



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 21, 2016 — 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 Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
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Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

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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
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Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before proceeding to the Order Paper, and in lieu of a prayer, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday.

Princess Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was born in London on April 21, 1926. She ascended the throne on February 6, 1952 after the death of her father, King George VI. She was crowned on June 2, 1953 in the first televised royal event. Queen Elizabeth II is the longest reigning monarch — now for 64 years, surpassing Queen Victoria's 60-year mark. Her Majesty has worked with 12 United Kingdom prime ministers, 12 Canadian prime ministers and 12 United States presidents. That proves her longevity, stamina and dedication in her role of Queen of the Commonwealth.

An interesting fact: Queen Victoria never visited Canada; whereas Queen Elizabeth II has visited Canada 22 times and has been to every province and territory. On one of her visits, it was noted that she said, "I am going home to Canada." Her last official visit was in 2010.

As the head of state, the Queen is kept fully briefed on all matters affecting the realm. She is very interested and aware of what is happening around the world. As her public appearances slow down, other royals take over her duties, but she still remains very active.

Please rise.

Members rise

Speaker: On behalf of all Yukoners and the Legislative Assembly, I wish Her Royal Highness a very happy 90th birthday and may she continue to reign in good health. God save the Queen.

All Hon. Members: God save the Queen.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Patrick William Van Bibber

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Patrick William Van Bibber who passed away on March 4, 2016. I would like to thank Mr. Van Bibber's family for giving me the honour the delivering this tribute on behalf of all members of this Legislative Assembly.

Pat was born at Pelly Crossing on March 17, 1922, and was the eighth of Ira and Eliza Van Bibber's 14 children. Letters sent by Ira to his family back in West Virginia were kept and copies of the letters were given to his Yukon family during one of their visits to Virginia Beach. Ira wrote — and I quote: "Mother and child doing well, and we are calling him John James. When the next one comes and it is a boy, we will

call him Patrick William." So it was, and as luck would have it, baby Patrick was born on St. Patrick's Day.

He was a true gentleman and was the quiet one. Pat and his siblings were part of the famous raft story of shoving off the banks of the Pelly River heading to Dawson City for St. Paul's Hostel and school. The oldest, Alex, was 13 and their dad hollered, "Alex is the captain." Ira said, "Why pay for steamboat tickets when the river runs that way?"

Also, they were instructed that, should the raft logs get waterlogged, they should pull over and add a few more logs, which they often did. They were able to sell the raft when they arrived in Dawson. I believe each got 50 cents.

Most of us have a difficult time letting our 13-year-olds go for a walk alone, let alone sending your children down the river on a raft. How times have changed, Mr. Speaker.

Life on the land was tough, but their way of life gave each the strength to be healthy and have prosperous lives. Pat may not have had a lot of formal education, but one could not put a grade on the intelligence gained by their lifestyle. Their work ethic was outstanding and there was never a shortage of work or adventures. Ira sent his boys out two by two to trap and hunt, while the girls had traplines and snares nearer to home. JJ and Pat were closest in age, so they were a team. As well, they all tended huge gardens during the growing season and learned how to preserve and keep their food. As with any large family, the older ones helped with the younger ones.

His sisters remember that Pat was always the kind one. If the other kids were cold, he would give them his mitts and go without. Father Ira would say to them, "Why can't you all be more like Paddy? He is always so good." Each of the Van Bibber kids had cameras and they had a love of taking pictures, which has captured a great synopsis of Yukon life by depicting their adventures and family life. They loved to share their pictures and the Archives has a very large Van Bibber collection.

As Yukon began to open up with mines and roads, Pat and his brothers were involved in the development of the territory, whether building those roads, captaining the ferries, freighting on the riverboats or sharing their local knowledge.

Pat met a beautiful young woman from Hell's Gate near Fort Selkirk, Ada Blanchard, and asked for her hand in marriage. Married in Whitehorse with Alex and Sue Van Bibber as their witnesses, Pat and Ada celebrated their 66th anniversary on April 9, 2015. Ada passed away on August 29 of that year at Copper Ridge Place, but Pat took care of her as long as he was able to before she moved there. They had a strong bond and a very strong commitment to each other.

Pat and Ada had five children and instilled in them the love of hunting, fishing and trapping. To this day the kids and grandkids continue to live on country food. Both enjoyed telling of their adventures growing up and how things changed as Yukon developed.

Pat operated the ferries at Stewart Crossing and Carmacks. Then he worked on building parts of the highway for United Keno Hill Mines. When the government took over the highways, Pat was encouraged to become a road foreman

for the Mayo district. He witnessed many changes in structure and personalities through his years at the department of highways. He retired in 1987 at age 65. This is certainly one case where the government pension plan paid out as he was retired and receiving a pension for about as long as he was employed with the department.

Pat loved retirement and did not slow down. His energy, strength and stamina lasted his whole life. The Van Bibber families stayed close and gathered whenever they could at the Pelly big house. Many years later, Pat Sr. took on the legal task of making sure that the Pelly Van Bibber property was equally divided between the brothers and sisters to ensure the future generations had a legacy to the homestead.

With the passing of time and, as with any large family, Pat lost many, but he was aware that, except for a couple, most had lived good, long lives. His sister, May, lived to 100, and his brother, Alex, lived to 98; others into their late 80s and 90s.

At age 75, Pat, along with his daughters, Carol and Karen, granddaughter Sherri and grandson Craig, followed in his father's footsteps over the Chilkoot Trail. Along the way, they camped along with other trekkers at specified camp spots. One group said they heard a really old guy was climbing, and Pat was looking around for that really old guy — never thinking it was him, of course.

He did not look his age and he loved to tell that story. To JJ's end in 2012, Pat and he would talk every day on the phone, chewing over bits of history and stories and what was happening in their lives. When JJ's book, *I was born under a spruce tree*, was released, JJ's granddaughter, Shannon, asked Pat and Alex to help her sell books and they so enjoyed their time doing that, speaking about their family's story and signing books for their brother.

Pat even had a couple of copies in his hospital room in case someone wanted to buy one. They enjoyed and applauded each other's successes. Hunting and river trips with Pat were so special. He knew bends and elbows, what happened at each spot on the waterways, who lived where, where people cut wood for the steamboats and where you can still see the odd artifact linked to our river history.

Pat Jr. has lost his main hunting partner.

In 2011, at age 89, Pat had quadruple bypass surgery and, with his daughter-in-law, Geraldine, along as escort, he pulled through that. The St. Paul's Hospital nurses were coming to see the old heart patient. Even with a few complications on returning to Whitehorse, he was always upbeat. He said that when he had his appendix out in the old Whitehorse Hospital in 1949, it was the only other time he had ever been in hospital.

He was interested in seeing and trying new things. He loved to travel. When he took a trip in 2014 with his daughters to Nashville, New Orleans and West Virginia, he was extremely excited, but getting medical travel insurance proved a challenge as many companies will not insure people over the age of 80. He was very upset and said, "You mean when you reach 90 you can't travel anymore?" He was told, "No, but most folks in their 90s don't or can't." They did find a

company that would cover him, and weddings in the Dominican Republic or Tofino, graduations in Victoria or Whitehorse, and other celebrations he was invited to, he was able to attend.

In January 2016 when Pat was told he needed surgery again, he said, "Well, let's get it done." During a few trying days, family tried to limit visitors but he quickly stopped that nonsense. He wanted to see his friends, his family, and everyone who wanted to come. He loved to hear what was happening. He gave his best fight, but his body finally said, "enough". But he had walked into the hospital and, right to the last morning, he was cognizant and clear. To the end, just 13 days shy of his 94th birthday, Patrick William Van Bibber was the most kind, most gentle and most patient man. He will be missed.

On behalf of the members of the House, I extend our deepest sympathy and give our condolences to the family. Mr. Speaker, so many of Pat's friends and family have joined us here in the gallery today — too many to mention — but I do want to single out Pat's children who are here with us today: Pat Jr., Carol, Deb and Karen. Unfortunately, Pat's daughter Shirley is in Spruce Grove, Alberta and unable to attend today. I would ask members to join me in welcoming his friends and family.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise and invite all members of the Assembly to help me in welcoming a couple of people. First is my incredible wife, Tammie, who is here and also wanted to witness the tribute to Pat Van Bibber Sr. I would also like to recognize the Grand Chief — Ruth Massie is here and her partner, Fred — and the Chief of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Eric Fairclough; and a couple of constituents of mine, Mr. Speaker, if I can — Stuart Van Bibber and his wife, Nicole. I invite all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming them today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Hassard: One member in the gallery in particular I would like to mention today is Evan James Clark.

Applause

Mr. Barr: I would like all to join me in welcoming a friend and business owner in Teslin, Mr. Steve Kramer.

Applause

Mr. Silver: I would like everybody to help me in welcoming an ex-constituent of mine and good friend, Shannon Van Bibber.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I ask all members to join me in welcoming a couple of folks I know from my past:

Joyce Van Bibber, a former Watson Laker, and Trevor Ellis, a former colleague of mine from the great town of Mayo.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming a constituent of Porter Creek South, Michelle Kolla, to the gallery today. Welcome.

Applause

Mr. Elias: With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to please join me in welcoming Ms. Tina Dickson to the Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Seeing as we're up introducing folks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Frances Chambers. She's in charge of the hubcaps in Champagne — and also Donna Chambers and Curt Campbell, Sherry Wabisca, Kelly and Heather Hougen, Denise Beattie, Sandy Wabisca, and a few other friends.

Applause

Speaker: I have to mention my very dear friends, Geraldine Van Bibber and her husband Pat, who was introduced earlier.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petitions No. 24 and No. 25 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review two petitions, the first being Petition No. 24 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition on April 20, 2016.

Petition No. 24 meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

I have also had the honour to review Petition No. 25 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun on April 20, 2016.

Petition No. 25 also meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 24 and Petition No. 25 are deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council responses to Petition No. 24 and Petition No. 25 shall be provided on or before Wednesday, May 4, 2016.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Petition No. 26

Ms. White: I have for presentation the following petition, which reads:

THAT the establishment of a government liquor store would not be a good thing for Teslin

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to reconsider opening a government liquor store in Teslin; and to conduct public consultation in Teslin regarding the proposed government liquor store; and instead consider investing in projects that would better develop and strengthen the community of Teslin in a more positive manner.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to invest \$487,000 to support the operations of the new 10-bed St. Elias group home, which provides supportive housing for adults with cognitive disabilities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to invest an additional \$365,000 to enhance social worker support services in rural communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to support the development of 11 recreational lots at Dutch Harbour on Kluane Lake in cooperation with Kluane First Nation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately undertake initial consultation with community stakeholders on Motion No. 1142, unanimously passed in this House, with a view to implementing necessary regulatory changes before the next election.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Ms. Moorcroft: In an April 8, 2016 letter about the value-for-money benefits of the Partnerships BC procurement services contract for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said — and I quote: “Partnerships BC is a one stop shop for procurement and... expertise and a bridge to help deliver large capital projects...” I quote again, Partnerships BC has enabled Yukon

government to deliver this project in a way that "... ensures costs and schedule certainty for Yukon taxpayers".

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works explain what kind of cost certainty there is in building a \$150-million facility without knowing how much it will cost to operate?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly thank the member opposite for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature again today. Yesterday she asked a similar question and although I didn't have the numbers right at my fingertips, I have followed up immediately with the department officials to attain the best estimates that we have at this time.

Certainly this government recognizes that it is expensive to care for seniors when they are at that point in time in their life that they need to move to a continuing care facility. Even so, we're committed to providing our seniors with the care that they need. Currently when this care is provided at the Whitehorse General Hospital, we pay \$2,462 per day. By comparison at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, we will pay roughly \$500 per bed per day or approximately \$28 million per year. We have included these O&M costs in our long-term fiscal plan.

Providing this level of care to seniors at that point in time of their life is extremely important to this government and we will continue to make those investments.

Ms. Moorcroft: Let's go back to the basics here. The fact is that this government approved building a \$150-million facility without having a clue of how much it would cost to operate it. It defies all sense and flies in the face of the Auditor General's criticisms of this government. Yukoners who buy a phone will consider how much their monthly plan will cost them before they purchase. I am sure that they expect the same due diligence when their government spends \$150 million.

How can the Premier pretend to have any credibility on fiscal management when his government has failed to meet the most basic due diligence by not knowing the O&M costs of a \$150-million facility before they commit to build it?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for this question. The member will be well aware that this government currently operates continuing care facilities here in the territory and, by comparison, we expect the costs at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility to be very similar to that of the Copper Ridge facility.

For the member opposite to make assertions that this government was not aware or did not have an idea of what the costs would be at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, the member should be well aware that we currently do provide that service here in the territory.

If there is a need to expand this facility in the future, we actually estimate that the costs per bed to go down. On the one hand, the opposition want to build a facility in every single community, but they do not seem to understand the costs. So I ask, Mr. Speaker, if the opposition is critical of these costs and feels that it is too expensive, then where exactly do they draw the line? At what point in time would the members opposite not provide that care to Yukon seniors?

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister finally admitted that he doesn't know how much the annual continuing care facility operation and maintenance costs will be. Today, they have magically found a couple of numbers: some beds are \$2,462 a day; other beds are \$500 a day; and this new facility will cost less, they think — less than \$500, less than \$2,400. We are elected to represent Yukoners' interests. As public servants, it is our duty and responsibility to make sure that public finances are properly managed. This government has the duty to conduct comprehensive, long-term fiscal planning, not just say that all is fine because there is money in the bank.

