be a great question for the Public Service Commission and I will pass that along.

Mr. Tredger: It would be important, I think. We do have a number of tradespeople employed in Yukon government and it would be a wonderful opportunity to provide apprentice opportunities for people potentially entering the trades. I know that it is sometimes difficult to find tradespeople to take on apprentices. I'm sure minister responsible for the Public Service Commission is listening to that, but I would say to the ministers of every department that they should look, whenever possible, at having apprentices employed with our very, very capable tradespeople.

I'll move on to safety of teachers. In 2007, the Yukon Teachers Association had a report done — "How Safe Are Our Educators". In it, nearly one-third of our educators mentioned sustaining some level of physical injury while 59 percent had some level of psychological injury. The concern was raised about the amount of violence, especially of children toward their teachers. At the time, I know it was a hot topic that was much discussed. Subsequently in a joint

management meeting, it was decided that the first step would be to begin a tracking process because, for many different reasons, these incidents are grossly under-reported.

The government of the day committed to developing a reporting mechanism and to work at ways to mutually encourage the reporting of such incidents. By now, seven years later, we should have some idea of the incidence — whether they're increasing or decreasing; whether or not they're being reported; how the department is encouraging the reporting of violent incidents and where we're at with that.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: This question arose in Question Period last week, I seem to recall. As I reiterated on the floor of the Assembly, we treat any and all workplace incidents of violence with the utmost importance. As I mentioned the other day, ensuring that staff and students, for that matter, have the ability to be treated in a fair and reasonable manner, free from any form of abuse — that is duly recognized and treated with great importance.

As I mentioned before, there are a number of processes and a number of training initiatives in place to ensure that incidents such as those the member opposite referred to are dealt with in an appropriate manner.

We will continue to always review what we have in place and continue to work with our partners to ensure that any and all incidents are properly addressed. As I mentioned last week, there are provisions under the *Education Act*, as well as the collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers Association, to ensure that we do work together to take the appropriate action to deal with any of those violent acts. We recognize that every employee has a right to freedom from physical, verbal or threatened assault in the workplace, bar none.

Under the collective agreement, it also states that we agree to take appropriate action to deal with any of those specific acts and that we agree to collaborate in developing or upgrading training requirements to support safe working and learning conditions. Likewise, under the *Education Act*, it also provides that working with school administration, principals and teachers, we have a duty to maintain order among students while they are in school and that we provide every teacher with the right to be treated in a fair and reasonable manner, free from physical and other abuse. That applies to students as well. All students must respect the rights of others and observe the rules of their specific school.

As I mentioned last week, we do have a workplace risk assessment and safety plan procedure in place for dealing with incidents that occur, which indicate that a student's actions may be a risk to staff or other students. Under that procedure, incidents are reported first to the school principal, who then investigates the incident using that particular assessment tool. If it is determined that the incident involved is a serious threat, then we do have a violence-threat risk-assessment protocol that kicks into play and is used to address the incident — as I mentioned last week — and activates at that specific step in time the involvement of community partners to deal with the issue, including the RCMP, the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as Student Support Services within the Department of Education.

We track all workplace risk assessment and threat assessment incident reports, including all the information that we are required to provide to our stakeholders. It is provided without including students' personal information, which is protected under the ATIPP Act, as I understand. I am pleased to say that there is a lot of work that has been undertaken to formalize the protocols and the assessments that we have currently in place.

In addition, that is why the government has also undertaken to place great emphasis upon specific expertise within the Department of Education to work with our students who are encountering — and we know this to be true — increasing amounts of stress in their lives, particularly for students from more vulnerable families within urban and rural areas of the territory.

For the second year in a row, we've been working with the Canadian self-regulation initiative, for example, to implement our own Yukon self-regulation initiative. We have been working with a number of schools and their communities, specifically Takhini Elementary here in Whitehorse, but also the schools in Carcross and Teslin. From there, I know there have been great efforts expanded to other schools as well, with the intent of being able to engage all schools that will be involved in the self-regulation initiative.

The goals are improving outcomes for all of our learners, no matter where they are situated, to be able to work on training initiatives and work with individual students and school staff in the use of the framework to identify students for more focused clinical work and also helping to generate community interest in the framework and its sustainability.

I know there are some school communities that have undertaken to do just that, working through the school councils and having meetings with the families during the evenings or with individual school newsletters pointing to different resources available on-line and so forth. These initiatives are very much underway and it means that we need to continue to work collaboratively with our communities and that's why we continue on with our rural equity action plan. We utilize assessment tools, like the early development instrument, to address emotion and physical vulnerabilities so that all learners have the ability to reach their potential.

We know through the Minister of Health and Social Services that there are increasing issues pertaining to the emotional health and well-being for a number of our students. We have to be proactive and we have to continue to think smart and work smart in terms of our allocation of resources and how we can work collaboratively to address all of these and other issues of importance.

Mr. Tredger: I guess I was looking for a shorter answer. Article 38.06 B in the collective agreement states: "The employer will maintain an updated tracking system for reporting acts or threats of assault, and shall provide a copy of the tracking system, to the Association." My question for the minister is: Has that been done and has she noticed an increase in the number of incidents or a decrease or the same over the last two years?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'll just reiterate what I stated earlier. I believe I did address that, but I'll state it again for the member opposite. The Department of Education does track all assessments — threat assessments and incident reports — including the information that we are required to provide to the Yukon Teachers Association as articulated through the collective agreement the member opposite referred to. It is provided to the association without including students' personal information, which is protected under the ATIPP act, as I understand. As for the specific numbers and assessments in each and every school, I do not have that information at my fingertips.

Mr. Tredger: In the same collective agreement in July 2012, when it came into effect, there was an agreement between the Yukon Teachers Association and the department to set aside article 39, which deals with the harassment prevention article. In its place the department and YTA are looking at a respectful workplace office. As part of that, there would be whole staff training for each of the individual schools.

Can the minister tell me how many schools have received that training and how many remain to be done?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Working through the Respectful Workplace Office that is administered through the Public Service Commission, I understand that all administration staff have received training in this regard and, likewise, we'll be looking to the following summer academy that will be held later on this fall, prior to the start of the school year, in terms of being able to deliver that specific training.

There is work underway with the Public Service Commission and the Department of Education to ensure that the appropriate training is provided, pursuant to provisions under the collective agreement. Again, Madam Chair, my apologies — that work is currently underway and obviously there is more work to come later on this year.

Mr. Tredger: I know the YTA was quite specific in hoping that the training sessions would not be done on an individual, or separate, basis but rather that the whole school get together for that opportunity and use some time as a group.

I have just a quick question — in the past, there have been employment engagement surveys done of the Department of Education. I haven't seen one for the last couple of years. I may have missed that. Are they continuing to be done or are we moving on from them?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Yes, it is part of the overall employee engagement survey administered through the Public Service Commission. I believe 374 Education employees completed the survey, which represented just under half of all our Education employees. The overall employee engagement score rose from 66 in 2011 to 71 in 2013. The survey was undertaken in the fall of 2013, if I'm not mistaken.

I believe all that information is posted on the department website — if not Education, then it would be in the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Tredger: I have just a question around staffing allocation. Typically around this time of year, the staffing allocations are shared with the administrators, with school

councils and with the staffing allocation committee. Can the minister tell me if there have been any cuts to school-based staffing in any of our schools — school-based staffing or educational assistants — that would help with planning for the next year? Specifically, school by school — are there any schools that will have less staff next year than they do this year?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Without getting into specific schools, what I can say is that the staffing formula that was developed in 2010, if I'm not mistaken, which was a number of years ago, and it was put together with a committee comprised of various stakeholders in education and it was for the purpose of providing a more systematic approach to defining core areas within schools.