Will this government provide the estimates they are using for the operation and maintenance costs of the continuing care facility so that Yukoners have an idea of what the impact will be on future health care budgets?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's concern in this area. The member is right. Yesterday I didn't have the budget at my fingertips. Perhaps they have the budget on their desk across the floor, but this is forecasted in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

As I mentioned in my first response when the member opposite asked if I had that information yesterday — I did not have it at my fingertips — certainly we recognize that it is expensive to care for seniors when they are at a point in time in their lives when they can no longer care for themselves. Even so, we are committed to providing our seniors with that care that they need at that point in time. In comparison, a hospital stay for an individual waiting for long-term care is \$2,462, and we estimate that the average daily cost for a senior staying at the Whistle Bend facility will be very similar to that of the Copper Ridge continuing care facility at approximately \$500 per day.

For the member opposite to assert that we didn't have that information and that we don't that information is incorrect. I just didn't have it at my fingertips yesterday. This government is committed to providing that level of care to those seniors when they most need it. I don't know where the members opposite draw that line, but we will continue to make those investments in Yukon seniors.

Question re: Community nursing

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister for Health and Social Services what was being done to ensure the safety of nurses and patients in communities. The minister assured this House and Yukoners that his government was doing good things and good work on community nursing. Yesterday, the CBC aired an interview describing the big problems in community nursing. Yukon is facing a critical shortage of community nurses. Nurses continue to work alone, often with no relief. Despite their good work and their dedication, nurses are overworked and fatigued.

Mr. Speaker how does the minister respond to community nurses who are telling them loudly and clearly that this government is not doing enough?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member opposite for asking this question. It certainly provides

me an opportunity to highlight the good work that is being done in the territory around community nursing. In fact, the Department of Health and Social Services receives a number of calls each and every day from nurses across this country making inquiries about the possibility of employment opportunities here the Territory. The department has offers pending for nurses with additional interviews that just wrapped up yesterday.

The 11 primary health care centers currently have three out of 24 community-based positions vacant. Three auxiliary-on-call nurses provide coverage throughout rural Yukon for current vacancies and for leaves. We expect to be fully staffed for the summer, so Mr. Speaker, this government continues to support our community nurses, and continues to support health care in the territory. We're very proud of those investments.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister for Health and Social Services told us that there were 36 auxiliary-on-call nurses providing coverage throughout rural Yukon for current vacancies and leaves. This is true. In fact, three nursing stations in Yukon are staffed entirely by auxiliary-on-call staff. These nurses often come from outside of the territory for a week, two weeks, and a month. Despite their best efforts, these nurses are new to the community and new to the patients. Patients in the communities do not have the opportunity to build a relationship with their nurse. Every time they receive care or need care, they're retelling their health story to somebody new.

Mr. Speaker, what action is this government taking to recruit and retain permanent nursing staff in the communities — not just auxiliaries on call?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for bringing this question forward to the floor of the Legislature. Certainly nursing shortages are not something that is exclusive to Yukon; in fact, all across Canada and many northern parts of the provinces see this same issue. We are competing with all jurisdictions across Canada in that regard; but as I mentioned to the member opposite, work is certainly in progress. We've been working through some of the issues. We've been working with our partners on this issue and we will continue to work with our partners in the area of recruitment.

Recruitment is pursued in a variety of ways, including targeted local- and national-level advertising, collaboration with other local recruitment efforts and attendance at national job fairs. Health and Social Services attended three job fairs across Canada in the last seven months. Mr. Speaker, on the floor of this House I've said before that word of mouth continues to be one of our best ways of recruitment. I know a number of nurses and doctors have reached out to their colleagues across the country and they report that they're still having success with that.

This government will continue its investments in nursing. It will continue its investments in health care, one of which I would argue that Yukon's health care is one of the best in Canada. We'll continue to support those professionals on the ground.

Ms. Stick: There's no question that these nurses are working hard. The Minister for Health and Social Services tells us that word-of-mouth advertising is probably one of our strongest advertising models to recruit and retain nurses; but Mr. Speaker, we know we have a community nursing system in crisis. Permanent nurses are leaving for other jurisdictions. This kind of word of mouth will not help recruit permanent nurses for Yukon communities.

Community nurses are working alone in isolated communities, often without backup or support from the RCMP — rarely with the benefit of a physician. Many are on call 24/7. They do not feel supported by this government.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister recognize this government is not doing enough to support nurses that we have now in our community health centres?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for asking this question. They continually provide me with opportunities to highlight some of the great work that is being done in the territory. In fact, it wasn't just this minister who had indicated to the members opposite about word-of-mouth advertising; that's coming from the grassroots, from the professionals on the ground that reiterate how important that messaging is for the territory.

We do recognize that there are challenges recruiting health care professionals to Yukon communities and this is a reflection of the same challenges across the country where we are facing nursing shortages, and I've said that before on the floor of this Legislature. Certainly to meet these challenges, we've been executing our plan to deliver health care across Yukon and to keep Yukoners in their homes as long as possible. Health and Social Services works extensively with the nurses association and Yukon communities to attract and retain nurses long term. We've also invested significant resources to that same goal.

This government will continue to make those investments. This government will continue to ensure that health care is one of the best in Canada here in Yukon — something that Yukoners certainly deserve and expect and we're very proud of those investments, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Film industry

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development about a letter that he received this week from the president of the Screen Production Yukon Association. It was regarding a review of the Yukon government's film funding programs. According to the letter, these programs are in desperate need of revision and reflection of the recent evolution in the industry. Digital media, in particular, is in dire need of incorporation into the Yukon film funding programs. The government has identified the requirement to review and update the current funding programs to address digital media, as well as other funding gaps, but it has not delivered on providing any solid process, timelines, road maps or otherwise to have such a task completed on time soon.

The government began its review a year ago and said programming will be updated in January of 2016.

Mr. Speaker, why has the government missed its own deadline?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: The Department of Economic Development is undertaking a review of the funding programs offered by the Film and Sound Commission. There have been significant changes in technology and the possible distribution mechanisms in the film industry in recent years. The department is currently meeting with stakeholders who have an interest in Yukon's film industry in order to obtain input on how they see these changes impacting our film programs.

Currently, the department has met with 10 groups and individuals representing over 100 members who have an interest in an economically viable film and sound industry here in the Yukon.

Mr. Silver: I appreciate the update from the minister, but preliminary input was requested over 12 months ago but, to date, there has been no follow-up and the members of the Yukon industry are completely in the dark as to what the next steps, if any, are and when they will take place.

It is crucial for Yukon government to address the current issue of film funding program inadequacies and deliver a firm plan for the revision in an expedient manner. Given the past year of limited progress in the film funding review process, it is even more imperative for the Yukon government to take a leadership role to review the film funding programs and to gather information from those stakeholders.

We heard an update today on the floor, but when does the minister anticipate this will happen and when will it actually be completed?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course it's important that we take the time to do the good work and to talk to all the people involved, so we don't have to go through this process again next year or the year after. It's important to try to do it once and do it right.

Mr. Speaker, industry meetings are showing that there are a multitude of different funding models that people are interested in, and department officials are meeting with officials from the Arts branch of Tourism and Culture to discuss funding opportunities for film and sound within the Yukon government. Film and Sound Commission officials have completed face-to-face stakeholder consultation meetings within the territory and provided each group with the meeting minutes for their approval.

We do realize this is an important issue and we will continue to do the good work to try and move forward in the best way possible.

Mr. Silver: I do appreciate from the minister that he and his department want to get it done right. The general tone of the letter is to get on with it. It speaks to the lack of urgency that the government has taken in its approach to this funding review. There's a great deal of interest in the Yukon right now, Mr. Speaker. We need to be ready to meet that demand.

Instead, the government is stuck in a review that is now months past its deadline for reporting. When your GDP drops for three years in a row, the government should be working to grow new industries and to diversify our economy. Why has completing this review not become a priority?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I think it's important to realize that we have \$710,000 in the budget this year for film and sound incentive programs. That does show that we are interested in diversifying the economy and helping this film and sound sector of our economy.

We heard just the other day an official from film and sound talking about how Dawson had so much interest in it this year — the Yukon in general. There are great things happening in the film and sound industry here in the Yukon, and we're very happy to see that. The work that the department is doing helps that work continue, helps those film production crews come to the Yukon, helps those productions take place, and in turn puts Yukoners to work.

Question re: Teslin liquor store

Mr. Barr: This question is directed to the minister responsible for Yukon Liquor Corporation and MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin. I am asking this question on behalf of Teslin community members.

We have tabled their petition asking the Government of Yukon to reconsider opening a government liquor store in Teslin. Nearly 200 community members have signed.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Elias: It is my understanding that in the rules of Question Period, the opposition cannot direct a question directly to an MLA in a riding in the territory. It has to be to a minister.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: He directed it to the minister who is actually the same person. Your point is well taken. I would advise the members to direct their questions to the minister alone and not to include the riding.

Complete your question please.

Mr. Barr: Nearly 200 community members have signed. These community members have been vocal in their opposition to a government liquor store opening in their community. They have written letters to their MLA as well as the Premier himself.

What is the Minister of Economic Development's response to his constituents who oppose the proposed government liquor store in Teslin?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course, as an MLA when a group or organization comes forward and asks their MLA to look into something, I believe that, to do our job properly — and I would like to believe that every member in here would have done exactly as I have done. I said, "Look, I can look into this question for you." That's exactly what I have done. I have approached the department. I said, "Look, I have had the..." — and actually it was the chief and some of the executive council — ask about the possibility of a liquor store in the community of Teslin.

Doing my job, I approached the department and asked how we would proceed if such a thing were to happen. The department went to do the work that they do. In the meantime I had two public community meetings. At both meetings this subject came up on more than one occasion. At the end of the day, after those two meetings, the one thing that was asked in particular was that I do more community consultation.

I am happy to say that over the past two weeks, I have gone door to door, to individuals' houses, and talked to them about this item as well as many other subjects. Mr. Speaker, I continue to do that consultation, and when I am done, we will see where we are.

Mr. Barr: A government liquor store would make a wider selection of alcoholic beverages cheaper and more readily accessible in Teslin. Many community members are concerned about the social problems and impact on the social fabric of their community that this could have.

Signatories of the petition include community nurses, social workers and religious, municipal and First Nation leaders. Residents of Teslin want the opportunity to discuss the proposed liquor store with this government.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation commit to conducting a public consultation in Teslin regarding the proposed government liquor store, where all can come together?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: As I said in my first response, I have had two public meetings. People get very passionate about this issue, of course. Some people are very opposed and some people are very in favour, so it is rather difficult to host those types of meetings — public meetings — in a community, but I have done that. What I got out of those two public meetings was that they wanted some more community consultation.

Mr. Speaker, I felt that the best way possible for that to happen was to go to individuals' homes in the evenings and on weekends and talk to the individuals. I don't want to talk to people at work. I don't want to be in office situations where people have peer pressures or other people giving input that may influence their decisions.

It's interesting. Even though I have never seen this petition that was tabled today, I have spoken to numerous people who said, "Look, I signed that petition, not understanding all of the implications that this project could have in the community." I have never been in favour of or opposed to the project. I'm simply doing what I believe an MLA should do, and that is, when you're brought forward a question, to do the due diligence and do the consultation that is required, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barr: The residents of Teslin have many ideas for projects that would develop and strengthen their community. A new library in the town square, an artifact conservation building for the George Johnston Museum, a new post office, a safe house for women or a swimming pool would provide employment and contribute positively to the community.

Mr. Speaker, will the government instead consider investing in projects that will develop and strengthen their community of Teslin in a positive manner?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I guess it's a matter of opinion when you say something is going to contribute to the community. I would like to believe that creating jobs in a community is contributing in a good way.

The member opposite has spoken about a swimming pool, and that has been discussed at numerous meetings in the community of Teslin, but unfortunately, when the First Nation or the local municipal government is approached with the idea of a swimming pool, they say, "No, absolutely not. We can't afford to run it. We're not interested. Please don't approach your government about building us a swimming pool."

Mr. Speaker, I can simply do what the people ask me to do, and that's what I will continue to do as long as I am the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Question re: Oil and gas development

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that this Yukon Party government would like to open Yukon to fracking. They are spending millions in public money to subsidize this industry. This year they have allocated over \$360,000 for two water quality monitoring wells in the Kotaneelee, an area they have stated they intend to open to fracking. The Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing made recommendations for establishing baseline water quality data to — and I quote: "... to ensure that comprehensive data is available." Two wells do not strike me as comprehensive.

Does the minister truly believe that two groundwater wells in the Kotaneelee will actually satisfy the high standard contained in the recommendations of the select committee?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I should again thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for being a member of the select committee along with two of his colleagues from the opposite side of the House and three colleagues from this side of the House. As we mentioned last year in our response to the select committee recommendations, we accepted all of them and we are acting on all of them. I think Yukoners should be very proud. When we are down in Calgary with Yukon Geological Survey staff, we are told that we are one of the first jurisdictions — if not the first — to collect this type of baseline information before industry activity happens. That is something to be proud of, not only on water monitoring, but also on seismic collection and on all of the other aspects that were recommended by the select committee.

I will remind the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that he was a member of the select committee and that he did travel to Yukon communities — I believe he travelled to Alberta to talk to industry leaders and other individuals who were active in this industry. I thank the select committee for the report. We agreed to accept and act on all of the recommendations, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, these ad hoc expenditures are not a plan. We are still waiting for the oil and gas action plan. In a November 2 letter to the minister, three northern First Nation chiefs said that the Yukon government has — and I quote: "... distorted the recommendations of the Select Committee..." Distorting committee recommendations before

responding to them isn't the same as meeting them. We know water is not a priority for this government. Their water strategy fails to deal with the important issues and the only new groundwater monitoring wells they are doing are to facilitate fracking.

Why isn't it a priority for this government to invest in groundwater monitoring wells throughout the Yukon for all Yukon citizens, rather than just focusing on fracking needs?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing. We are responding to the recommendations made in the final report by the select committee, which the member opposite is more than aware of. We are improving baseline knowledge of the Liard River Basin and expanding groundwater and surface water monitoring activities. We have a better understanding of the impacts of natural gas extraction fluids on groundwater, and we are researching the integrity of wells in the prevention of long-term mitigation for fluids and gases.