What I can say is that there have been no reductions in terms of the number of teachers or the number of educational assistants or remedial tutors — any of the paraprofessionals. In fact, as I had mentioned before, our support for teaching professionals and all of those whom I mentioned before — those numbers have continued to rise over the last decade. There has been a change or decline in student enrollment, but the application of the formula itself really refers to — from student enrollment to specific literacy needs to specific identified vulnerabilities within each and every school.

What I can say is that, overall, the actual numbers when it comes to delivering professional education in each of our schools have not changed.

As we've seen over the last number of years with the applied formula, there are various schools that receive fluctuations due to student enrollment and due to different needs and vulnerabilities identified within their school communities.

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

Just a quick question on the school calendar: When I look at the Whitehorse school calendar halfway through the year — counting the number of days comes to approximately the first week of January. That's a very awkward time for our high schools. The B.C. provincial exams don't occur until the end of January. Halfway through the year is the first week of January. The major break is in December. What is the department proposing for the various schools? Are they planning to have a long semester to begin with and go until the end of January, thereby completing it or do they plan to have the students come back from an extended Christmas break for a week in the classroom and then begin their next term classes? How are they going to handle the exams being at the end of January? What does that say about prerequisites for the subsequent courses? I guess the concern is that if we have an extended first term, what does that do to the second-term classes if we have an extended second term? Or do we just deal with the awkwardness of the situation? How is the department proposing that this be dealt with?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: We have been working with British Columbia on the exams, proposing to write in November, January, March and June. As I understand it, we're putting great emphasis on those exams for the second

semester within a school year. I understand that was not the case.

So when you look at between semesters, we're looking at about a three-day difference when it comes to the Whitehorse school calendar, as is currently adopted.

Mr. Tredger: I'll have to check those numbers again. They don't correlate with what I know or what I've heard.

Just a question about the Whitehorse catchment area and school attendance: Can the minister tell us the number of requests for transfers from one school to another? I don't expect specific school transfer, but is that number increasing, is it decreasing or is there any trend there? What is the process for a prospective parent and their child, when they wish to change schools? What priorities are given?

I talked to a number of parents who had been told the school in their catchment area was full. They had to go and interview in two other schools before they found one with room for them. That's sometimes quite demanding. Is there a problem with catchment areas? How is it being resolved? Finally, as part of that question, kindergarten registration — I understand that, at the kindergarten level, some students were told they would not be able to attend the same school as their older siblings. Sometimes there were misunderstandings as to the required catchment areas.

Finally, French immersion — it was extremely popular. It was my understanding that the registration was changed from in-person to on-line, therefore requiring a person to be very conversant on-line and with computers. As well, it did not open before 9:00 a.m. of the said day and, by 9:10 a.m. or 9:15 a.m., it had already been filled. A number of parents were quite disappointed that they weren't able to get their children into school and felt concerned about the process. Can the minister explain to me a little bit about the process for enrollment in kindergarten as well as catchment areas? What are the policies around catchment areas?

Finally, in terms of coming to high school, I know a number of high school students like to move from one school to another. When is that information given to the prospective schools so they can plan for programming in the subsequent year?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: When it comes to catchment areas, there are catchment areas. That said, within those catchment areas, there is also the delivery of Catholic education. We have a number of Catholic schools housed within the City of Whitehorse, which, depending on where that specific student resides, that student would subscribe to. If there wasn't any room, then that would be the next school. That would be decided in collaboration with the principal and the school superintendent and the administration overall.

When it comes to families, the priority is always and continues to be keeping the siblings together, where and if possible. That still stands. As I mentioned, French immersion at Whitehorse Elementary School subscribes to students from all over the city and beyond. I can personally say that, prior to the on-line registration that came into being three years ago, individuals — our family included — had to line up outside

the school for many hours. Not every family can line up at those specific hours for a whole variety of reasons.

I'm not saying that this process is perfect, but I do think it is an improvement from having to go back to those days of having to line up outside the school doors. I know there were some individuals who were lined up at 5:00 in the morning.

In terms of kindergarten registration for Whitehorse Elementary School, for example, I do know that there continues to be a great uptake in terms of delivering French immersion and I do know that when you take a look, those numbers don't necessarily stay as robust as they are when you are entering kindergarten. Choices change or it may be that the family has chosen a different path for their student.

We continue to work with families and continue to work our best to allocate or be able to see that parents and families do have choices in terms of subscribing to Catholic education or French immersion or the French first language school as delivered by l'École Émilie Tremblay.

I think that's probably the best that I can provide the answers at this time.

Mr. Tredger: Emergency responders are an important part of community life, and in many of our communities, our teachers and educational staff like to volunteer and be part of the fire crew or the ambulance crew. What is the department's policy around their staff becoming involved as emergency responders?

What training opportunities are there? If a school can meet operational requirements, are they permitted to receive training so they can be an active volunteer in their community?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I understand it, individuals wishing to subscribe to in-service training or in support of — it could be EMS, fire service, or search and rescue. They are privy to \$18 per hour — I guess it would be considered an honorarium or a stipend — plus travel, plus accommodations, plus associated expenses accompanied by that specific training required.

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

If I could go back to the Auditor General's report for one quick question, in it the Auditor General mentioned that the metrics — or the way of determining grad rates — weren't working. They had a suggestion, and I believe the department replied that they would begin to institute it.

What metric does the department now use for determining graduation rates?

I believe it has been reported annually in Education's annual plan. Has the minister noticed a trend? Are the graduation rates increasing, decreasing, staying the same rurally and within the City of Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The member opposite referred to the Auditor General's report. It identified planning and improved accountability as a couple of areas for improvement for the Department of Education. We have been working very much to align the recommendations from within our education reform document, the secondary program review, the Auditor General's report, educational research and, of course, our respective obligations as outlined in the *Education Act* as well.

We have a number of stakeholder advisory committees that have been working to develop an assessment matrix, a process for monitoring school growth, improving leadership and partnerships with Yukon First Nations and other community members and to improve classroom practice, as well as our student achievement.

All of this is to say that we have developed a number of policies and documents that have all been captured in a comprehensive assessment framework, formally known as the Yukon education accountability framework. That is again building on the actual results of reports that have been implemented or have been initiated over the years, taking that and putting it into a comprehensive framework for the purpose of providing that accountability and relevancy.

That takes into account all the mandatory assessments provided by our students, from the various B.C. provincial exams, our language proficiency index and there's early years evaluation — all of that. There is a tremendous amount of work that has been undertaken to provide a more holistic or more accountable framework to track our particular students.

When you look to graduation, we do track graduation rates for students enrolled in grade 12. They are calculated as a percentage of students who graduate, from the total number of students enrolled in grade 12.

We also evaluate them on terms of six-year and completion rate in terms of the annual graduation rates. It is one of a number of various indicators pointing to student success. As I understand it, there is no consistent method used among our provinces and territories in terms of the national standard, because of the actual decentralized role of the provinces and territories in administering education. Increasingly — this includes not only Yukon, but we are looking to other jurisdictions as well — we are looking to move toward a six-year cohort method to calculate a completion rate overall. We are seeing more students taking more than three years to complete their high school. Our six-year completion rate is improving; for every three students, one percent is on that graduation rate. We are seeing some trends here in the Yukon that are increasingly consistent with the rest of the country. Based on that information, we are certainly taking that into account and working with our respective stakeholders to look at the delivery of initiatives to be able to better see student success and to see what is actually motivating our students to take this broader completion rate.

Mr. Silver: I would like to begin by thanking the department officials for their time here today.

I'll start with a question about the federal EI changes. There have been recent federal EI cuts, noting that we need more hours for less weeks of work. It occurs to me that every apprentice in the Yukon apprenticeship program relies on EI to cover living expenses during the months that they are off the tools and at the schools. There used to be a level of cooperation between Canada and the Yukon Department of Education, so my question would be: If the federal employment minister is going to rewrite our policy for EI, what is the Minister of Education doing to mitigate these effects? What is the Yukon government doing to ensure that

our apprentices don't experience financial hardships to learn their trades — the trades that we so desperately need in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Of course this is indeed a national issue. I know it was a point of discussion just recently in Yellowknife among the three respective northern Education ministers. We have agreed to work collaboratively to be able to share some of our due diligence on some of these changes being proposed by the federal government and certainly we'll continue to track just that.

In terms of providing trades-related training and apprenticeship financial assistance, those are part and parcel in providing ongoing reviews of our student financial assistance. On the national scale, we will continue to work, particularly as three northern jurisdictions. We do know that perhaps some of the changes that Minister Jason Kenney had recently announced on the EI front as it pertains to the three northern territories — not expecting any impact for those residents in the City of Whitehorse, so to speak, but very keen in looking to rural Yukon and ensuring that we do what we can to ensure that we pay attention to those issues, but all the more reason to be able to work collectively on a pan-northern approach and provide that feedback — again, working through Yukon College and working through Public Schools branch as well as taking our review of the student financial assistance act.

Mr. Silver: I'm going to move on to the *Education Act*. The *Education Act*, as stated in section 205(1), is to be reviewed with all stakeholders including First Nations, parents, et cetera, every 10 years. According to that, that should have been done in 2012. Would the minister please give us an update on when the government was planning an *Education Act* review?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Unfortunately I don't have the *Education Act* right in front of me so I can't reference the specific component or the specific section within the statute. I was just reminded by the former Minister of Education that there is reference to a 10-year review following the actual enactment of the act. The review was undertaken, I believe, in 2000 or 2001 — at that time.

Mr. Silver: Once again, I did state the section. It's 205(1) and it does say that it will be reviewed by all stakeholders every 10 years. If the last one happened in 2001, the question is: Is the government planning an education review based on the fact that this is supposed to be done every 10 years?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Again, I don't have the act in front of me, but what I can say is that the Government of Yukon has undertaken a litany of different reviews over the last number of years, all with the intent of being able to increase student achievement and student success.

I now have the actual section in front of me. Section 205(1) does state that "On or before 10 years from the proclamation of the act, the minister shall establish the process for review of the act."

As I undertook to address that response, that review was undertaken in 2000 and 2001 by the previous Liberal

administration. That said, as I mentioned, there have been a number of different reviews undertaken on various subjects, from literacy to — as we just referenced earlier with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — student accountability, education accountability framework, in terms of how we assess students, in terms of how we're bridging the achievement gaps between rural Yukon and urban Yukon, and also how we're trying to improve student outcomes between First Nation students and non-First Nation students.

There have been reviews undertaken on the school calendar, reviews of French language programs, trades programming, and so forth. There are ongoing tables of reviews, and that is a good thing. Each and every time we do undertake reviews in the territory among all our schools, there is a great amount of collaboration undertaken on many different tables, many different fronts. It is inclusive, collaborative and working to implement those specific recommendations.

Mr. Silver: I really don't think I got an answer to the question yet. The *Education Act* states that there should be a review with all stakeholders. This is a specific review. I do appreciate from the minister that there are other review processes with regard to school calendars and with other initiatives, but, once again, we are overdue for the *Education Act*, according to section 205(1), to be reviewed by all stakeholders including First Nations, parents, et cetera.

I will move on from this question, but we are looking forward to some type of commitment or some type of return to the state of this review and what planning has been done so far.

I'll move on to the reclassification of remedial tutors and to educational assistants. The Department of Education has done this. They have done a reclassification of all remedial tutors to become educational assistants. It is interesting that this has taken place during the middle of the school year and not at the beginning. I was wondering if the minister could comment on that.

My understanding is also that other ministers have the right to reclassify the positions. However, reclassification of positions does not necessarily fall under the mandate of the Minister of Education. Could the Minister of Education explain to the members of this House the justification and the authority for this reclassification?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: For clarity, I believe the Member for Mayo-Tatchun had raised this question already a couple weeks ago.

The review is still in the works, as I understand. We had received some concerns that were brought forth through the Yukon Teachers Association. Those were heard loud and clear and we are continuing to work with YTA and others on addressing those concerns.

Mr. Silver: I realize that parts of this question were brought up by another member, but I have this very specific question about the reclassification and jurisdiction, so I will ask the question again.

Can the minister explain the justification and the authority for this reclassification?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I understand it, according to the department, there was a concerted interest in being able to provide more flexibility to each of our school communities in providing paraprofessionals, including remedial tutors, as well as educational assistants.

As I referenced in response to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun's question, concerns were brought to our attention. We continue to undertake those discussions with YTA to address those specific concerns and to work through each of those particular issues that have been brought forth to the table. We are respectful of those, so no decisions have been made. The review is currently underway.

Mr. Silver: I'll move on to a communication policy. I'm not sure what this policy is called, but there was a review of the policy under which teachers are allowed to communicate — what they're allowed to say or what they're not allowed to say. It's my understanding that there are some proposed changes to this and these have not been finalized. I don't want to call it a "gag order." I forget the title of this actual policy.

When was the last time the YTA met with the Department of Education on this matter? Has this been finalized? It has just kind of dropped off the table a bit. Is the government still going to make changes or has the issue just finalized itself? Will things just stay the way they are now?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, just to backtrack in time, we've actually had a communications policy in place since 1994 with the Government of Yukon. It has been administered, I believe, through the Public Service Commission. I was thinking of the Executive Council Office. That policy was updated in late 2012 to enable every department to develop its own guidelines that reflect the uniqueness of every branch of government, including specific types of information they handle.

There have been a number of discussions since then in terms of adopting a specific guideline within the Department of Education, working with the Yukon Teachers Association with the goal of receiving input. We have received widespread concerns from the Yukon Teachers Association. For the time being, we just continue to apply our employees to that policy that was updated back in 2012. That is what stands to this day.

Mr. Silver: I'm going to move on to the REM program that the minister has spoken about quite a few times on this floor. It absolutely was a great success. We're wondering specifically though if the participants — the teachers who participated in this — were paid for their participation in this or was this a voluntary exercise? With that in mind, is there a budget set aside for this program?

Moving forward, can the minister explain where we're going with this? There has been some communication from the Yukon Teachers Association on this matter, as far as the remuneration of the teachers for this. I don't believe there has been a response yet from the department. When can we see a response for these concerns of the Yukon Teachers Association?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I have not heard of those specific questions or concerns, so I'll certainly endeavour to look into that for the member opposite.

What I can say is that REM is part of the overarching rural equity action plan that we debated on the floor of the Assembly. I want to thank all members for their unanimous support in moving that initiative forward. I had the opportunity to see it and witness it first-hand in Dawson for the first time last fall. Indeed, it was a great example of what can occur when you bring students from many of the rural communities in for the first time to another rural community, share expertise among the teaching professionals and be able to deliver upon programming that has not necessarily been made available to those students in those rural communities.

It was really fantastic to see the results. I was very pleased to see this repeat itself, albeit to younger grade levels — grades 7 and 9 — which occurred last week in the community of Carmacks. It is a great opportunity, and I want to thank all the teaching professionals who did contribute their time toward this initiative — coming together and being able to share their capacity and for the purposes of bringing that back to other school communities. What we saw in Dawson was a renewed confidence in the students themselves and being able to expand upon their peer network. These are all great things in terms of building our students for further success in all of their subject areas.

Likewise, the teaching professionals were able learn expertise made available through others, but accessible enough to know who to pick up the phone and call — being able to share challenges and being able to come up collectively with solutions at hand.

The rural equity action plan does come forth with new resources in this year's budget. I don't have a complete breakdown, but we have a number of new resources for that particular initiative in support of technology and the rural equity action coordinator as well in terms of other initiatives in support of rural equity. It has been a work in progress over the last couple of years and we continue to build upon that.

We're very pleased to be able to work upon the previous successful initiatives that have been made available. I know even for distributed distance learning opportunities, that is a major component of the action plan itself. We have added to the budget to support the ongoing rural services provided by Aurora Virtual School. I think that there is just over \$400,000 allocated for that and it provides flexible inclusive learning environments to support individual learning styles. A case in point was the the blended learning approach delivered through the Watson Lake Secondary School.