Starting this year, the Yukon government is collaborating with the University of Calgary on a three-year Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada project. It will develop baseline monitoring techniques to assess potential impacts of oil and gas extraction on groundwater and surface water. Like the member opposite said, we are investing in two multi-level deep wells and surface water quality monitoring stations, but what we are doing is expanding the long-term water monitoring networks. We are gathering baseline data, targeting research projects and that is what this government is committed to do.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Kaminak Gold Corporation has spent years monitoring water quality on their Coffee gold project with local involvement and, like other mines, they have done this with their own money. The select committee had not contemplated that the government would bear the costs of conducting baseline water quality data; nor do the recommendations prescribe who should bear these costs. The government has chosen to pick up a tab that should rightly be paid by oil and gas companies. The minister says they aren't picking winners and losers, but paying costs that should be borne by industry is the very definition of picking a winner.

Mr. Speaker, how does this government justify spending public money to subsidize oil and gas fracking in the Liard Basin?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'll expand a little bit more, Mr. Speaker, about how the Yukon government monitors groundwater and surface water quality and quantity through, like I said, long-term trend networks, baseline study programs and targeting research projects. Over the next year, the Yukon government will expand its long-term network by adding 10 hydrometric stations, five to 10 groundwater stations and two water quality stations.

Once installed, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon government will share the operation — or operate directly — 95 hydrometric stations and 29 to 34 groundwater stations and 13 water quality stations across the Yukon. It wouldn't be good if

government did not gather baseline data and collect stuff, and that's exactly what this government is doing.

I might remind the members opposite — I sure hope they vote for this budget because that's where that money is going.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I rise to invite members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in introducing, before she walks out of the Assembly today, a constituent of mine — Amy Campbell — welcome; and another member from ECO as well. I welcome both of you to the House today.

Applause

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

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. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Mr. Graham, you have 11 minutes.

Department of Education — continued

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, it's a pleasure for me to welcome a couple members of my staff here — Cyndy Dekuysscher, who was with us here yesterday and

joining her is my deputy minister — Judy Arnold is here with us today as well.

Yesterday, I ended with the Advanced Education branch and I will just do a quick overview of Advanced Education, because a total of \$16,750,000 is requested for O&M for the Advanced Education branch. Our government is investing in supporting Yukon post-secondary students to help them achieve their career goals. As part of this investment, \$5,034,000 is requested to support our students and the proposed changes to the Yukon Student Financial Assistance and Awards program — the Yukon grant. This represents a change of a little less than \$400,000 in funding.

The Yukon grant provides financial support to Yukon residents who are taking full-time post-secondary classes at a designated institution. The government is committed to providing access to financial assistance that makes it affordable to attend post-secondary studies and ensure that funding is distributed in a fair and equitable manner for current and future Yukon residents.

The changes in the grant system will allow more students to qualify for the Yukon grant, it will increase funding for students studying at Yukon College, and it will maintain a cost-of-living increase for post-secondary financial assistance. Students who currently qualify for funding from the Government of Canada will now be eligible for the Yukon grant as well. Specifically, this will open the Yukon grant to more First Nation students than previously. Additionally, eligibility requirements for the Yukon grant will now allow students who were Yukon residents during their high-school years and completed high-school equivalency to be eligible for the Yukon grant.

The travel amount for a student studying outside the territory will be reduced from \$1,800 a year to \$1,500 per year, and we believe that this more accurately reflects the actual cost that students face for travel. However, to offset the reduction in travel costs, the annual student grant will be increased by \$800 per year for all eligible students. We believe that this will more adequately reflect the importance we put on students attending Yukon College as well, and it will give a fairer break to those students in accessing the Yukon grant. The Yukon grant will be subject to regular cost-of-living changes as well.

Students who were eligible under the Yukon grant as it currently exists will be able to continue receiving the Yukon grant until September 2017, even if they don't meet the current requirements.

Currently, First Nation students who receive post-secondary financial assistance from the Government of Canada are not eligible for the Yukon grant, and we want to support those First Nation citizens to achieve their educational and career goals and we want to be able to more adequately address the achievement gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students. With these amendments, we will ensure that all First Nation students who meet the eligibility requirements receive the same financial assistance for their post-secondary education.

Changes will also be made, Madam Chair, to the student training allowance. Previously, post-secondary students would be eligible for five years of funding in total through the student training allowance and then the grant. We will be changing the student training allowance eligibility — and the training allowance is primarily used to upgrade courses at the college — but those students who use the training allowance to upgrade will be eligible for up to two years of the student training allowance and they will continue thereafter to be eligible for the full five years of the Yukon grant. This is a substantial change from what previously occurred.

All of the changes to our post-secondary financial assistance programs are the result of extensive public consultation, which included students, parents and First Nations. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who participated in the consultation process, because we believe that the changes to the *Students Financial Assistance Act* will make financial assistance available to more Yukon post-secondary students.

An additional \$230,000 is also requested to develop the degree-granting capabilities of the future Yukon university. The department will continue to work with Yukon College and the governments of both Saskatchewan and Alberta to ensure that the degrees granted by the college are recognized by and transferrable to other institutions, both within Canada and internationally.

\$1,510,000 is requested for the community training fund, and that is a \$75,000 increase to meet the additional demands on the fund.

We are also increasing the amount of funding that is available to Yukon College, as it works toward its transition to become a Yukon university. This year we'll be adding \$500,000 to enable the transition to a Yukon university, and this is a three-year funding agreement — \$500,000 a year in each of the three years — and it's included to develop its research capability and evaluate and work toward achieving the academic standards necessary. It will help to move a Yukon university forward to meet the strict requirements needed to achieve that status. It's a multi-stage process that will require significant effort over a number of years. I have said in this Legislature time and time again that this is not something that we're rushing into — creating a Yukon university. We want to be sure that it's done correctly and done so that we will be widely recognized as a high-quality institution because we believe that the transition will bring considerable benefits to both higher education in our territory as well as to the economy.

We've seen university towns throughout this country where the primary source of economy was the university. I can think of several back east that are in that category. While Yukon College perhaps won't meet that status in the short term, we believe that high-quality programs with a northern focus will definitely bring students to the territory.

We've also requested an additional \$175,000 to support Yukon College as part of their base funding to improve their information technology and records management, and another bit of funding that is very important to us is \$593,000 to

extend funding for the practical nursing program at Yukon College for an additional four years in order to meet the demand for licensed practical nurses.

The commitment will see two intakes of 16 students into the program — the first is this year in September, and the second in September 2018. The Department of Health and Social Services has already indicated that they're in a position — or they will be in a position — to hire all of the graduates of the program, as they have done for the last two graduating classes. I believe this reflects our government's commitment to the health and well-being of Yukon by taking this step to address this shortage of nurses in the territory.

I'll end there. The only part I haven't gone through is Education Support Services, and we can do that later on in the debate. I'm open to questions now from members across and look forward to providing answers.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his comments. I too would like to welcome back Cyndy Dekuysscher and Judy Arnold. Thank you for coming. Yesterday, they weren't here, but I did mention that I appreciated — and staff in many of the schools appreciate — the fact that they've taken time out of their schedule to visit most, if not all, of the schools in the Yukon. I understand they intend to get to them all, which I must commend them for.

In 2009, the Auditor General referred to the need for a long-term plan for the upkeep and maintenance. The Department of Education agreed that they will incorporate the results of building audits into a risk management plan as the department develops it.

I know recently, or over the last few years, the department has been conducting seismic audits on our schools, as studies confirmed that several buildings were in need of modifications in order to ensure long-term safety. There were issues identified.

Which capital projects have been identified in this year's budget for upgrades to the seismic studies? Do school councils and staff have access to the reports on their schools and have they been informed of the seismic studies on their schools — and back to which capital projects are identified for this year?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The Department of Education works closely with the Department of Highways and Public Works to ensure that all of our schools are safe. We are in the process of developing a school revitalization plan to address future new construction and what renovations we can do to existing school buildings. We have a preliminary draft plan now that I am discussing with the department but, as for the 2009 Auditor General's report — I believe it was recommendation 99 and that we work with Property Management Division to develop a long-term facility plan. That is the reason we are working on the plan. Recommendation 108 — that Yukon Education work with Highways and Public Works to conduct regular and comprehensive facility audits to ensure that major building deficiencies are identified. As a result of that, many of the schools' building-related audits have been completed. Most of the urgent issues as far as roofs had been completed by late

2008. The education facility assessment report was completed in 2011 and dealt mainly with electrical, heating and ventilation systems. All of the urgent, safety-related issues have been addressed.

The seismic assessment, which was asked about, was completed over the winter of 2013-14, and we don't believe that the report was distributed to the various schools in the territory. We have completed a number of renovations due to the seismic reports and, as part of the overall plan — the draft revitalization plan — we are trying to determine if it is worthwhile to make the changes necessary to upgrade some of the older schools especially, or whether it's less expensive in the long run and over the life cycle of these schools to simply replace the school. We are trying to make that decision right now with Christ the King Elementary School and Selkirk Elementary School because that assessment hasn't been completed.

We are looking at a number of issues in a number of other schools too. Watson Lake elementary school — Johnson Elementary School — J.V. Clark School, Teslin School and Robert Service School have been completed. Whitehorse Elementary School has not; several renovations were done. The more urgent requirements were carried out, and now Whitehorse Elementary will fall in with Christ the King Elementary and Selkirk Elementary schools and we will try to determine whether it is worthwhile to upgrade those schools or to completely replace them. As you know, it's a fairly large capital layout to replace those schools, so we are attempting to make the choices. That is part of what the draft revitalization plan is all about — making choices and trying to determine what we are doing with a number of different programs such as all of the programs we are running in high school — MAD and the experiential programs.

We have to consider where we're headed with French immersion. As you know, last year we started French immersion at Selkirk Elementary School. We've committed to continuing French immersion in that school from kindergarten through grade 7 as those children progress, but we're trying to determine if this is something we should be doing in other schools — such as Porter Creek and other schools — rather than centralizing it in one place. Those are some of the things that have been done.

The eight schools in the medium- to high-risk categories of the seismic screening were Takhini Elementary, Whitehorse Elementary, Christ the King, Wood Street, Kluane Lake, St. Elias, Nelna Bessie John and Selkirk. As I said, some of the renovations have been completed in those schools. Those were all non-structural mitigations that included doing things like securing furniture and shelving, making sure filing cabinets wouldn't collapse in the event of seismic difficulty, and things like that.

I think I have answered most of the questions. I'm not sure if we have distributed, as I said, those reports to the various school councils but it's something that we will find out for sure.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer. I thank him for his commitment to distribute those forms to

both the existing school councils and the new ones. Hopefully that passes on.

Are there any capital funds from this year that would address some of the deficiencies in a seismic audit?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, there are. In the current budget we have placed \$100,000 for various schools in this school revitalization plan. That's part of the total of \$2.9 million that we have put aside for work being done — renovations being done in the schools over the 2016-17 year.

Mr. Tredger: Just to go on to housing for a minute — housing continues to be a problem for many rural teachers. This is especially evident in the fall when new teachers arrive in communities. In some of our communities, they haven't been able to find a place to stay. They have often bunked in with someone. I was talking to a teacher who started in somebody's living room and moved to the bedroom; they got company and had to move again. It makes it very difficult to retain teachers — but difficult for teachers to continue to teach.

This seems to be an ongoing problem. It has been a problem for many years. It's worsening as long-time teachers who own their own houses retire and new teachers moving in don't have that housing.

I understand that there are somewhere between 800 and 900 YTG employees in rural Yukon and there are 170 houses. That creates a bottleneck. It's hard on rural communities because they can't attract and keep staff in any of the fields — but particularly in education. I know of schools that have had to hire married couples to fit the housing.

Obviously the minister is aware of the housing problems. What steps is the minister taking and has he lobbied the minister of housing for additional educational housing units? What is being done to meet these needs?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, we work with the Yukon Housing Corporation but, in addition, we work with the Health department, which also has a number of employees looking for housing in the various communities — so it's an ongoing battle. I know Ross River was one of our problems and we have a great young teaching staff there in Ross River now. Consequently, I know the Housing Corporation is now constructing a facility in Ross River, I believe, that was just announced in the last week or so. That will alleviate, we hope, the pressure there.

It's a problem that we face; there's no doubt about it. I know what we would prefer is that people build or purchase housing in these small communities and live there. I know my kid sister, when she first came back to teach in the Yukon, taught in a rural community and we actually spent a summer building her a home in that community so that she and her kids would have someplace to live. We would love to see everybody do this, but we realize they don't have that opportunity.

We'll continue to work with the Yukon Housing Corporation; we'll continue to plan with Health and Social Services as well as Highways and Public Works to better house our teachers all over the territory, but it's a big territory.

There are a lot of spaces and a lot of priorities so we'll continue to do it. I don't know what else I can say.

Mr. Tredger: I know it is a concern of the Yukon Teachers' Association and many of their meetings are filled with concerns that are brought forward to them as well as to the rural communities when they're trying to attract professional staff, whether it's in Education or in Health and Social Services. This is an issue and it's an ongoing issue. It's important from an education perspective that, once hiring is done, Yukon Housing Corporation is made aware of the needs of incoming staff so that they can act on it in the spring and over the summer so that when teachers arrive — often from out-of-territory into a small community — they have a place to stay. I just want to highlight that it's an ongoing situation and it's a government-wide situation. Part of it has to do with land availability. Part of it has to do with — for a long time, people weren't able, and still aren't able in many communities, to get a house — to build the house he talked about. I assume when his sister was moving to the community, there were lots available. Many of our communities don't have lots available, even if people did have the wherewithal and a big brother to help them build the house.

This fall, a lot of rural schools had great difficulty getting their teachers on call into the schools because the teachers on call — and this applies also to temporary teachers and temporary educational assistants, which the majority of them are — need a criminal record check every year. The format changed — something changed this fall and it was very difficult. I talked to schools where they weren't able to get a substitute teacher because teachers weren't able to get their criminal record checks in a timely fashion.