I do not have to go over all the success that was gleaned but, for the first time in many years, lots of other jurisdictions from across the country are keenly interested in seeing how that is working in Watson Lake — not to mention the community of Dawson City. Haines Junction is also looking to roll out their version of blended learning.

In terms of providing improved, culturally relevant curriculum, the member opposite would be very familiar with this, through our partnership with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, we

continue to develop an alternate learning model to support vulnerable learners through a very creative, unique outreach program. We continue to find ways to engage with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the school council and other partners in terms of coming up with curriculum on residential schools in the territory — that is currently in the pilot stage and will hopefully to be made more readily available to other Yukon schools. We will be talking to that at greater length to our professional teachers at the summer academy in the fall.

It also builds upon many other partnerships throughout the territory. I am not going to get into all of them, but, as I mentioned, sharing resources — the REM process being but one of them — so that communities such as Carmacks, Dawson, Pelly Crossing and so forth are able to build the capacity and the infrastructure to be able to deliver more creative and more engaging programs.

Earlier today, we talked a bit about supporting trades and specialty training and the dual-credit welding program delivered through Dawson. It's a great partnership and kudos to all the many individuals, organizations and governments involved in making that readily available. It also refers to providing professional development opportunities to rural teachers to support the implementation of these programs and initiatives as well. We very much recognize that the challenges associated with delivering many of these programs in rural Yukon is far different from what it is here in urban Yukon. Through mentorships and through peer networks, looking to opportunities such as YNTEP to come up with curriculum that is so responsive to the teaching needs of today is of vital importance to the territory as well.

As I mentioned, just being able to bring our students together more readily on a more consistent basis — the REM in Carmacks was the second of its kind, but it's a great opportunity for students from different communities to learn and to work together, whether that's in fine arts or applied skills education. It is an experiential approach to learning, which is increasingly being adopted by not only schools and institutions across this country, and across the globe — making the curriculum more relevant and more responsive.

Obviously, utilizing communication, working together, problem solving, and developing this critical thinking is where it is at — that and more.

Again, we're very proud of the work — I'm very proud of the work of the Department of Education, working with its many stakeholders throughout the communities and being able to identify specific needs within the communities and come up with plans to deliver, whether it's on the technology side or supporting teacher specialization or the programs. It's a step in the right direction. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but we are monitoring and evaluating each and every one of these initiatives. From that, we'll be able to compare results and see what is working and what is not working. We won't know that until try.

Mr. Silver: As I said, it is my understanding that YTA has some concerns about members of the Education department being asked to volunteer for this. The minister has come on to the floor of the Assembly on several occasions and

has rightly talked about the wonderful program with REM and also the successes that are there. Hopefully — we didn't get a commitment today — the government will be putting some full-time funding into this, so as to not rely on volunteers for this. I think the minister would agree that this type of programming is worthy of long-term funding.

I'm going to move on to the fall conference. All teachers will be participating in October — I think it's October 1 and 2, 2014, for the teacher conference here in Whitehorse. I believe it is mandatory. My first question would be: Has a travel day been set aside for rural teachers to attend?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'm trying to sum this up in a bit of a summary here. There's a lot of information here. As a result of the recent changes to the *Education Act*, as I understand, there are a number of hours — 30 hours of paid non-instructional time for teachers and paraprofessionals. The Department of Education has chosen to use 10 of its 15 hours to deliver the annual summer academy. In keeping with what we did last year, we have agreed to pay the travel expenses and the travel time for rural teachers to attend the academy. That remains the case.

Last year, when there was not a YTA conference, the department used its remaining five hours for school-determined professional activities on the day immediately preceding the school start date for students. There was a letter of understanding struck during the collective agreement discussions with YTG just recently in 2013 that provides that in years when there is a YTA territorial conference held, five of the hours of the department-directed, non-instructional hours shall be set aside for the professional development committee to incorporate into the territorial conference. That is what has occurred. We understand that school councils are designating five hours of non-instructional time to support the territorial conference. This is a decision that councils have the authority and capacity to make in this regard.

The YTA professional development committee plans to use their five hours of department-directed professional development for the territorial conference, and we support that. We have agreed to continue to work with YTA to continue to make professional development opportunities available to our teaching professionals. It is a rather long answer, but hopefully that provides a little bit of clarity.

Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the minister's response, but I'm still a little confused. The day that I am questioning about is the travel day. I'm just wondering, is the travel day a PD day now? If the minister can just explain once again, that time set aside for travel, would this mean an extra day being added on for instructional time or is this considered just a travel day and therefore it won't affect our PD days or our instructional time?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I understand, of course, when it comes to travel time, I know that there was a request of the Department of Education to use some of its remaining 10 professional development hours to pay for travel time. Those hours are being used in support of the summer academy. What we have agreed to do, working in collaboration with YTA, is to provide rural schools with the option of closing earlier the

day before, on the Wednesday, to facilitate travel to the territorial conference. We're working with each of the school councils and working with each of the principals as to how we can facilitate this taking place.

Mr. Silver: Thank you for the answer. It's just a non-instructional half day when they'll be travelling. Okay. Thank you very much.

I have a question about YSIS replacement. Has the decision been made? If the minister can give us an update on YSIS — have there been discussions with teachers about the replacement, maybe a commitment to the budget for this project, and when will the new system be in place?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I understand that no decisions have been made. We have had a working group in place for quite some time. I am thinking that in the last year, a working group comprised of YTA, the Department of Education and others worked with the intent of being able to roll out the system in 2015-16 — some time yet.

Mr. Silver: I guess there is no budgeted money this year for YSIS.

Also, special needs students — what improvements, if any, have been made to services for special needs students? Can the minister give us an update?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: There are a number of initiatives underway to address the very unique needs of our student population, starting with support being provided to our teaching professionals — but, of course, specific support being provided by paraprofessionals in our schools.

We have some renewed expertise within our department to help provide a more comprehensive framework as to how we identify the specific needs of our student learners and being able to more appropriately define and provide those student-teacher supports in our classrooms.

Every school has their own specific allocation of staff determined through a needs-based allocation model, as I mentioned before. It's a more formalized approach to identifying those specific needs and being able to appropriately address those needs through various staff. The staff are but one resource that a school can access for student support.

Other strategies for students include our counsellors, our teachers, school administrators, the Public Schools branch staff, education support workers, community education liaison consultants, and so forth. There are a number of various supports provided to our students — whether they are students who have individual needs or whether it's more classroom-based focus on specific needs pertinent to that particular classroom.

In terms of education assistants and remedial tutors, we have 179 positions in those two complements of educational assistants and remedial tutors, and that's determined through a needs-based allocation model. Perhaps I'll just leave it at that.

Mr. Silver: I thank the minister for her answer. I have an interesting question here. A couple of years ago, one of my mentors, Bob Sutherland, retired from teaching. When he did, he passed me a piece of paper with 17 names on it. He taught for 30 years in Robert Service School. The list of 17 names

were the 17 administrators — the 17 principals — that he had as a teacher there for 30 years. We are seeing an increase in the outside hires for these administrative positions.

I was wondering if the minister can talk about any incentives that the department is working on to focus in on local hires for administrative roles — if there is anything that the department is doing to look into this issue.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I very much appreciate the question coming forth from the member opposite. It's something that has been raised with me in my travels throughout the schools, especially in rural Yukon. I've had the privilege of being able to have discussions with individual teachers, with the principals and with the schools councils as well.

Having come from rural Yukon, the Town of Watson Lake, born and raised, I very much appreciate that the realities associated with living in rural Yukon and having the same opportunities as the rest of Yukon here in Whitehorse — urban Yukon, so to speak — is something that is of great importance to me and of great importance to our government. That's in fact why we have really placed a focused, concerted effort to reducing those gaps, especially when it comes to the outcomes of our students in rural Yukon and urban Yukon. The rural equity actions or initiatives that are being undertaken really were put in place and continue to be put in place to be able to provide rural students with more options and, equally as important, to build the capacity of our teaching professionals in those particular communities as well.

I can say that everyone from our superintendents — there is a concerted effort to have our superintendents in our schools a majority of the time. We have a number of various consultants from the Public Schools branch, some of whom are actually teachers who were stellar teachers in our classrooms. They are now working in the department providing that mentorship and expertise in the schools in rural Yukon and providing that added capacity among our teaching professionals. They use various lessons — they use collaborative time with staff to plan, brainstorm and to talk about issues and challenges to be able to come up with action plans as to how to address these particular initiatives.

Through the technology assisted learning unit, we have some very amazing individuals who are working in that particular unit in the Department of Education in terms of bridging those gaps and in terms of expanding technology to our rural teachers by being able to facilitate some of that training available to teachers. Rest assured, not every teaching professional has that kind of background, but through use of iPads and Promethean boards, we are able to expand the delivery of education.

I go back to Watson Lake as a case in point — that we were able to expand the course complement from some 38 to 55 different courses within the context of the year, thanks to the use of technology, and provide training and support to our teachers.

Thanks to the administration of Watson Lake Secondary School, we were able to expand our capacity.

Our smaller rural secondary schools receive an additional allocation of staff over and above the allotment for Whitehorse schools. We do provide paraprofessional assistance as well. It is very important to continue to work with our teaching professionals in rural Yukon and to continue to listen, learn and work with them in terms of providing that added expertise and capacity.

We work with the Yukon Teachers Association and we provide just under \$500,000 per year in professional development opportunities for teachers. It can include workshops that are developed within the schools. It could also be visitations to out-of-territory conferences. Teachers receive reimbursement for credit and non-credit courses that are also completed according to their specific needs. There are a number of specific initiatives in place to support rural teachers and school-based staff. There is quite a list, which I am not going to get into, for the member opposite.

When we were in Yellowknife last week, as the three northern ministers of Education, it is a topic of great debate. It's a topic of great importance and we see extreme turnover in our northern territories — not just here in the Yukon. We do need to do a better job in terms of attracting individuals and preparing them for working in rural Yukon.

That's why I was particularly interested in learning about the successes of the NTEP, which is the same program being utilized here in Yukon as YNTEP. They are able to really deliver that program in 10 different communities around Nunavut. That's a priority. We're obviously keenly interested in finding out how they're able to deliver that particular program in a variety of communities, not just here in Whitehorse. It's something we are all very interested in.

Even in the Northwest Territories, they're undergoing an education renewal initiative. It's what they're calling their initiative. It comes at a time when the Alberta curriculum is also undergoing significant transformation, so making education more relevant. In turn, the Northwest Territories is looking to make changes. It's very similar — when we compared notes on all three fronts in the three northern territories, we are all working in the same light, albeit perhaps a bit differently in our relevant communities, expanding on those learning opportunities, expanding on teacher specialization in terms of building capacity in our communities, and in terms of providing that support and really look to the north.

A lot of times we look to the south to recruit teachers and we need to really expand and build our capacity within the three northern territories because of our shared challenges and opportunities and being able to expand upon a program such as YNTEP. YNTEP has been a very successful program. It has undergone a recent review. I know that a number of those recommendations are being delivered and worked on by the college itself and by the administrator who is overseeing that program currently.

We have also expanded upon our hiring protocol and have made changes to incorporate the hiring of First Nation teachers as well, giving them more precedence and certainly

elevating the precedence when it comes to hiring Yukon First Nation teachers. There are a number of initiatives underway.

The other initiative I also wanted to point to is the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit. That particular unit has been in place for a number of years but they are really working very diligently with specific schools throughout the territory in bringing more experiential learning opportunities and more First Nation cultural programming to rural schools.

I give them great credit. I just look to their recent work at Vanier Catholic Secondary School and Whitehorse Elementary School. I just pay attention to those two because I was there and they were doing some fantastic work. They are providing examples of what can be delivered in our schools, not just here in Whitehorse but beyond as well.

The summer academy, as I mentioned, is an opportunity to bring all educators in at the same time prior to the start of the school year and develop those peer networks among the communities by being able to share in the challenges and working together to come up with solutions as well.

There is a lot of work ahead of us but it is a concerted effort on the Department of Education's part and it's obviously of keen interest to all of our educators across the territory.

Chair: Prior to taking another question, would members like 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're going to resume general debate in Vote 3, Department of Education.

Mr. Silver: Just to recap, we were talking about hiring for administrative positions and rural schools. I just wanted to make a comment on the minister's response. There have been some excellent programming and initiatives for rural schools. She mentioned the Promethean boards. I was one of the first teachers to have a Promethean board in the rural schools, and I have to say that it was an excellent initiative and we were so thankful to the Department of Education for this technology.

I have to tell you it really made a massive difference in the classroom, especially for teaching math and with the new curricula out there that are multimedia. It was an excellent opportunity.

The minister also mentioned YNTEP. With YNTEP, I have had teachers come in and do their practicum through my classroom as well and, yes, reorganizing and refocusing that program would be an excellent initiative to get some more First Nation teachers into the rural schools — an excellent idea.

I also want to give huge credits to the Minister of Education for the Independent Learning Centre in Dawson. The position is now a full-time, permanent position, and I can't thank her enough for making that determination. We spoke about it here when we debated the motion for the rural

action plan. I implored her at the time to make that permanent and full-time, and she did. Once again, there are lots of great things going on and lots of great incentives.

I implore the minister now to work with school councils and with First Nation governments to look into some incentive to get into the communities and to focus on the individuals who are there already. Her future administrators live in the community right now. They are there. When you have an administrator who knows the families and can go door to door and is trusted in the communities, what an excellent opportunity that is to get those individuals past just their BED, get them into a master's program and move forward so that we can have some more administrative staff from the communities. I think it would be of extreme benefit to the rural communities.

Once again, as I say this, I have to say as well, I'm not taking anything away from the administrators we have who come up from other communities in Canada. They are great. There are some great administrators who come up from other communities, but it's the timeline. Usually they are either near retirement or they have already retired from somewhere else in Canada. It's the level of commitment to the community. Really, when you compare the two options, going in there and finding someone who is actually already a professional in the educational community and who already has a mortgage and already has a vested interest in the community, compared to someone who is retired with an amazing career somewhere else — well, I'll just stop there. It's quite obvious what the impacts and benefits would be for those positions to be more Yukon-based.

I just have a couple more questions here. I want to move on to virtual schools. As far as the budget goes, how much money has been spent on the virtual school program? Also, how many students are enrolled in the virtual program? I'll stop there for now.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I want to thank the member opposite also for his positive comments for the department's work and for acknowledging the very positive things that are going on in education.

I've mentioned this many times before, but from the days that I went to school in Watson Lake to where we are today — and of course there have been a lot of years that have elapsed in between, not too many, but enough years — there have been substantive changes. It has been very encouraging to see. One of the most encouraging things is that the Department of Education is responsive to rural Yukon and to working with each of the individual school communities.

Obviously there are finite resources associated with every department that the Government of Yukon has, but there is some really creative work being done to be able to bridge the gaps and to be able to expand our learning opportunities for our students. It is really great to see. Any time we can offer students the ability to personalize their learning curve and their learning paths, we are improving those gaps and we just have to continue to work toward that.

I also want to say for the members opposite that in terms of building upon local talent and success, it was just brought

to my attention that in the community of Teslin, we actually just hired one of our teachers from Teslin for the position of principal for this coming school season. It is great news indeed. In Ross River, we just hired the vice-principal from Ross River as the principal, coming into this school season. Those are a couple of great examples of how we are building on success.