I have talked to people who were potentially teachers on call and who just gave up and said, "Look, I'm doing this to help out the school. I don't need the drive into Whitehorse three times to get my criminal record check." Is the department addressing this? Have they taken steps? It has created a real situation in our rural schools and I assume in Whitehorse itself, although many of the people in Whitehorse are qualified teachers and are more able to handle the system and the bureaucracy around filling out forms, filling them out right and filling them out this way and that way. It is a concern. Has the department addressed this so that we don't have this problem next fall?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We are working with the RCMP, but it's a delicate balance that we have to reach here. We have to ensure that people who are teaching in our schools have their criminal record checks done because we're concerned about the safety of our children, but those teachers who teach year over year don't need it every year, as I understand.

The other part of that equation is that if they're not alone in the classroom with children, they can work without a criminal record check until it is done. I know we have had the same difficulty this year and we put an EA with a person who hadn't had a criminal record check report done, so that carried the person over until such time as a criminal record check was done.

I can't remember what the rest of the question is right now, but I can assure the member opposite that we are working with the RCMP. Just today I heard that the RCMP are now putting CPIC online for customs officers, so we're hoping that this indicates some speed-up in their criminal record check process, because I know from personal experience that it can be a real chore.

I hope that we have answered your question. I cannot provide anything new, other than that we're working with the RCMP. We have made these changes to the system so that as long as they don't work alone, we will wait for the criminal record check to come in — and if they work on a year-to-year basis, as I understand, we don't need a criminal record check every year.

Mr. Tredger: Just for a little bit of clarification on that — when you say, “when you work year-to-year for a temporary teacher”, do they have to stay in the same job? They're temporary year-to-year — they don't need an additional criminal record check? Does that apply to teachers on call who remain on the callout list? Does it apply to education assistants who may be on a temporary basis but in the same school year after year?

Hon. Mr. Graham: With ongoing positions, it's year over year; it's not required. If they're on call or temporary and don't have a continuing record with the territory, then they will need them every year — yes.

Mr. Tredger: I did have a question on temporary teachers, but I can't find it right now so I'll come back to that.

For a couple of years now, the schools in Whitehorse have used a centralized callout system. How many schools are on that system? How many have been on it and dropped it? What have the results been?

I know there was some concern expressed by administrators and school staff that, when they don't have the opportunity to call teachers on call, they may get ones who are not familiar with the school. They like to get ones who maybe have continuity in terms of presenting programming and stuff.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The automated system to call in substitutes is a system called EasyConnect. It was first tested in Robert Service School in 2013-14, and the results at that time indicated that it may not be the best thing for small rural communities. As a result of that test, the decision was made to implement the system in Whitehorse area schools and to not implement it in the rural schools.

The system was supposed to allow school staff to enter a description of the assignment they're filling and then add preferences related to the skill set required for the assignment. The system was then supposed to automatically call, text or e-mail substitute people who were in the system until the assignment was filled.

My staff indicated to me that it hasn't worked as well as many of us had hoped, despite the fact that, when this system was first implemented back in 2013, school principals were consulted and they seemed to believe the same as the department; that the implementation of EasyConnect would make it much simpler to contact substitute personnel.

Finding substitute personnel to fill in for a teacher is always challenging. It's challenging everywhere in the Yukon, even in Whitehorse. We can't always find substitute teachers with education degrees. Consequently, the department has provided substitute teachers with educational credentials from time to time in the rural communities as well as for specialized areas, such as intensive French literacy and numeracy.

It continues to be a priority — finding substitute teachers — as I said, not only in the rural communities but in Whitehorse. It continues to be a priority for the department.

In October of last year, the department reached out to administrators throughout the territory for their input on recruitment and they did a recruitment campaign as well to encourage applications for substitute personnel, not only in Whitehorse but in many communities as well.

We've posted advertisements on job banks. We've posted advertisements at the college campus and outreach centres. We've posted these advertisements at First Nation organizations and at all territorial libraries and other territorial agents, but it is difficult.

We're also reaching out to retired teachers. Hopefully we'll have something for you when your career here is finished, you see — but perhaps not. We realize that retired teachers are a real boon to the territory, the people who stay here know the system, work well with students, and it would be an excellent addition to the system.

I am glad to see that both members opposite can take a joke.

As members opposite know, it is a problem and we're working as hard as we can to create opportunities, shall we say, for substitutes.

Mr. Tredger: This retired teacher has found something to do in his retirement, and I hope to do it for some time longer.

One of the things that we, as a society and territory, have been working for is that the number of First Nation teachers is reflective of the population. That would be somewhere around 23 percent. However, the number of Yukon First Nation teachers has been around 10 percent for a number of years. There was initial flush when YNTEP first graduated a few, but it hasn't been able to get up much past 10 percent.

Does the minister have the latest numbers on the number of First Nation teachers teaching in our schools? Are there any specific initiatives to ensure — the hiring protocol I know is in place and has given some preference to First Nation teachers, but it hasn't increased the number in our schools proportionately. I'm wondering if there are initiatives — if there are ways the department is going about trying to increase that number.

I know a number of teachers have graduated from YNTEP and have chosen other professions. Is there any initiative to keep them in teaching or to encourage them to teach? Are there any types of programs that would assist them as they move into the schools and ensure that their schools are a success?

I know that nationally, many teachers — I think it's around 30 percent — drop out within the first five years of their career. When we're dealing with smaller numbers in the Yukon, some type of supportive program so that we don't have that dropout of our First Nation teachers into other fields — I'm not suggesting they're dropping out, but that they move into other fields.

Are there any initiatives the government is taking to increase the numbers?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The percentage of First Nation people in teaching positions — and that includes both aboriginal language teachers and certified teachers — is 20.3 percent. The percentage of First Nation persons in remedial tutor and educational assistant positions is 18.9 percent. The overall percentage of First Nation people in teaching aboriginal languages, educational assistants and remedial tutor positions is 19.9 percent. The overall percentage of First Nation people working in the Department of Education as a whole is 17.7 percent.

Madam Chair, what we try to do with First Nation teachers — especially those coming out of the YNTEP program — is provide coaching and mentoring within the schools. Our First Nation program planning department at the Department of Education provides support on an ongoing basis. But I can only go back to when I worked at the college and watched, year after year after year, graduates from the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program graduate and immediately go to a job other than a teaching job.

I know I had a niece who is a First Nation person and has a teaching certificate, and she said that, too often when you go back to your home community with a degree, there are a huge number of options that are available to you, and so you take the option that best suits your style of life. In many cases, she said, we don't find that teaching, once we get into the job, is what really suits our way of life.

Consequently we've lost a lot of people — great First Nation teachers — who could have taught in the Yukon, anywhere, and we've lost them to other jobs. First Nations around the territory are always looking for smart, educated people such as YNTEP graduates, and a number of them work for the First Nations themselves. It's a problem. We realize that we have 20.3-percent First Nation people in teaching positions but we would like to see that increase, and we make a concerted effort to do that. I should also make sure that you're aware that these numbers are as of March 31, 2015.

Mr. Tredger: I must commend the department and the minister. Those numbers are higher than I had expected and than I had heard. I believe my numbers did not include native language teachers and I stand corrected; they are teachers in our system and should be counted as such.

I also commend the department for the efforts they are making to incorporate First Nation teachers into our system.

Violence in our schools has been a long-standing issue. In 2007, the YTA released a report called *How Safe are Our Schools?* They commissioned a survey that found almost one in three Yukon educators sustained some form of workplace

injury; 59 percent had some level of psychological injury. Our educators deserve better.

Just this winter — for a bit of history, many incidents in schools are underreported. I know that the department and YTA have been working — it has been part of the negotiated settlements that the tracking of the incidents happens and that incidents are reported. YTA has been working on it. It has been out there for many years, and I would just read from the YTA notes of February 2016: "Thank you to everyone who filled out school safety forms and sent them in last year. In total, we got 135 forms in 2015. Since these forms are optional, 135 is likely just a fraction of the incidents that actually happened last year, but they give us an idea of the issues faced by our members at their workplaces. The issues reported most often had to do with being physically attacked, followed closely by being sworn at by students. Threats of harm with or without the use of weapons (rocks, scissors, chairs mostly) were also of concern.

"We have been requesting that Student Support Services address the processes around violence at school and clarify them in terms of timelines, accountability, resources, and communication/follow through since October 2015."

I know I have raised it in the House, and I raised it when I was with YTA. We are looking for a tracking system so that we know — before we can deal with it. As the Member for Riverdale South says, if you don't measure it, you can't manage it.

In other words, we want to know and want you to know: Who gets the forms that you fill out? Who decides what is to be done and makes sure that resources are in place to deal with the issue? How long will it take for someone to react to the issue with help of some kind? When will you know what happened about the issue, and who will tell you?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, it was a multi-pronged question and I will try to do as much as I can. If I miss something, I apologize and hopefully we will get back to it.

The Positive Behaviour Intervention Support and Classroom Diversity Committee is mandated under the collective agreement, as the member opposite stated, to work with teachers and the department, dealing with incidents of violence.

Due to the scope of the committee, it was decided that they had to have subcommittees and working groups and they would report back to the steering committee. Two committees were formed: a working committee to establish timelines for the PBIS rollout — that's the positive behaviour intervention support — and a committee to review existing policies and codes on conduct in Yukon schools. In February 2016, 14 schools attended a two-day introductory workshop, which was very well-received with lots of school planning time. The next workshop for schools is in May with coach training to follow. The remainder of the schools will begin their training in the 2016-17 school year.

The department continues to work with the YTA, especially to deal with incidents of violence in the workplace. Just recently we began monthly meetings with the YTA where

the topic of discussion is violence in the workplace. We're also meeting with the WCB to try to take advantage of their expertise and their experience dealing with workplace safety to see if they can provide us with advice and ideas that will lower the risk of violence in the workplace.

We also have a violence and risk threat assessment protocol, which is designed to ensure that violent behaviour — a threat by a student — can be responded to in a manner consistent with the best interests of the student as well as the employee. The protocol enables partners to share appropriate information about youth to support prevention or enable early intervention in risk situations in a school setting. The protocol, which has been in place for a number of years, has been signed by the departments of Justice, Health and Social Services, Education, and the RCMP, as well as Yukon College. Training to support an updated protocol takes place annually and I believe the last time the training took place was in January 2015. Personnel from all of the departments that I talked about attended the training and there'll be additional training as we go forward into 2016.

The protocol sets out a number of questions to guide in the identification. It also sets the levels of concern; whether a risk is active or imminent. It also includes considerations for a comprehensive intervention plan to help ensure safety and well-being for everybody. Behaviours contemplated in activating a threat assessment are: serious violence with intent to harm; verbal or written threats; Internet or text messaging threats to kill others; possession of weapons, including replicas; bomb threats; fire-setting; sexual intimidation and assault; and gang-related intimidation and violence. All of those behaviours are contemplated prior to a threat assessment being activated.

Madam Chair, we have also begun a number of other programs. The early intervention pilot project, as I said, started this year to support students over a three-year period from kindergarten to grade 2 in seven classrooms at Takhini, Jack Hulland, Elijah Smith and Tantalus schools.

There are a number of programs that we're working on to lower the risk to teachers and to students in the classroom.

I'm not sure I answered everything but, if not, I'll be happy to provide more comprehensive answers as we go along.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for the answers he did give me. I still wonder: Do we have a comprehensive or formal tracking system in place that would collect data on incidents in schools? Is there a way to analyze that data and a way to try to deal with the under-reporting that often accompanies violent incidents in schools and in our lives?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, we're working with the health and safety committees at the schools and we are tracking incidents; we're compiling the incidents here. As I said at one time this session, I know the number of reported incidents had gone up, I think, by 180 percent from one year to the next, and we knew that it wasn't due to the fact that there were that many additional incidents, but instructors were taking the time and making sure they filled out the reports promptly when the

incidents occurred, instead of forgetting them, passing them off and then eventually forgetting to do it.

So we know that we're getting better reporting. As I said, we will be compiling those statistics and the data will be all part of the PBIS system, so we'll be able to extrapolate and we'll be able to — the early intervention system is the one that I think we hope will prove to be the most beneficial, because it will be able to identify potential incidents before they occur. We hope that will be something that will really assist us in the future to prevent these incidents before they ever happen.

Mr. Tredger: Those are some positive first steps. They will take some follow-through. I know there's a huge discrepancy between the number of incidents reported to the department and to YTA. That remains a concern. I'm glad to hear you're working with them on a regular basis to address this, because this is a serious situation. It has implications in the classroom for all our students and staff.

A year or two ago, there was a ruling about temporary teachers. At the time, we had in excess of 60 temporary teachers who had been on contract for more than three years. I know the YTA and the department have been working on it, and that the YTA is pushing to get the number of temporary teachers who have been employed for three or more years in the same or similar position down to a smaller number.

What has the department done to achieve that and how successful has it been?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I think we first of all just have to back up a little bit and define the fact that temporary teachers are hired for defined periods to meet temporary programming needs in Yukon schools, and these can be any number of things.

When you consider how many teachers we have — teaching professionals we have in this territory — working in the school system at any one time, you only have to extrapolate from that how many will be on maternity leave or paternity leave, or on leaves where they have taken a year off, or they go to temporary positions either at the department or in another department for a year or more — all of those positions have to be filled.

The way we do it is by hiring temporary teachers. When we find a good temporary teacher, the department likes to keep them so they will move from one assignment to the other, possibly on an annual or even semi-annual basis. We have a huge number of temporary teachers at any one time.

In 2014, we had an adjudicator's report, a decision, ordering that a temporary teacher who had been employed for more than two consecutive years be given the status of a permanent employee. That adjudicator's decision was appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court refused to overturn that adjudicator's decision. As a consequence, the YTA has filed grievances because it believes, as the member opposite said, that temporary employees employed for more than two consecutive years should be converted to permanent.