Obviously individuals who live within the community and have been working in the school community are very familiar with the challenges and with the opportunities. I agree, I know of some teachers in the communities who do go door to door. They are very committed. Whether they're in Old Crow or whether they're in Watson Lake, they're working pretty hard to deliver education in a meaningful way that's responsive to all our students and engage those communities.

I'm often reminded about the importance of our schools. It's not just a school; it's a community centre. There is some very creative and innovative work being done with the community to engage, making it a more welcoming environment for families to come to and celebrate the successes. The outreach program is but a case in point, for example. Dawson has taken that approach and they're doing some fantastic work, working through the Individual Learning Centre, which was a great initiative that was initiated by my former colleague, the late John Edzerza. It's another example of how we are building upon those successes.

We learned of another school in Yellowknife where they have taken it upon themselves to deliver education from irregular hours, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., being able to subscribe to student learners who aren't necessarily always engaged first thing in the morning. Again, it's about trying different things and being able to reach out in different, meaningful ways.

In terms of the member opposite's question with respect to the Aurora Virtual School, within this year's budget we have \$418,000 in support of distributed learning, most of which is for a number of new staff to be able to administer the Aurora Virtual School. My apologies — actually that's \$418,000 in distributed learning resources and that is in addition to the \$400,000 for staff, some of whom are new staff. We have in total just over \$818,000 in support of distributed learning resources for this year that we are currently debating in this year's budget.

As I mentioned, it is a very innovative way in terms of being able to improve engagement and achievement of our students by providing a variety of schooling options throughout the Yukon. It provides access to a number of various on-line courses of the highest quality available to meet the needs of all students. It provides differentiated learning opportunities, instruction and alternate learning approaches. We're able to utilize these resources to expand the use of technology in our classrooms to address self-directed learning, increasing student choices, expanding the role of teachers as facilitators of learning as well as broadening their knowledge and their skills as educators. It has enabled us to develop and also implement various, unique approaches.

I mentioned earlier, just recently, the remedial math program that was recently being offered this year for students in grades 7 to 9. It really allows us to offer instruction in a virtual environment with active teacher support throughout the course. It was deemed that this was in fact necessary to be able to really respond to a number of challenges that we were seeing in grade 10 math — being able to prepare our students in grades 7 and 9 in various rural schools is making a big difference.

By building on the teacher expertise in our schools — schools such as Ross River, which is where I had really learned about the use of the remedial math program — they are doing some fantastic things and they are really filling in those skill gaps that some students experience in their intermediate years so that they're better able to experience success in further years, from grade 9 and out. It will hopefully lead to increased options when students reach grade 9 and grade 10 in terms of the math streams that they are able to subscribe to. We're looking to that as really a pilot, but so far we've seen great results and we hope to be able to build on that.

It is but one example where classes are being delivered in sync with one another and we are looking at delivering that particular class three times a week at a similar time. We are engaging with our teaching professionals in terms of providing them the opportunity to work out the bugs, so to speak, and to enable them to identify those bugs by being able to address some of those technical difficulties in collaboration with our technical staff here in Whitehorse.

We think that it is a valuable asset to our schools, to our students, and they are doing a great job at delivering virtual programming — again, kudos to the team at the Aurora Virtual School. As I mentioned, in Watson Lake, we have been able to grow the courses available to that school to some 58 in Watson Lake Secondary alone.

Thanks to our staff here, last year's school season, when it comes to distributed learning, we had 114 in-school students and we also had 111 home-schooled students for a total of 225. We know that there is more this year, but we don't have those specific numbers at our fingertips. It is growing, obviously, with Watson Lake and we are looking to increase that capacity in Dawson City and Haines Junction this fall.

We are excited about those opportunities. It is more concerted effort — more formalized framework — in how we deliver those e-learning opportunities. It is a more formative framework. We continue to assess those courses being delivered. For any and all interest in a specific course or curriculum, we will also work to provide that professional lens on that, prior to it being reviewed any further or being adopted in its entirety.

Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the answer from the minister. I also asked how much money was spent on the virtual school system. Also, as far as the technical side of things, I wonder if there was any merit to the technical. It seems the directive for home-schooling would involve quite the commitment to IT capacity. I was just wondering if there

was any consideration to this when creating the administration here.

As a comment, I do know that if a student is enrolled in over 50 percent of their academic pursuit in the actual schools, then all the money goes toward that school, whereas if it's anything less, then that money allotment per student then goes to the virtual school system. It might be worth an analysis of why students are choosing to be home-schooled, compared to entering the school system, and also what type of engagement the rural schools are doing to attract people back into the classroom.

Once again, that can be a conversation for another day. My last question for the day is on the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. We have \$976,000 this year. Work is underway with the college to establish the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, with an allocation in the 2014-15 budget of just under \$1 million for capital and an additional \$1.2 million for operations.

When will the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining be completed? Also, what work on the centre will be undertaken this year? Will the Department of Education be providing an ongoing \$1.2 million for operation and maintenance? We have asked the question already: Why does this come out of Education as opposed to another department?

Thanks to the officials from the department for their time here today.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: We are very proud of our investments in the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. It was a major campaign commitment by our government in response to being able to deliver education here at home to prepare our Yukon workers for not only today, but for tomorrow and years to come.

I was really pleased to be able to help announce, with our Premier, an investment of \$11.5 million over five years. Of course, comprised within that \$11.5 million is \$5 million in matching capital for the Government of Canada to go toward capital expansion or construction on an industrial trades facility at Yukon College, which is primarily the use of that funding for a total of up to \$10 million. In addition to that, the Government of Yukon has really stepped up and provided secured committed funding of \$1.2 million for its operations over five years. I was also remiss in mentioning that also went toward the purchase of the mobile trades trailer.

The expansion of the industrial trades — this is not just in support of mining, but it is in support of all industrial trades. Really, when one takes a look, whether you are working on commercial construction or whether you are working on individual homes or whether you are working in a mine or other industry, this will all be of great benefit for our territory. In fact, we paid tribute to CNIM graduates just recently and we had, as I seem to recall, some 42 graduates in the various courses that were being delivered.

Perhaps one of the more interesting graduations that I have been to in recent times was at Delta Junction in Alaska. Just recently, earlier this spring, it had its first graduation. It was a great collaboration between CNIM, Yukon College and the University of Alaska in being able to utilize simulated

underground mining experience. We had seven graduates from throughout the territory, ranging from Old Crow to Haines Junction and so forth.

These individuals spent a couple months in a simulated mine at Delta Junction. They were able to live, work and breathe in the underground mining experience, living at the camp, being able to learn about heavy equipment, being able to learn about production, underground mining and its contribution to our territory. We all had the opportunity to talk to each of these individual graduates. I have to say — what an amazing complement of individuals. Their pride in mining practices, their pride in safe compliance with respect to our mining rules, regulations and laws, in terms of their respect for environmental remediation compliance, and just their overall understanding of mineral production and the importance of that to our territory was impressive.

They knew every piece of equipment like no other. I have been around lots of pieces of equipment over my years, but these individuals were just a fantastic complement of Yukoners who are now skilled. They now comprise part of our skilled workforce in the territory. I do know that a number of these individuals are now working at Capstone Mining as we speak, over half of them, I understand.

I learned that at the college's board meeting I attended on the weekend. It is industry-driven training. It's research-based and the goal of CNIM is to develop a sustainable mining industry in the Yukon with a skilled local workforce. I believe it's doing just that.

We have been working in close collaboration with the Yukon Research Centre, applying research in terms of how we can increase the competitiveness of our mining industry. Really, the work started years ago on this vision of having a CNIM here in the territory. It has evolved, even when you look at the timeline itself of 2011, when the college first launched its field camp assistant/camp manager program to train students for exploration in the mining industry. It then evolved to the year thereafter, for the delivery of the mineral resource program, which began at the college, November of 2012, the governing council was established, which includes representatives from our mining industry, First Nation governments, the Government of Yukon and the college. Then in January 2013, a year ago, we had the introduction to mining operations, the first program that was delivered under the formal banner of CNIM. Then it evolved to a four-month pre-employment course for heavy equipment operators. That was actually held in Pelly Crossing.