I believe that, at the present time, we have approximately 100 temporary teachers in place around the territory, 19 of whom have been employed for more than two continuous years. We also have 156 temporary paraprofessionals, 53 of

whom have been employed for more than two continuous school years. Those temporary teachers include educational assistants and aboriginal language teachers because they're all members of the YTA. They're all covered by the agreement and have the same benefits as if their jobs were permanent.

We believe that it's almost going to be impossible to convert all of those teachers or all of those persons to permanent status. What it could force the department to do is enact layoff provisions or something like that on an annual basis or begin doing other things.

At the present time, a number of teachers are able to take deferred-salary leave, they take personal leave without pay, and in all those cases as well we hire temporary teachers. We believe that this enhances the job of a teacher in this territory.

If we have to now start saying that we won't be able to give educational leave — under the collective agreement there are provisions for educational leave, but every other kind of leave that we do is on an optional basis now. If we have to start eliminating some of that, I think it would only make the job worse for all teachers.

We're looking at options. We're negotiating with the YTA at the present time to come to a common understanding of what is deemed exceptional circumstances by the deputy minister. In order to continue a temporary employee's status as a temporary employee, the deputy minister must declare exceptional circumstances for a temporary teacher.

Once we agree on a common understanding with the YTA, I believe that the outstanding individual group grievances will be assessed against that criteria and the decision will be made at that time on a permanent status. We believe that will resolve the outstanding grievances and we believe it will substantially reduce or eliminate future grievances in this area.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his comments. My question would be: When do exceptional circumstances not become exceptional? How many before they're not exceptional?

Many of the leaves are contractual obligations. Deferred salary is actually paid for by the teachers. They spread their salary out over five or six years and go on what we call a "six and five" or "five and four" plan, but those are paid for by the teachers. They are a benefit and a boon, and I highly recommend them for anybody in the profession.

The minister is right that there is a need for leaves within the system, but there are ways around that. A temporary teacher — and he talks of good teachers, of successful teachers — these are teachers we want to keep in the system. What a temporary teacher means is that you don't know, come June, whether you'll have a job in September, which means that you can't get a mortgage because the banks want to know if you're going to have a job come September.

If we're encouraging these teachers to come and live in our communities or in our towns, we want them to be able to settle down and get roots, but if they're on a temporary contract, it makes it very difficult. It makes it difficult to retain good, successful teachers. I know a number who were here for three or four years on temporary contracts, gave up

and went back to Edmonton or back to Vancouver or back out east. That's not the answer.

I think that there are ways around it without cancelling leaves. Perhaps a way around it — if we have successful teachers who have been in the system for three or four years, or in excess of two years, that's longer than a probationary period — or that's as long as a probationary period — perhaps we can get a pool of teachers who are floating. In other words, we put them on regular contracts with the understanding they may be at this school or that school. Every year, we have a number of leaves, so that wouldn't be too onerous on the department.

The other thing it does is — in many communities, there are people who have moved into other positions or into Whitehorse. They leave behind their permanent position as a temporary position, and it makes it doubly difficult for the communities to be able to bring in people we want to keep in our communities when we can only hire into temporary and backfill. Perhaps the department can look at situations where, after three or four years, rather than guaranteeing a position back in that community, they can guarantee the person on leave a similar position, but not necessarily that one. These are just some suggestions.

I was a little concerned when the minister said that an alternative was to cut back the number of leaves, because they are important in our system and I did want to throw out some ideas that may or may not work. Certainly there would be negotiations with YTA, with the teachers involved and with the people involved, but I would urge the minister to not see it as an either/or situation. There are creative ways to deal with the situation without making a case for cutting back leaves, which are important to our system.

I would like to talk a little bit about school-based teams right now. School-based teams function as a unit that helps to resolve a student's individual needs. I will read from a document from the Department of Education dated December 3, 2015. "The School Based Team functions as a collaborative problem solving team to address student's needs. The School Based Team does this in two ways: 1. To address student's needs at a school level and 2. To work with parents and other support personnel to respond to individual need(s)."

School-based teams are very effective and have proven to be very effective in our schools. However, I have heard reports from a number of parents that they haven't been involved in the school-based teams. I know the department is working on it, according to this memo, and I know it's legally required that they be on the school-based teams.

This memo goes on to say, "Parents shall be invited members of the School Based Team that has been established for their child... The School Based Team should also schedule review of student progress in regards to identified needs at School Based Team meetings as a way to evaluate student success and to prioritize services and resources... The School Based Team Meeting Notes/Minutes template may be used to record the School Based Team (SBT) meeting minutes. School Based Team referrals for individual students should be filed in the School Based Team binder."

My question is: Have parents been aware and how are parents being made aware that they have access to the minutes of the meetings? Do they need to request that or is it automatic? Are they informed of meetings? I know that in some situations, schools go out of their way to include parents and sometimes they even meet after school hours, or have individual meetings with those parents, to inform them what happened during the meetings.

The question from parents is: How do they get involved? How are they informed? Is that becoming standard practice or do they have to ask for it?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I just first of all would like to get back to temporary teachers just for a moment.

As I said, the department is currently working to define temporary exceptional circumstances and temporary, which are not exceptional circumstances and which should lead to permanent. They are looking at those issues with the YTA and I look forward to seeing what is eventually negotiated.

I know from my past experience working at the college where the exact same issues came up on a monthly, if not daily basis — of the difficulties experienced with temporary employees. Because as soon as you make those people permanent, if you only require 480 teachers in the system and you have 500 or 550 permanent employees, you have a problem. We all know that. There is a problem. So we have to work out a solution with the YTA and, as I've said, it would be a shame to see anything deleted from the current benefits that we all enjoyed.

I know speaking of four-fives — I often said I only work four years at a time at the college and learned to be a big game guide and other things during the years off, so I know what a wonderful thing that is and we have no intention of attempting to cut those back, but it's really important that the employer's part is understood too. For 489 teachers — which is roughly what we need, give or take — we don't need to have 520 permanent employees who we are paying. It's simply unworkable.

I know the YTA is working very diligently with the department and I wish them all the best in those negotiations. I know I have some very clear guidelines in my own head of what the department can and cannot agree to, but we will work out a solution. We always do.

As far as the school-based teams go, if there are parents who aren't involved, all we can say is those parents should let the department know immediately. The member opposite read the policy. That's our policy and we believe in that policy. I have already told the deputy minister that she should be sure and severely castigate the director of Student Support Services and make sure that she knows all of her employees — or make sure that her employees are following that policy — because it's something that we believe in.

We expect parents to be involved in the system because without parents it simply doesn't work. So we agree with you. We'll take this back and as I said, my comments should be taken, as the member opposite knows, with a grain of salt there, but we do agree. Parents have to be involved in this system and if we know of any who haven't been involved, we

will encourage them to, first of all, let the school know and then let the department know and we'll follow up with Student Support Services.

Mr. Tredger: I guess that, just from a parent's perspective, quite often when their child is in need of extra service, it's a difficult situation for them and it's hard to advocate. The more that can become standard procedure when a child is going before the school-based team and the parents are automatically notified — the more those options become standard procedure, I think the better it is.

I'll move on to another situation. Two years ago, the Premier announced that he wanted to make financial literacy a pillar of the Yukon school curriculum. How many schools have introduced the Premier's financial literacy agenda and at what grade level?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As part of the new BC curriculum, financial literacy went all the way through in every grade from kindergarten through grade 12. As part of our own work on curriculum, we're trying to decide exactly how that will be implemented into our curriculum here in the territory, but we have every intention of doing it as quickly as possible. We believe, as obviously they do in BC, that it's very important that financial literacy be taught in our school system.

Mr. Tredger: I assume that will be coming. I thank the minister for that.

All students used to get preventive dental therapy. Most schools had, or still have, dental rooms. At this time, I know a number of schools have had difficulty getting therapists or regular service. Which students at which schools still get that dental therapy? How much of it is preventive and how much of it is actual dental work? Which schools don't and why aren't they now receiving that preventive dental care? It was a very successful program and served the children of Yukon very well.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I know that, as former Minister of Health and Social Services, we dealt with the dental program in the Health and Social Services department, so I'll leave that one to my colleague to answer at the time that Health and Social Services comes up.

It was a difficulty in some schools, I know, looking back at my years there, but I'm sure he'll be able to answer that question more adequately at that time.

Mr. Tredger: They will probably thank me for the question.

Last year, the Individual Learning Centre ran two community pilots. What were the outcomes of those pilots and can the minister give us an update on how the Individual Learning Centre is working this year? Are numbers up or down? How successful have the pilots been?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I can speak anecdotally about the ILC, and I think I did in my opening remarks as well. ILC attendance is up dramatically this year over last. We'll get those numbers — I had them, but I've lost them, I'm sorry. We'll get those numbers and provide them as quickly as possible.

I will have to get back to the member opposite as far as the rest of his question as well. I apologize for not having the

answers, but we will get back to him as quickly as we can with ILC numbers.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, over the summer, the ILC moved. Can the minister inform us how much the new space is costing? Is it effective as a school space?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, once again, I don't have those exact numbers, but the idea behind the move was that we would combine the Aurora Virtual School with the ILC and thereby save some resources, or at least make better use of our resources. We will get those numbers as well. I have to tell you, the kids like it. As I said the other day, they were attending school throughout the two-week spring break. In talking to some of them, it is as if they consider this a second home.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, can the minister confirm that the planned residential school curriculum has been implemented? At what grade levels? Has it been implemented in all schools? Is there a plan to evaluate its effectiveness or to get some feedback from the First Nations on that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, probably the member opposite knew already, but the residential school curriculum was introduced as a social studies credit in grade 10. It has been introduced in all grade 10 classes throughout the territory, except, I believe, in one school where there were insufficient numbers of students to introduce the program. I think there was only one student in one particular school who the member opposite is probably aware of. It was decided not to do it unless they did grades 10, 11 and 12 altogether to get an adequate number of students to have some interaction at the same time. It has been introduced as part of the social studies curriculum for grade 10 in all schools in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, a few years ago the Department of Education — this was quite a few years ago — shifted responsibility for janitorial services from the school administration to Property Management, a division of Highways and Public Works. I have been hearing an increasing number of concerns from administrators that the janitors, who used to belong to the schools — and I say that in a good sense because they were other adults in the community and in the school. They formed relationships with the kids.

I can remember that Mike, the janitor at my school, would arrive early with me and we would walk around the school every morning and do a safety check, and he was able to do a number of things and it was under the purview of the administrator. This is no longer the case. I hear that janitors are being moved from one school to the others and they don't — what that means is they don't belong to the school, so they don't get the satisfaction from doing a good job at that school and from being part of the school community. That's a real concern.

When I was at École Émilie Tremblay, the janitor didn't speak French. That startled me because it just didn't seem to make sense. That's just an example of how that isn't working and I'm wondering is the minister aware of that? What steps have been taken to try — I'm not sure we want to return to the old system — to get the janitors so that they belong in the school? The second part is that I heard — and I need

confirmation — that a number of schools don't get janitorial services until the afternoon. As a former principal, that sounds like a mess to me, because often students will be sick and they will appear in the office. So you have a building with 150 young students, more or less, and if there are no janitorial services, that doesn't work. You end up with your administrator or teachers who are supposed to be doing something else cleaning up in bathrooms or cleaning in the hallways or cleaning in the office, which happens. I'm wondering if the minister is aware of that situation and if he can tell us whether or not he is looking at full-time janitorial services for buildings through the day, which is when people are there. I look at the number of people who work in this building and there are janitorial services from the morning until the night and it should be no different for our children in our schools.

Hon. Mr. Graham: We've just been discussing here between the three of us and we want the member opposite to come and sit on our negotiating team with the Department of Highways and Public Works, because we agree with him 100 percent. We believe that this service has declined in the schools somewhat — not the actual service in the schools, but the associated things, like opening the school in the morning for students who come early, like cleaning up in the evenings after community residents have utilized the school and like the scheduling of custodians. We agree with him.

We are currently in discussions with Property Management Division and as soon as that darn Minister of Highways and Public Works sees it our way, we will begin setting up the program and transferring that system back to Education.

Mr. Tredger: When I visited — I will just go back to the Aurora school for a minute. When I visited this school, some of the rural schools' concerns were raised by the communities that we visited that teacher-led classes were being cancelled in favour of the Aurora school. There were concerns that students who require more time and more one-on-one are getting left behind.

On the Aurora school, are there attendance statistics for rural Aurora classes? Have students been asked in the rural communities how well it's working? I guess a final question for the minister: Is the Aurora school replacing teacher-led classes in rural schools? Do you have stats on the number of students who are receiving Aurora instruction in the schools?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We have no intentions of replacing teachers in the school system with virtual schools. It's part of our blended learning program and that blended learning means that teachers in the school are such a vital part of the learning process, they will be included in the instruction, even when that instruction is online.

Madam Chair, I don't have any statistics with me right now about the numbers of rural students taking courses through Aurora, but we'll have those numbers for him as quickly as possible.

The least cost annually for the ILC and AVS combined is \$211,000, and that budget does reside with Highways and Public Works because they do leases on our behalf. It's

probably up a little bit because this space is actually larger than the previous space, but I can't confirm that right now. It is with Highways and Public Works and it did cost us \$211,000 a year.

Mr. Tredger: Has the minister heard those concerns from the communities about attendance at Aurora classes?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, Madam Chair, I heard from one community in particular. As part of that, it was a written exchange with that school council member and a school council. We will be establishing a rural advisory committee that will have people on it from school councils all around the territory, and that advisory committee will be working with the department to enable us to deal with concerns, such as those raised by the Watson Lake high school recently. We've heard what they had to say; we didn't have anything within the department process that could deal with rural concerns at the present time, so we felt that their request to establish a rural advisory committee was a good one and we're in the process of setting that up at the present time.

Mr. Tredger: Are there steps being taken or has any time been assigned to staff to make sure that these students enrolled now in the Aurora program don't get left behind? There are concerns about it, and while we can take a long-term view around that, has the minister considered assigning extra staff time to ensure that the students who are struggling — correspondence or virtual classes have some definite advantages, but they have some definite disadvantages.

I know that I have struggled through a few university courses that were offered online and had a very difficult time finishing them. I guess my concern is for the kids who are new to the program.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, our projected enrolment this year, through Aurora Virtual School, is 74, but that is the total number. Those could be home-schooled students, rural students or students in Whitehorse. The cross-enrolled students are not in that number, so that number will increase somewhat when those numbers are added, but I thought I would give you that just up-front.

I know what the member opposite is talking about when he talks about doing courses. We used to call them correspondence courses. In fact, the reason that I'm here today instead of being an accountant somewhere is that I couldn't do accounting courses by correspondence. I couldn't do it. My wife, by the other token, can sit and do online courses all day. So I envy people who can do that. I didn't have the ability. We will get some statistics on the AVS students. We also have 165 students registered through the ILC and that is substantially more than last year. It's a substantial increase over last year and I know, as I said anecdotally, that the students are enjoying it. They are learning and they consider it — like I said — as a second home almost, and some of them seem to just be so happy to be attending school that it's amazing to me.

Mr. Tredger: I believe these are last year's numbers, but I think three teachers at the ILC — with that number, are we considering adding more staff? That is quite a number of students.

The thing about online courses or virtual courses — they are easy to sign up for but they're hard to finish. It may take a bit of coaching and guidance from staff. Is there extra staff there?

That just reminds me — the ILC has a very difficult-to-reach clientele. I have often wondered whether that would be a good place to have some social counselling. Is the minister considering — I know I have asked about it in the past — putting a counsellor into the ILC, where they could work and help the students who are hard-to-reach clientele. They are there. The sooner we can reach them, the more cost-effective it is.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I will just go back to the Aurora Virtual School students. It is a difficult number to really get a handle on because there are a number of students who are also taking courses through BC. They are taking courses online through BC. We will get some additional numbers as we progress through the budget.

With the ILC, we have added one PY — person-year — this year, so we now have four teachers at the ILC. We also have a First Nation advisor who is there. We have also had a recent request that we are considering — to have a native elder-in-residence program at the ILC. We are looking at it and seeing if we can fund that position as well, because many of the students who attend the ILC are First Nation students. We are leaning toward it, but we have to find the money within the budget.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, I am jumping around a little bit and I apologize for not staying in one department. I have heard from a number of schools and a number of teachers that there seems to be more workplace absences due to stress. I am wondering if the minister has data on the number of sick days taken and whether he has noticed any trends? Is there an increasing number of leaves due to stress or mental illness?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, we do have stats for persons on sick leave or absent from the job, but we cannot break it down for you because the privacy concerns would be that we would have to ask each individual why they are absent from the office or from the school on that day. We simply do not compile stats on that basis. What we can give you is if the rate of absenteeism in the school system is higher or lower. We will see if we can get that together. I am not 100-percent sure that we can, but if we can, we will provide that information as well.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, I guess I would be looking for trends. I am not sure what you can read from just absence data — but if there are trends, then what measures can we take to go with it.

I know a number of schools in the past have identified air-quality issues, and the minister mentioned some of the schools that have received heating and ventilation upgrades over the past while. Are there any schools now that are continuing to raise concerns about air quality? Is there a process for staff or parents to alert the department when they have concerns, be it headaches or watery eyes, or when concerns are raised?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, the information that we have at the present time is that only one school has indicated they had concerns with air quality. We're working with Highways and Public Works right now to see if, in fact, there is a problem at the school and, if there is, what we can do to fix the problem.

As part of the health and public safety committees at the school, we work very diligently with school personnel to make sure that any concerns with health or safety are reported immediately to the department. Those things are taken very seriously and we take the opportunity at all times to work as quickly as we can.

I would just bring up the fact that there was recently a fuel spill in the member's community and, as soon as we heard about it, we notified HPW and they had people on the ground working. In the Destruction Bay school, there was fear over fumes permeating the school at one time there, so we moved all the students out to Burwash while we did the repairs in the school and made sure it was clean and safe for their return.

We take it very seriously and we act on them as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr. Tredger: This is an issue I raised in Question Period, but I do need to come back to it. The \$100 that every parent gets to alleviate their supplies — and I realize that the minister has clarified that it's going to school councils. But that impression is still out there from the budget speech — that parents are going to get \$100 in September.

In talking to school councils, they have said that they were unaware that they would be responsible for dispersing the \$100-per-student school supply grants. We're talking about substantial amount of monies to a volunteer council. Some schools will receive \$45,000 to \$70,000 — if there are 450 kids and they each get \$100, that's \$45,000 — to spend.

School councils, I believe, used to have a \$1,000 spending limit without the minister's consent. The school council elections, as we know, are right now, which means there will be a changeover in school councils in September. Which school council will be responsible for distributing the money? The first school council or the second school council, or will they do it collaboratively?

These are the questions that I'm hearing from school councils. How do you plan to oversee the spending of those large sums of money at 27 different institutions by volunteer boards? They are volunteers and they have limited resources. How is the minister going to counter the impression that is out there that parents are going to get \$100 to take down to the local store and spend on their books — or is it going to be up to the school councils to handle that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I thought it was fairly clear in the Finance minister's Budget Address when he said where the money will be going — that it will be going to the schools. There has been no doubt in my mind, as I answered the member opposite when he asked the question. I have been on radio and mentioned the same thing on CBC the other morning. More importantly this was a topic of discussion at the annual association of community — AYSCBC — the

Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees and there was absolutely no doubt then that they would be involved in the disbursement of this money. More importantly, they're involved with the department in setting the parameters over how this money will be spent because we believe that it's important that they let us know what they consider priorities as well.

I have been approached by parents even at the hockey rink where they have said that they think it's a wonderful idea — not so much the money, I think one person said, but the hassle of going with their three kids and picking out three different sets of school equipment for their children. They thought that this would probably be the biggest benefit of all. I was approached on Tuesday night by a single parent who said, "Is this program retroactive because I had three kids last year who I could have used this money for?"

Anyway, we're getting out the word as quickly as we possibly can. We're also working with school councils. There will be memos going home with children and we will continue our public campaign to ensure that everybody understands that parents don't have to go out and buy school supplies this year.

My ADM of Finance has also made it very clear that we expect this money to be well spent and it will be accounted for in the normal run of things. At the end of this process, we'll be able to evaluate the program and determine if this is something that should be carried through year after year, and we'll also be able to evaluate and see if \$100 per student is too much or too little.

It's really important too that people understand why school councils made this recommendation and why we accepted it. It was very interesting to me to hear one parent say, "Well, I'm glad that everybody's getting it because if a needs assessment was done and only certain kids got it, you can see the child accepting a care basket from the school and that child would be stigmatized by the rest of the school because they had to get something that they couldn't afford." So they felt that it was really important that it be universal and that everyone receive the benefit.

I already said that it won't be necessary — or we don't see it as essential — that school councils spend all of this money immediately. This money is available for the full year process. Those schools that are on a semester basis may wish to hold some back and spend it during the second semester. Once we get those parameters set in cooperation with our partners, we will be more adequately prepared to proceed with the program, but I think it's a wonderful program. It's going to be really well-accepted by school councils around the territory and I look forward to an evaluation of the program when it's finished.

Chair: Is it the wish of members to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

We are continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education.

Mr. Tredger: I would like to thank the minister for putting that money in the hands of the school councils. I have no problem with school councils receiving money. They are closest to the students and the classroom situations, and they are in a good place to ensure that the money is well spent. It was a good move. My concern is with the way it was announced and the management of it, but I believe it has the potential to be a very good program and to reach the very people it was intended to reach, so thank you for that.

I do have one question. Will this money be spent locally? Will there be directives given to the councils to spend the money within the territory? I'm sure what the answer will be to that, so I will go on to my next question.

The department had invested in self-regulation over the past number of years to help children cope, handle stress and take control of their lives — calm, alert and learning. It was beneficial for all the students, but was particularly effective for students with autism. This required the training of staff at the department and school-based staff, as well as considerable school time to involve students.

By all reports, it was very successful. However, I was concerned to hear that some schools believe that it is optional and they're moving to other programs.

My question for the minister is: How is the program being supported? What schools are benefiting from it? Can the minister give us an update on the program?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, the self-regulation is a huge part of the early intervention program that I mentioned earlier that we will be working into four schools. For students with social, emotional or behavioural issues, we believe self-regulation is key to these students reaching their personal academic goals. The department is working with the Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative. The budget this school year is \$36,000, and it is being funded from within the department. Eight schools were engaged in the first and second wave of the initiative: Takhini Elementary School, Ghùch Tlà, Teslin School, Hidden Valley School, Ross River School, Johnson Elementary School, Robert Service School and École Whitehorse Elementary School.

As part of the new collective agreement with the YTA, the Department of Education will be working with the YTA through the Positive Behaviour Intervention Support and Classroom Diversity Committee — that is the PBIS that I talked about earlier. Self-regulation is part of the PBIS, but the PBIS system, the positive behaviour intervention supports, will be introduced throughout the territory. Because it is part of the collective agreement, there will be no alternatives. Every school will be involved with PBIS. That is the only way we are going to be able to compile the data that is required. It is the only way that we will live up to our agreement with the YTA. Yes, PBIS, of which self-regulation is a major part, will be introduced to all schools throughout the territory.

It is interesting to me to note that Dr. Stuart Shanker and Mike McKay presented a keynote address to all Department of Education staff on self-regulation practices in schools, and it was really well-received. He also provided in-depth support in February of last year in the area of anxiety and self-regulation to schools involved in the initiative. I think he also provided some information to school counsellors at the same time. We are moving ahead with PBIS, of which self-regulation is a major part.

I have just been informed by my deputy that we now have an internal trainer in the Department of Education, so we are definitely moving ahead as quickly as we can.

Mr. Tredger: Madam, Chair, I thank the minister for his answer and the department for their work on that initiative. I know a number of teachers and parents who, having seen its effectiveness, are looking forward to working with it.

Wilson Reading training involves training teachers and staff at considerable department expense, yet it seems that despite the successes, the department has not adequately funded it and is instead letting it dwindle to the point where it's no longer offered in many of our schools.

Will the minister agree to restore adequate funding to the Wilson reading program to ensure that there is a trainer available and that schools are made aware of this opportunity and given the resources and time to implement Wilson programming?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The Wilson Reading System is only one of the systems that are available in the department at the present time. As everyone knows, we're working to improve literacy rates. That is one of the reasons we started the new intervention system in four pilot schools — because a significant number of children do not demonstrate reading skills or reading success at an early age. It's a complex task, and no single solution seems to work for all students. Our primary reading support system has been Reading Recovery and early literacy intervention as a central aspect to a balanced literacy instructional approach. However, we also realize that Reading Recovery is not the only system that truly works.

In 2014-15, 156 students received Reading Recovery; 26 students will continue their lessons in 2015. Of the 130 children completing lessons in 2014-15, 62 percent made accelerated progress, according to the program parameters; 14 were recommended substantial progress and will be able to benefit from classroom instruction with some extra attention — and it goes down from there.

\$115,000 is allocated for Reading Recovery. Six teachers will be trained to address the needs of students. However, as I said, we also realize that the Wilson Reading System is a good system. The Wilson intervention program suggests that it is effective for addressing the individual needs of some students with clearly identified learning challenges. Therefore, the program, which is typically provided by a trained learning assistance teacher or educational assistant, will continue. The department will be providing training as it expands the number of interventions available to support vulnerable readers with the Wilson system. We realize that the two systems serve different populations, and we will be

reintroducing the Wilson Reading System, providing some training, and will expand the number of interventions available.

Mr. Tredger: Yes, Wilson Reading can be in conjunction with Reading Recovery and, at one point when we were looking at it, the later one goes in terms of teaching reading, the more expensive it becomes because you're reaching children who haven't been reached at an earlier age, so your early childhood intervention is probably the best bang — reaches the most students — for the dollar. Reading Recovery is an excellent and very well-researched program and has served a fabulous — we're very, very fortunate in the Yukon to have Reading Recovery the way it is.

A side benefit to that is teachers who go through the Reading Recovery program and teach Reading Recovery sometimes go back into the classroom and they have a significant training in literacy that helps all of the their students, but Wilson Reading and the Foundations part of it does serve another need. It is expensive, but it's reaching children who are harder to reach and who weren't caught in the first few waves of interventions. But it's critical, because if we don't catch them there, we end up with students in high school — or out of high school which is even worse — who are struggling with their reading.

I thank the department and the minister for keeping Wilson Reading and for putting money into a trainer because it's one of those things that, unless we keep at it, like Reading Recovery — if we don't keep training new people, very shortly we won't have the numbers to keep a program going.

I have a question on Yukon College. The Minister of Education spoke about his government's direction to Yukon College to transition to a university. He noted that this won't be a quick process. The minister said the work has been done on an economic impact study and a business case for the university. Will the minister provide the Legislature or the opposition with any studies that have been completed related to university development — a program and service review; a university transition budget; an economic impact study; and a business case for the university?

I guess a concern that I have heard is, "How will we get the numbers?" When we looked at the YNTEP program, it was initially full and now they went through a period where they struggled to maintain the numbers. I believe it's the same in other courses. There's a pent up demand for a course or a program and, once that demand is through, it's hard to keep the numbers up when we have such a small population. I'm wondering, if we're hiring professors for a particular program and tenuring them, what happens when the demand switches from, say, education to health and social services or to nursing or to any other of the fields? The same applies in the science fields as well, I would assume.