There is another fantastic example of Selkirk First Nation working in collaboration with CNIM, Yukon College and the mining industry there to come up with a tailored course for those operators to be able to subscribe to the local mining industry. From there, it evolved to the initial funding announcement of just over \$5.5 million in capital funding from the federal government by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. From there, members will recall last fall, our Premier announced just over \$11.5 million in support of programming, but also in support of the capital expansion — matching funds — for the federal funding that was provided.

In December of last year, the mobile trades trailer arrived and it began its operation. It travelled to Dawson, where it still is to this day and has turned out to be a tremendous success, with the delivery of the dual credit program with respect to welding. Of course, it also provided pre-employment welding as well as earning credits for the high school diploma in Dawson City. As I mentioned, since then it has also helped contribute to a successful underground mining course that was held in the training facility at Delta Junction. Also, later on that month after we had left, the first surface mining course was also held at Delta Junction.

Plans are currently underway in terms of construction and planning with respect to an expanded industrial trades facility at the college. As I mentioned, that will be of significant benefit to the territory because it will enable us to expand upon apprenticeships in electrical, for example, and to be able to deliver that full four years is of critical importance. As is currently the case, there are a lot of individuals who have to travel down to SAIT or NAIT or another institution to finish off their training. What we are seeing is that many of those individuals will not come back to the Yukon. There are other opportunities in Alberta and British Columbia — all around us. We want to ensure that people are able to deliver that training here at home and are able to subscribe to the opportunities. Clearly, investing in Yukoners — they are very familiar with the way of life that we currently enjoy here in the Yukon. Their roots are here and they have a vested interest in making our territory a success.

We are also continuing to work with the Yukon Mine Training Association so that they are able to have a clear learning path developed in conjunction with CNIM and helping them find employment opportunities for today and tomorrow. There has been a lot that has transpired when it comes to CNIM. It builds upon the mobile trades trailer and also the simulators that we currently have in place.

In fact, when we were at Delta Junction, they had the simulator there in place and it was a great addition to that particular training component.

Safety is a huge component of CNIM, as is learning about environmental compliance, the production and the mining industry in general. We are very proud of our investments in CNIM. As I understand it, the mobile trades trailer will be en route to Ross River later this year — another natural place to land, given all the various opportunities in place in that area of the territory. We are very pleased to be able to provide that.

The direct contribution is in support of Yukon College. We are very pleased to provide an overall funding complement or funding envelope of \$26,500,000, a loans record level, in support of Yukon College funded through Advanced Education. We're very proud of that partnership and being able to provide continued support to Yukon College just like we have with the continuation of the LPN course as well as the Northern Institute of Social Justice — and our ongoing commitment in support of the Yukon Research Centre — all of which work hand in hand to make great strides in our territory's success.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the officials who are here to help with responding to questions this afternoon and also to thank them for the information we received at the departmental briefing earlier in the sitting. The briefings help us prepare for the debate on the budget estimates. As critics, we raise issues to provide oversight for departmental budget expenditures and of course, to represent the interest of our constituents Yukon-wide and to discuss issues that concern them on the public record.

I want to begin with one program in Advanced Education and that is the Yukon temporary foreign worker pilot project, which is in place from August 1, 2013 to July 31, 2014. This temporary foreign worker pilot project is co-administered by the Yukon Department of Education and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I applaud the support that that demonstrates to the critical importance of workplace safety. I think it makes the Yukon have a good model that is leading the country.

When I looked at the details of this pilot project on the website, it indicated that it was operating under labour market opinion exempt work permits for occupations destined to the oil and gas, mineral exploration and mining industries or the tourism and the hospitality industry. Firstly, I would like the minister to confirm that my understanding of labour market opinion-exempt work permits is that it has previously been determined that we do not have an adequate workforce locally. The temporary foreign worker program can therefore recruit people from outside of Canada.

Secondly, I would like the minister, if she could, to indicate how many temporary foreign workers are employed in oil and gas mineral exploration, the mining industries and the tourism hospitality industry. Then my last question in relation to that program is that the website also indicated that the Yukon government and Canada-Yukon working group on the temporary foreign workers would monitor and evaluate the program over time to assess the effectiveness and efficiency and the overall impact on Yukon's labour market.

I want to ask what, if any, assessment has been done on the overall impact on Yukon's labour market. The minister was just referring to the new Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining and the mobile trades trailer that was training people to work in that sector, so can the minister explain how those are coming together?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: When I referenced immigration and when we reference the temporary foreign worker program, it's but one program that the Department of Education administers on behalf of Canada. We have that program; that is our Yukon's own temporary foreign worker program. Then of course we also administer the Yukon nominee program.

At the same time, the Government of Canada is still the overarching, responsible body that is ultimately responsible for immigration in the country.

Immigration, though — I just wanted to say that it was back in February 2011. Yukon government has been working ever since then with a number of labour market stakeholders, and we were able to, back in February 2011 — it seems a lot

longer than that — launch five specific strategies to help guide our overarching labour market activities over the next 10 years, one of which includes immigration. It also includes comprehensive skills and trades training. I refer to the recent investments in CNIM.

It also has to do with labour market strategies with respect to recruitment, employment and retention and, of course, providing accurate, relevant labour market information. All of which is to say that each of these plans were developed by a number of multi-stakeholder working groups. Those groups include the business sector, non-government organizations, First Nations, Government of Canada, government departments. Those committees — a number of those stakeholders, or stakeholder groups — really provide us ongoing feedback on all of those respective streams of our labour market framework.

I would really like to thank them for their plans in providing an assessment of how we're doing on each of those strategies and also coming up with an evaluation plan to assess how we are doing, where we are missing the gaps, and where we need to strengthen.

We have been updating, and we continue to update, all of our action plans under those various streams. I think that's really key because, when it comes to growing our territory, it is part and parcel of providing education, trades training, skills development, and working with institutions such as Yukon College and bridging the gaps also between our public schools and post-secondary education such as with Yukon College.

It's also investing in identifying those gaps in our labour market. It's an issue of great importance and is a great topic on the national scene. I, as the Minister of Education, am not only responsible for public schools but advanced education and also labour market, which is, in addition to that, immigration. I sit at all those respective tables on the national stage and there is a significant amount of work being done on all fronts to be able to respond to some of the challenges of today and tomorrow.

I think when you take a look at the territory — and recently it was just announced that we had a 3.4-percent unemployment rate for the month of April. Obviously that just shows that we have significant demands on our labour market, on Yukoners.

We are really working diligently with all of our stakeholder groups and individual businesses to meet those labour market needs, and immigration is but one stream of that.

As the member opposite made reference, we are delivering — I believe last August, it was announced that we would be undergoing a one-year pilot in delivering a Yukon temporary foreign worker program. It's a unique program that has been developed with strong involvement from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. It's a labour market program to enable seasonal employers in the tourism/hospitality industry as well as — as the member opposite pointed out — the oil and gas, mineral exploration and mining industries to access workers for a temporary period. One of the key differences between the federal

temporary foreign worker program and this program is that ours is up to 12 months, whereas the federal program is up to four years. It's for a minimum of two to 12 months, keeping in mind that priority has and continues to be that Yukoners and Canadians always have the first opportunity for jobs. Employers are not able to look to the temporary foreign workers until those available jobs have been sufficiently advertised under the prescribed time frame for Canadians. It's in recognition of how our economy tends to fluctuate on a seasonal basis and the fact that many of our employers also need access on a short-term basis to workers to maximize their opportunities in those specific fields.

There are a number of differences, as I mentioned, just even the time frame for subscribing to the program. Ours is available for up to 12 months — a minimum two to 12 months — the federal program does subscribe to a four-year time frame.