I guess I'm looking for any completed reports as well as a comment on the numbers and if any studies have been done on whether or not the population of Yukon is enough to sustain courses over time.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I just want to make one point first, though, that the government didn't give direction to the

college that they shall become a university. This was a choice made by the Yukon College Board of Governors. The college was the impetus behind this move. The Premier and I actually attended a meeting at the college before the last election and at that time made a commitment that we would work with them to establish a university over the term of our office.

We have been doing that, Madam Chair, but, as I've said numerous times in this House, this is not a fast process. I think the college felt that they would be much further along in the process than we are right now, and part of that evidence, I think, is that, beginning in 2017, the college had already planned to offer a made-in-Yukon three-year bachelor of policy studies in indigenous governance and a one-year post-graduate certificate in climate change public policy and public policy.

I'm not sure — in fact, I don't believe that we will be finished all the processes — including quality assurance and the rest of the process that needs to be done — before a university can be in place, so I believe, in just my talks with the college lately, that they will probably partner with another university to offer, in 2017, the bachelor of policy studies in indigenous governance.

I do have a draft report. It's not the cost-benefit analysis, but it is a report on the need for a university in the north. I'm not sure if this is a draft report or a final report that I received from the college, but I will check. I'm meeting with the college next week and, if this is something that they don't mind making public, I would be only too happy to make it public.

The college has been working since 2010-11 — they have been exploring the development of a post-secondary model. I know they've travelled extensively in the north in an attempt to target, to see what would best suit the needs of Yukoners and the north. As I've said before, there are six phases to become a university in the north. The first of that is that they have to complete a report that outlines options and what would be required to expand degree partnerships in the territory — that has been done.

We have asked for an economic impact study and a business case to be provided to the government. We've committed, once those are received and they show a positive outcome, that we will develop legislation, but the other thing that is exceedingly important is the quality assurance part. We have discussed with Saskatchewan — beginning with Alberta, because we have very close ties to Alberta — so we discussed the possibility of the Alberta quality assurance for universities acting on our behalf as well. We found that this would require a change in legislation, and therefore it would have taken quite a bit of time. With the change in government in Alberta, they have indicated to us that they are still interested and they are looking at possibilities, but we have also gone to Saskatchewan to look at an interim process that would evolve over time and we would enact the appropriate legislation to have an independent body, namely the Saskatchewan body, oversee the quality assurance process for Yukon College.

We haven't set which province we're going to work with yet. We're kind of exploring our options there, but we think

that is probably one of the most important parameters to be met before this government introduces legislation to turn them into a university.

The college is working — and has been, I know, for a number of years — on their own internal quality assurance, but as far back as when I was registrar at the college, we had an academic council that was independent and would evaluate courses. Then, once we evaluated courses, we would evaluate certificates and diploma programs themselves. So the college is fairly advanced in quality assurance for courses for certificates and diplomas. It won't take them much time to work up to being a degree-granting institution, but it's the external evaluation that is so important because, unless our degrees are accepted by universities across this country and internationally, there is no point in establishing a university here at all.

I know our courses are very, very well accepted. During my time as registrar, I was a member of the BC admissions and transfer association. We then became a member of the Alberta admissions and transfer association, and all of the courses offered in our arts and sciences program were accepted by universities across this country — as far away as Western University, McGill and universities in the Atlantic provinces. Individual courses had been accepted on equivalent values in all of those places. We were very proud at the time of courses being offered at the college, and I think that will continue on. It is essential that our degrees are acceptable before we establish this university.

Mr. Tredger: I have one last set of questions for the minister and then I'll turn it over to my colleague for Klondike. I'm sorry to jump back to public schools from Yukon College, but there is an emphasis on more experiential courses and students being out of the school more. A couple of years ago the department developed a field-trip format. What I've noticed about the format is that people who use it all the time — specialists — don't seem to have a lot of trouble with it because they sort of know it and are familiar with it. For a new teacher, or for somebody who doesn't go on field trips regularly, it can be rather daunting. It's a problem mainly because they're not familiar with it.

The problem is that teachers then become reluctant to go on short trips or go out of the class, and trips become a big event rather than integrated into the regular classroom routines. I know the department has purchased new vans for many of the schools, and that is a welcome aspect but I'm wondering: Do we have any stats? Do we have any feedback from teachers on how the new field-trip format is working, whether or not there's a reluctance to go on trips because of it, and stats on the new vans, the use we're getting out of them? Are they used five percent of the time, 20 percent of the time? Are they out on a daily basis? I assume it varies from school to school, but does the minister have stats on that? Has he noticed any trends on either the field-trip forms or the vans?

I thank the minister and his staff for their attention today and appreciate the exchanges that we've had.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Because the safety of our students and staff is always an important issue and it's always at the

top of our list, that's one of the reasons the form was designed in the first place. We're continuing to refine that form because we have heard some discussion with respect to the usefulness of it, so we'll continue to refine the form. We think it's absolutely necessary that we protect, first of all, student safety.

As far as both staff here are aware of today, there has been no decline in field trips. In fact, if anything, there has been an increase, especially among the various experiential programs that are being offered throughout the territory. We make a commitment to continue to refine that form and try to make it simple, without deleting any of its usefulness.

We don't have stats on the usage of the vehicles — the new vans — but, just anecdotally, the department seems to have all of the vans out all of the time, so they must be getting used. We have sign-out sheets, and I guess, if we went through each of them on a manual basis, we would be able to compile something, but I don't think that's something that we want to get into right now. We know they're being well-used, and there has been no decline in the number of field trips.

Mr. Tredger: Does that apply to the schools as well? I know that central signs them out — but rural schools?

Hon. Mr. Graham: There doesn't appear to be any reduction in use in any of the schools that we're aware of at this time.

Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the department officials for their time here today. I would also like to thank the Department of Education for Bill Bennett. That man filled some big shoes as the superintendent for the district that includes Dawson and Robert Service School. Greg Storey is another fantastic part of the educational team. He has done it very well, by all accounts. It is a wonderful time to be involved in education in Dawson with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in drawing on 17.7 as well. It is nice to have great partners like Bill.

I would like to start with questions on the new vision. This year's budget has outlined \$190,000 to be spent on four key areas under the new vision program, and those areas are mental health, career counselling, flexible pathways for secondary students, and early learning. I will start with asking questions on that. How will the money be divided among those four priority areas? Will any of that \$190,000 go to anything outside of those four key areas?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, those are the four key areas that we are working on at the present time. The funding will go toward building capacity in the schools to some extent. We also have the ability to reallocate funding within the budget itself. Even though we have earmarked that money as new funding specifically for this project, we have the ability to work within the school's budget, especially when it comes time for staff training and working with building capacity in the school system. Those are the things that we are working on for the short term.

Mr. Silver: I am to assume that the specific number isn't necessarily divided equally among those four and that they could go to other areas outside of those windows. I am getting a nod from across the way here so I will move on.

A steering committee made up of educational partners and stakeholders, we were told, will be looking across Canada at changes and innovations to curriculum. Quebec was mentioned — Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, which are Canadian leaders in curriculum. Have recommendations by the steering committee been made from these jurisdictions? What changes will be made in terms of partnerships with these particular stakeholders?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I guess maybe I did not clearly understand the question — but on the steering committee, we have laid out certain guiding principles. The guiding principles are: (1) to meet the diverse needs of all learners and foster development of the essential skills and competencies; (2) identify the strengths and needs of each learner without prejudgement or bias; (3) integrate northern perspectives and Yukon contexts at all levels; (4) embed Yukon First Nation culture and world views in the curriculum at all grades; (5) implement the education-relevant recommendations of the truth and reconciliation commission; (6) celebrate Canadian diversity and use culturally relevant approaches, engage students in learning by providing a wide-range of choices, value and support our educators, build the capacity of educators to work with learners and communities and be accountable.

When we looked internally at curriculums across the country, we decided the BC skills and competencies provided us the best bet on an ongoing basis for basic curriculum. As my deputy just reminded me, it will be the most flexible because the BC curriculum already has embedded within their curriculum, the new curriculum coming out — some First Nation values and contexts — and we need that. We just need a Yukon context instead of a BC context.

Those are the things that we will be working on with our partners and that's why we need all of the members of that steering committee. They're so important to us because we need them to integrate the northern perspectives to embed Yukon First Nation cultures. Those are the things that we look to our steering committee for, but we'll still be using a basic BC curriculum and competency with changes to make it more of a Yukon context.

What we don't need to do is work with a straight BC curriculum and have native cultures and contexts from BC taught in our Yukon schools, which just won't work for us. We need these Yukon-developed values and these Yukon-developed strengths and identities.

We will be putting our framework out. I just have a very preliminary draft framework and we will be putting it out for input for next week, so next week we'll provide you with the basic framework with all of these things like guiding principles. It will also outline the goals of each of the individual principles and the indicators to be monitored and actions coming in the short term and long term. Hopefully we will have that next week and we'll be able to discuss it again with our partners and we will be able to release that publicly.

Mr. Silver: Yes, the minister did understand the question right because he answered it exactly. It is based upon concerns that had I guess a year and a half ago, maybe where

we were hearing from the minister about K-to-12 made-in-Yukon curriculum changes and teachers were in stakeholder conversations with BC at that time because there were changes to the BC curriculum and it was a lot more flexible and allowed for that local content piece. When we heard of this new steering committee — that is where these questions are coming from. Then we hear namely that the stakeholders are working, not only with British Columbia, but also with Quebec, Ontario and Alberta as well as BC. We then wonder: Are we going to mimic a particular jurisdiction outside of BC — BC being the obvious choice because that's the curriculum that we have been using?

This is an important question: Have the Yukon-specific curriculum additions already been developed? I guess the answer is that we're going to have a draft on that next week, so I don't have to necessarily ask that question. If the minister wants to comment on that, we do want to know where in the process we are. Maybe the minister can give us a sneak peek or some kind of indication as to where we are, as far as when to expect implementation.

My last question on the new vision would be: Have apprenticeship programs been implemented into the high school curriculum?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I perhaps wasn't really clear about the new vision process. We'll have a draft of the new vision steering committee report to date. Hopefully it will be approved for release next week, but the changes to the curriculum will take place — those are the ones we were talking about that will take place over the next year or two, or possibly even longer, but we really don't think so.

We hope to have an implementation plan in June of this year of where we're going and what the next steps are. We already have action plans in all the various different areas that we're talking about, such as government responsibility and learning environments, so we already have developed a plan in those areas and that's the plan that we will hopefully release next week.

As far as apprenticeships, we do have in this budget \$50,000 of new money for applied skills and trades in schools. The \$50,000 will be in this budget for applied skills and trades.

Madam Chair, before I sit down, I would just like to take a moment to thank a member in the gallery here. Davina Harker rescued me when I was looking for some sustenance this afternoon and my money didn't work in the chocolate bar machine. Davina came up and lent me money for my sustenance, and I just wanted to thank her.

Mr. Silver: The teacher in me is going to have to ask Davina if she brought enough for the whole class, but I'll let that go. Maybe the minister ate all of our chocolate. Sorry, Hansard.

Madam Chair, I'm going to move on and thank the minister for answering the questions on the new vision. I'm going to be all over the place, kind of asking questions after the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, so I apologize in advance for that.

I'm going to move on to busing. I do understand that the new busing contract has been running and there have been fewer issues presented by parents and staff of the schools, but we were also told that the bid did not necessarily go to the top bidder. Can the minister confirm that? Can the minister confirm how the contract was actually awarded, because we were told that it didn't necessarily go to the top bidder?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The initial busing contract went to the low bidder initially. Takhini Transport was the low bidder. They received the initial contract from Yukon government for busing in the territory. When Takhini ran into some difficulties in a number of areas, they finally gave up the contract and we were forced to go to the second-lowest bidder, so the next-lowest bidder then moved in relatively quickly and took over the busing contract and proceeded with providing busing for us for the upcoming few years. We are only doing it for the length of the contract, so the only thing that happened was that the second bidder came in and picked up the contract. It is more expensive because we had to pay the contractor to bring new buses into the territory, which wasn't part of the original deal with them, so we paid them to bring their buses into the territory. I believe that, over the term, the busing contract will be about \$175,000 more for the next year's contract — roughly, in that order of magnitude.

Mr. Silver: I will move on to Aurora Virtual School programming. This was an interesting question that was asked in Dawson. We want to know how many students are partaking in the Aurora Virtual program. We did get an update from minister on the program itself, but also, it's an interesting question. Are we seeing that most of these numbers are registered students who were already outside of the school, or are we seeing an increase in students moving outside of the classroom and then in to the Aurora Virtual program?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We just had a short conversation here and we agree that it's a little bit of both. Some of the increase is in home-schoolers taking courses with Aurora, but in many of the schools, if a specific course that a student is interested in isn't available, they will take that course through Aurora Virtual School, so that has been an increase too. On a course-by-course basis, it's a little bit of both. We're attracting new students, but also students who are currently in the school system are taking one-offs in addition to the courses they're taking at the real school.

Mr. Silver: It's an interesting phenomenon. Talking to teachers and talking to parents who have their kids in home-schooling, a lot of time students are being taken out. There might be a conflict with a particular teacher or you have somebody who has now got time off from — like you say, a lot of teachers have their four years on and take one year off and can actually go home and teach. We're wondering if the schools are giving incentives to try to get students back to the classroom, or is that even something that's being contemplated by the school system? Are we trying to build Aurora as an alternative to education, or is this more of a circumstantial thing? I guess that is the question.

Hon. Mr. Graham: We're not promoting Aurora as something that we're holding up here as an alternative. What

we want to do is promote it in parallel with the school system. If you're taking a program of studies and you need a specific course, then that course would be available to you. I guess we're looking at it from an expense point of view. It's cheaper for us to have all the kids go to school because we're paying for it anyway.

We see this as more of a companion to the regular school program. It's to make more options available to students in the school system.

Mr. Silver: I don't have a theme on this. I've seen certain situations where there is after-school programming or physical education opportunities, and kids being home-schooled want to come into the classroom. They want to come in and visit the kids. I've seen situations where certain schools aren't as — and for good reason. I mean, they're not as likely to be open to that because the funding is going to the parents and they're using our facilities, so it is a catch-22. I just wanted to put that out there. I was just wondering if the minister saw this as a problem, I guess. It definitely is something that the schools are fighting with.

I will move on to the college here for a second, Madam Chair. The education assistant program at the Yukon College — the program funding for this particular program, the education assistant program at Yukon College, has been unchanged at \$50,000, yet the number of education assistants is up significantly. What is the government's plan to train these additional EAs?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We're currently evaluating the college's program and if it's meeting our needs, but we're also, in the department on a parallel course, developing competencies for these positions and determining whether or not the product being turned out by the college meets our needs.

This is probably where the question is coming from, but we have placed the college on notice that we may withdraw our funding from the college and utilize it in a manner we determine to be more effective. We haven't made that decision yet, but we have notified the college that there is the possibility.

Mr. Silver: Can the minister just elaborate a bit on the numbers? We do know that the numbers are up, but can he maybe expand a bit on what the numbers are and how much they've increased?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I probably said this in my response to the budget speech, but I'm not sure anybody was listening.

The overall allocation of paraprofessionals in the school system has increased from 182 in 2014-15 to 223 — and we are talking FTEs — in just one year. In the one year it has gone up by 41. In the year before that, in 2011-12, the number of professionals in the school system was 159. It has gone from 159 to 223 in three years. As I said the other day, it is an additional 60,000 hours of additional support for students.

Madam Chair, some of that is our pilot project in those four schools, and we have dedicated seven FTEs for those four schools for the early intervention project. I'm sorry, it's seven, because it is in four schools but there are seven kindergarten classes. Those seven EAs will move through the

school process with these classes. They are with the kindergarten class this year and they will move into grade 1 with that same group and then into grades 2 and 3 as well. The plan is to keep that same EA with those students as they move through the grades system. We will evaluate it at the end of that period of time and determine if this is something that we really should be doing throughout all schools. The possibility is that EAs could substantially increase at the end of that project if it works as well as we think it will.

Mr. Silver: I have seen lots of success with EAs following students up through the ranks — that is for sure.

I think I am about to ask a question that has been already asked. Unlike the Clerk, I may not have been paying attention at that time.

This is about the funding for the school supplies. There is lots of talk in the communities about the funding. I will ask the questions, and if the minister has already answered the questions, then I will definitely check Hansard for those answers. It is not a big deal.

The promised \$100 per school-aged child for school supplies will be allotted to the school councils, as we know, and the school boards. Are there regulations or limits for what this money can be spent on? I believe that was answered. Has there been a baseline of supplies set per child? How will the government keep councils or boards accountable for the money? Are we expecting any unused money to be coming back to the department?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I probably said before, we are working out the parameters right now. The department will have, in the next few weeks, a list of required supplies for elementary schools, intermediate schools and high schools. Those are the things that we say will have to be included in whatever package goes to each individual student.

We then see a higher level — that these are optional items. As long as they go to every student, those optional items could be included in the package. Then we see a third tier, and these are things that — if the money was not all spent on the others, then we want to be able to have some other options that are available to school councils to spend that money on that would benefit the students and provide supplies to those students.

One of the reasons that the \$100-limit was set was because we had a variety of different opinions of how much money would be needed. We think that the \$100 will cover everything that a student needs on the bottom tier and probably even the optional items. We can see some school councils getting innovative and using the money for something else. They have the ability at the present time to keep surpluses and they can use that money for student support, but the department will be doing a real evaluation once this first year is over.

I think the other important thing that we've already determined with school councils is that the money doesn't all have to be spent in September. If they want to buy a basic set of school supplies for their students and not spend all their money, that's perfectly okay too as long as they have a plan to spend the rest of it during the school year. As I said, they have

the ability to keep surpluses as long as they use that money for student support.

Some school councils that have kept their regular funding for a number of years are now coming back and I know I have to sign the letter that says, yes, it's okay for you to use that funding for a special event. We have had just two, I believe, in the last few months. Some of the school councils that have been frugal over the years have come up with some really innovative ways to spend their money and that's fine with us.

We think school councils — as I've said before, they were the ones that asked for this in the first place. They didn't set a number, but they asked for this. We think that they'll do a really good job of using this money in the best interests of their school and of the students.

Mr. Silver: Thanks to the minister for that answer. I know the minister is working out the details now, which is great. It would be nice to know what those three tiers are, because I know the schools can spend it. I know that they can be very creative in determining what meets the first threshold, the second and the third. I watch as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other First Nations partner in education and share a lot as well. It is kind of an Athapaskan way — things like first hunt and first fish. It would be great to see that some of that money can go toward even shared initiatives in education as well. I'm looking forward to seeing how that money is going to get spent.

I just have one more question — well, a series of questions on the school revitalization plan. I would like to thank the officials for their time here today. It is much appreciated.

This year's budget includes \$100,000 for a school revitalization program. The Auditor General, in a report on schools, required a program like this years ago. There are eight schools that have passed their useful life and have been identified as needing an upgrade to ensure life safety in the event of seismic events. The question — we are interested in the \$100,000. What is that \$100,000 going toward? Also, where is the plan to replace or upgrade these schools and also, when do we expect this plan to be rolled out?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, the \$100,000 in 2016-17 will see us do a lifecycle costing exercise for both Christ the King Elementary and Selkirk Elementary School. The department and Highways and Public Works are working cooperatively on the school revitalization plan. I do have a preliminary draft copy of that school revitalization plan. In there, we talk about a huge number of options for virtually every school in the territory and what we would like to see happen 10, 20 — I think it went out to as far as 2030, so it goes out a long ways.

As I said, this is a preliminary draft. We have to make some choices and then we will have some kind of a revitalization plan that we can release. Some of the recommendations in this plan are significant. What we're trying to do, as I said before, is decide what we need to do with French immersion. French immersion elementary school has outgrown Whitehorse Elementary, so do we now, as we did last year, start French immersion not only in Selkirk, but

perhaps the Porter Creek elementary school, or somewhere else that has space? Or do we build a new school at Whitehorse Elementary and dedicate it strictly to French immersion?

We haven't made those decisions, but those are the kinds of things that are discussed. Christ the King Elementary School in downtown Whitehorse is currently being used for experiential programs as well as MAD. I still think of it as Christ the King Elementary School — it's now called the Wood Street school. It's being used for those — does that age me, or what? Those are the kinds of decisions we have to make, because Wood Street has significant seismic issues. We've addressed the urgent ones, but should we keep it or should we tear it down and put a school somewhere else, because that space is pretty small?

Those are the kinds of decisions. I know in Burwash, the First Nation there has asked for a school in their community, and we have several different alternatives. They've said they would like to partner with us and the possibility is they could even give us the land. So are we going to work — we are working with them, of course, but are we going to do that and, at the same time, build a community centre on one side of that school? I'm just talking now of the things that I remember from the draft report, but those are the alternatives we're looking at.

So over the next little while, some of those will be whittled down to smaller chunks. We'll have to talk it over with school councils before we release it publicly, but I'll have to talk with the Minister of HPW. If you want a confidential look at it, just to see where we are, I don't have a problem with that either. It's interesting reading, all right, and the number of options that are available to us — all expensive, by the way — are phenomenal.

Mr. Silver: Just a clarifier — but before the clarifier — the minister describes buildings like my father gives directions — “turn left where the church burned down 20 years ago.”

Just a clarification, the \$100,000 — the minister specifically mentioned Christ the King and Selkirk. Just to clarify, that money specifically is going just to those two schools for now. He is nodding yes, in approval. Thank you to the minister and thank you to his representatives from the department.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

We're going to move on then to line-by-line debate.

On Education Support Services

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Hon. Mr. Graham: If I can just run through a quick synopsis of changes here. The \$374,000 is personnel allotment. This is the deputy minister's office and support functions. The salary and benefits are for two FTEs and the deputy minister, and the other allotment is \$27,000 to cover such things as communications costs, travel to national meetings, advertising and printing.

Administration in the amount of \$374,000 agreed to
On Corporate Services

Hon. Mr. Graham: This line provides for corporate support to the department and schools in the areas of human resources, records, finance, environmental, policy and planning, and evaluation and communications. The salary and benefits are for 32.2 FTEs and they are distributed throughout Human Resources, finance, records, policy department, health and safety, environmental stewardship, and communications. The other allotments — so that's \$3.309 million — are for personnel, and the other allotment is \$400,000 — \$120,000 for advertising, and that includes: Education Week as well as miscellaneous advertising; \$75,000 for the waste diversion program in the schools; \$60,000 for departmental supplies; \$60,000 for travel and communication costs; \$50,000 for corporate initiatives; and \$35,000 for staff training, printing and other miscellaneous items.

Mr. Tredger: Can the minister tell us how many PYs are allocated to communications?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Three.

Corporate Services in the amount of \$3,709,000 agreed to

On School Support Services

Mr. Tredger: Is this where superintendents would be paid from?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Tredger: I get a no. Thank you.

School Support Services in the amount of \$4,139,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,222,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Information and Technology Equipment and Systems

Information and Technology Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$39,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Education Support Services Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$39,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,261,000 agreed to

On Public Schools

Mr. Tredger: One of the things is that a deputy minister travelled to every school this year, and that is commendable. However, for a long time, we were hoping that superintendents would be able to spend more time in the schools and serve as a window from the schools into the department and from the department into the schools.

I know there has been some talk about reasserting some of their prominence both in the school communities as well as in the department and giving them a bit more authority to act on what they see in the schools. This is sort of two-pronged for the minister.

Has there been any consideration to changing the role of a superintendent or to increasing the number of superintendents so that they do have the time to get to the schools on a regular basis so they are aware of what's going on into the schools and so they can be advocates for the schools as well as

increasing their authority within the department so that when they do have information or things in the school — projects that they think are acceptable — they then have the authority to bring them forward? I guess that is one of the things that the administrators were asking for and continue to ask for.

I know how hard it is, once you're in a department or in a position, to get away from your desk. That's why the deputy minister's role is so commendable — because I'm sure she left things undone. I shouldn't say it like that — I'm sure there were things she would rather not have been doing. A slip of the tongue there — I'm sure everything got done while on the road.

I think the minister understands what I'm trying to say. Has there been an attempt to reassign superintendent time and give them a little more authority?

Hon. Mr. Graham: What has happened in the department is that we have added one superintendent — a rural superintendent — so that we now have a smaller, slightly reduced, number of schools for each superintendent, but also we have a really client-focused attitude in the department. So not only do we expect the superintendents to get out to the schools, but when we talk about Student Support Services and other separate sections within our department, we expect those people to be in the schools as much as humanly possible.

It's actually working. I think we have seen more of our department staff in schools around the territory in the last six months than we have for a long time. I think that's partially due to the change in leadership. The deputy minister agrees that service to the schools is the single most important thing that we can do as a department.

Just to give an idea, every Monday morning, I meet with senior management staff at the Department of Education. I think there are eight or nine of us there. The assistant deputy minister who is in charge of superintendents is there, and he communicates very clearly on a weekly basis what the concerns in each school are and what the concerns of the superintendents in those schools are. So I hear it in addition to the rest of senior management every Monday morning. I think it's a really valuable experience for me and it's valuable for the other people who are working in the building to hear what's going on in the communities as well.

My opinion is, anyway, that we have a very solid senior staff in the Department of Education. We have a common goal, which is that it's all about the kids, and you don't accomplish that sitting in your office in the department. You have to get out there where the kids are, and that's the schools.

Ms. White: The Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon — the francophone school board — hosted a meeting recently, explaining their position and what they hope for. Can the minister tell us more about the ongoing process with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and kind of what this budget amount is for and what his thoughts and aspirations are for the francophone school?

Hon. Mr. Graham: One of the first things we did after the recent court decisions were handed down is negotiate with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon a budget. We set into play a formula that meets the outline — or meets the

needs — to address the issues raised during the court case, including the annual operation and maintenance costs of a school board. It takes into account the specific needs from section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. We believe there is a top-up for cultural inclusion, so we negotiated that agreement.

I think the funding formula has worked well for the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. The funding formula is a hybrid model. Certain expenses are retained under the responsibility of the department. The teachers remain members of the YTA and employees of the department. I don't know what else I can say about that. There is a francophone funding component. There is funding from Canadian Heritage and it is all based on the action plan that was given to us by CSFY.

There were a number of other issues that were brought up during the whole court case, and the committee that we established is working very hard to examine the other areas: construction of a French first language school has been in the news lately and we are working on that; the clarification of admission policies and responsibilities of non-rights holders, and we are working on that as well at the present time; and the clarification of policies and procedures for French first language distance education. The reason we are working on that is because there was a court case in place and, with the cooperation of all members of this Legislature, we passed that legislation last year that ensured that there was no doubt that the French school board is in charge of French distance education.

Some of the things have been resolved. We also have a number of other areas that probably aren't as high a priority, but that we're working on as well, and that's management of staff, an education policy framework, and the forecast of growth of École Émilie Tremblay. As probably everyone is aware, we're moving another portable in there in the interim until a French first language high school is built, so we need to expand slightly. The other issue that came to us was the French school board's participation in collective bargaining and how that can be worked out. We also talk about the management of the building and the property, including, as we discussed earlier, things like custodians.

Those are all issues we're working on at the present time. I have to tell you that my staff believe that negotiations are going very well. We expect to see an agreement in place fairly quickly, as far as non-rights holders' admission to the schools and a number of other areas. Hopefully those things will all be settled in the near future.

Ms. White: I'm going to leave this question on the paper right now. What I really wanted to know was partially how the planning for the new francophone high school was going and what kind of timelines we talk to and, most importantly, their relationship with the City of Whitehorse, because that had been flagged as a concern. As for the location, what kind of consultation is going on there?

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. White 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. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, 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: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.