There are also other programs. For example, what we have built into our program is that, if there are any layoffs from an employer, basically that employer is obligated to hire Canadians back first before they look to foreign workers. As I mentioned, it is one year, as opposed to four years with the federal program. A key difference as well is that when an individual has been approved to subscribe to this particular program — and the same goes for any applicant who has been successfully approved through the Yukon nominee program — there is an obligation. A tripartite agreement is struck between the employer, the employee and the Department of Education. It requires the three parties to sit down immediately to go through all the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties, and also within the context of monitoring the success of those particular employees.

Employers are obligated to advertise for up to four weeks. That is done on a national basis and a national scale. Those are just some of the individual differences in ensuring that we have some quality assurance in our immigration programs.

I would like to say that Advanced Education takes great care to protect the integrity of the nominee program as well as the temporary foreign worker program. Our staff is trained to verify the information and ensure that applications adhere to policy. We continue to monitor the unemployment rate in the territory, with 3.4 percent unemployment as was recently recorded. It is at an all-time low in the past several years — I think seven or nine years if I'm not mistaken. We continue to monitor that as well.

As I mentioned, we ensure to the best extent that compliance is first and foremost. We have been working with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I think that was really the first of its kind in the country when we launched that. It was a very smart move. Thank you to the Department of Education and to the board itself for ensuring that. In addition to that, ensuring the tripartite agreement is signed by all of the parties and that we actually go through those responsibilities and roles outlining every right and obligation under that particular program is a key to ensuring compliance and success as well, and in ensuring that vulnerable workers are not placed in unsafe work conditions.

We monitor the employment placements for both the nominees and temporary foreign workers. We also require exit interviews from our temporary foreign workers who are leaving the program to glean what has worked, what has not worked, and where we can improve and strengthen success. These are important streams, but I want to stress that, first and foremost, the priority is to train Yukoners and be able to subscribe to the economic success that we have been garnering in the territory over the last 10 years and beyond.

We are very pleased to be able to participate and work alongside the federal government in the continuation of our labour market agreements. Just recently we were able to sign off a labour market agreement for persons with disabilities for the first time ever. That is a great success. It is the first of its kind for the northern territories and we are really pleased to be able to see that come to fruition.

In terms of labour market information, we have been engaged in a number of different initiatives and projects in terms of rolling out the Yukon Work Futures website. It certainly highlights job profiles, forecast data for the top jobs for the territory.

We also were able to launch last fall a community profiles website, which promotes Yukon as a great place to work, to invest in and to visit, through a presentation on labour market information on all of our communities.

We also have been able to work on new labour market projects, including a Yukon business survey, a Yukon labour supply migration study, a needs study — and the list goes on. In terms of other work, we continue to administer a number of student employment programs and also student financial assistance in support of our employees available.

There is a lot going on in Advanced Education. I just want to thank our staff for their due diligence and for being able to continue to work with all of our stakeholders on identifying the challenges and also how we can better address some of these skill shortages and gaps.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister in her response gave an overview of all of the labour market programs, the Yukon nominee program as well as the temporary foreign worker program. I'm not completely clear on her answer.

I'm sure the minister understands that temporary foreign workers are not eligible to enter an immigration stream and that they are not eligible for permanent residency, so much of what she had to say about the Yukon nominee program would not apply to the temporary foreign worker program.

I don't believe the tripartite agreement applies to temporary foreign workers.

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Ms. Moorcroft: It does. The tripartite agreement does also apply to temporary foreign workers.

The minister did not respond to how many people have come into the temporary foreign worker program, which was one of the questions that I asked. I guess we'll have to wait until the first year of the pilot project is completed on July 31, 2014 to find out what the overall impact has been on Yukon's labour market. I will leave that and move on to my next area of questioning.

The Yukon College endowment lands have been an outstanding issue for a number of years. I would like to ask the minister what decisions have been made to date in developing a plan with the involvement of Yukon government and Yukon College and the City of Whitehorse, of course. I would like to know whom they've consulted with. I would like to know whether they have had discussions with Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Where is the planning at with the Yukon College endowment lands, and when will they be talking to the public?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I were very pleased to be able to make an announcement in terms of expanding the education land reserve for Yukon College for the purpose of supporting the planned and orderly growth of Yukon College, which includes the creation of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining.

We have been working with the college in this regard, but this announcement last fall will enable the college to identify land for their potential expansion and enable them to develop a five-year master land use plan for the college for their future development and expansion.

We very much recognize that there are many interests in the land surrounding the current campus. Of course, Yukon College is working to come up with the initial tenets of the planning process. It will be at the lead of the Yukon College to be able to conduct those respective consultations with all of their stakeholders and the various land uses, including the First Nation governments in that particular area.

The expansion of the reserve has been approved for some five years. One of the requirements is that the college has to complete a land use plan for the land that has been approved. It will be subject to the final approval of the Yukon government. We support Yukon College and we support their consultation in going forward. It is going to be a very significant undertaking in a number of years ahead of us in terms of putting forth that master land use plan.

In meeting with the college board this past weekend, I do know that the college is planning to go out to tender this fall to hire an independent consultant to help them craft their master land use plan in going forward.

It is an exciting time and it builds upon some of the recent investments that we have just announced in terms of the Northern Institute of Social Justice to ensure that they have the continued delivery of their programs, but also looking to the future of the Yukon Research Centre. We were able to approve a one-year extension so that they were able to continue or to complete their evaluation work with the Department of Education. It also goes hand-in-hand with the recent investments in the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. It's a very exciting time for Yukon College, having just wrapped up 50 years of being in operation. We have seen a great natural evolution of the college itself over that time frame. We'll continue to see another huge evolution of the college as it looks forward to meeting the needs and the priorities of Yukon residents in our territory at this time.

Chair: Does any other member wish to be heard? We're going to start then with line-by-line debate.

We're going to begin on page 8-6.

On Education Support Services

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$932,000 agreed to

On Corporate Services

Corporate Services in the amount of \$3,245,000 agreed to

On School Support Services

School Support Services in the amount of \$4,169,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,346,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems

Information Technology Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$56,000 agreed to

On Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space

Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space in the amount of \$15,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$71,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,417,000 agreed to

On Public schools

Chair: Moving on to page 8-8, Public Schools — is there any debate?

Mr. Tredger: Could I get a breakdown on how many employees are in communications please?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: 3.2.

Mr. Tredger: Are they under the auspices of the deputy minister?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Yes.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$349,000 agreed to

On Program Delivery

Mr. Tredger: May I have a breakdown of that please?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Very gladly. It's a good note to leave on. Program delivery activity is the largest single component in our Department of Education budget. It provides all the support for our schools, including staffing costs, site-based management, utility cost for facilities, implementation of our rural equity action plan, school council support, school growth planning, and professional development. The increase is mainly attributed to the collective agreement with Yukon Teachers Association and also the implementation of our rural equity action plan, which we all voted unanimously in favour of.

The personnel allotment is just over \$81 million — \$81,129,000. There are 792 FTEs budgeted here. They include teachers, remedial tutors, educational assistants, school administration, secretaries, school librarians, aboriginal language instructors, school council support, school growth planning and superintendents' offices.

We also included in this expenditure in this line item of program delivery \$7,374,000. Expenditures in this area include management cost for schools, utility costs for our buildings, rural equity action plan, school growth planning and so forth.

In particular, we have dollars for professional development funding, a teacher mentoring fund, utility costs — as I mentioned, professional development, rural strategy, operational costs day to day for superintendents' offices and miscellaneous student support costs. There is also allotted for that a number of just under \$1 million in support of government transfers in the territory, which includes student activities, education-related events, and remuneration for school councils. We also have \$575,000 for the Council of Yukon First Nations, \$405,000 of which is supporting the Native language program and providing education support. There are also dollars allotted in this budget for Artist in the School, leaders in the education innovation fund and the list goes on.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.