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HANSARD

Monday, November 25, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 Fall Sitting

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Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 25, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper.
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Can we please all welcome several guests who are here today for a tribute: Aja Mason from the Yukon's Status of Women Council; Emily Dory, executive director of Les EssentiElles; Jess Stone and Emily Kozknowsky from the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre; Chris Dixon from Engineers Yukon; Barb McInerney, executive director from the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society; and Ketsia Houde McLennan from the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming to the House Brooke McKenzie and Jenn Bugg, who I believe are here for the Child Development Centre tribute.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Child Development Centre 40th anniversary

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise in the House today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Child Development Centre on a very significant milestone — its 40th anniversary. Since 1979, when it hosted a telethon to raise funds to support its efforts and it operated out of a portable at Selkirk Street Elementary School, the centre has been providing therapeutic services and supporting the developmental needs of Yukon children from birth to kindergarten. The staff is highly qualified and caring, and the board members are there for all the right reasons — to support children and families in achieving their aspirations. Their motto is “Together we can reach the stars.” They have been doing just that for four decades.

The Child Development Centre not only makes miracles happen for the children whom it serves, but it also offers parents support — providing them with a safe place for themselves and their children. The Child Development Centre is a place where children are valued for who they are and their abilities are celebrated. In this space, mentorship is embraced. Children who do not have special needs work and play together with their peers in the classroom. By bringing children together, the

Child Development Centre is creating an environment of acceptance and understanding for all Yukon children and their parents that carried on into the future.

Expansion to rural Yukon communities and regular visits will ensure that children who need their services receive them, no matter where they live. This work will be supported even more by the territory's paediatricians, who will be visiting all Yukon communities on a regular basis.

The Child Development Centre had a very successful 40th celebration on November 23 at the Canada Games Centre. It was a free event with lots of fun activities and delicious cake for the young children and families to enjoy. Friends old and new were on hand to celebrate.

In closing, we are indeed very fortunate to have the Child Development Centre here to support Yukon families and children. Through stories from parents, we know that the services outside Yukon tell us how fortunate we are to have the Child Development Centre and how lucky our children are to have those who support them. We wish them another 40 successful years.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Child Development Centre, or CDC, as they celebrate their 40th year.

The number of children and families who have been supported by the CDC since its establishment in 1979 is remarkable. It is amazing to think that the CDC has gone from providing service to 10 children in the early days to over 1,080 last year. Those children who first received services are now likely adults in their early 40s — some with children of their own, which means the CDC could officially be supporting its second generation of Yukoners.

The CDC provides support and therapeutic services for children from birth to kindergarten. As noted in their annual report, the number of children who are referred for services continues to grow. The organization knows that each family is unique, and it works on their strengths and supports them in making informed decisions for their children. From speech language services to cross-cultural awareness, the programs offered are wide-ranging and inclusive. They allow the children to play, discover, and question.

Wait-lists range from one day to eight months. Staff mitigate the impacts of wait-lists by checking in with parents to see how things are going. The centre operates on a school year schedule, opening in late August and closing in late June. Facilitators also travel extensively throughout Yukon. One can check their outreach schedule online to see when they will be in your community.

One unique initiative that I want to mention is “adopt a room”. CDC is always looking for sponsors. This is a commitment of three years and a \$400 annual donation which will provide for toys and equipment for one of their playrooms. Your company's name or your name could be on a playroom for a small annual donation, so perhaps check this out. The 40th birthday party at the Canada Games Centre this past weekend

was a success — face painting, cakes, games, and fun. What child doesn't like birthday parties?

Congratulations to the board of directors of the CDC and to all the incredible staff. As a non-profit organization, I know that the work of fundraising initiatives and new projects are always at the forefront. The work you do is immeasurable and the community thanks you.

I leave you with a quote — no author: "Children are great imitators. So give them something great to imitate."

Applause

Ms. Hanson: The Yukon New Democratic Party is pleased to join in paying tribute to the 40th anniversary of the Child Development Centre. When you reflect on the amazing array of services that have evolved in Yukon over the past 40 or so years, the Child Development Centre is a good example of what happens when you have a small group of people who — often because they or a loved one face a serious need, one unmet by any government agency or other organization — decide to do something about it.

Forty years ago, a small group of people realized that, for families with children who had complex challenges, medical challenges, and medical needs, there were few resources available to assist with both identifying the issues at play and — equally important — how to provide the range of therapeutic services to provide the best outcomes possible for each child.

The focus on the needs of each child is a vital element of the Child Development Centre's approach because the key to optimal outcomes is early intervention, including their multi-disciplinary approach which can include physiotherapy, speech pathology, occupational therapy, and others — all benefiting the child in both the short and long term.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of serving on a CDC board quite a few years ago. It wasn't as small then as it was in 1979, but the full range of services and communities being served had not yet been developed. The centre's services were largely confined to Whitehorse, given the constraints of funding and staff. What was clear then and what has obviously driven the continued evolution of the Child Development Centre is the commitment of all those involved with the CDC to developing consistent, coordinated, and community-based services to children and their families. The number of partners that the CDC now works with is really quite phenomenal.

Mr. Speaker, although the Child Development Centre has grown significantly in 40 years, their values remain the same, with a focus on family, early intervention, culturally safe service, and inclusion. Providing the range of services necessary to assist Yukon children to realize their full potential is resource-intensive. As a not-for-profit society, the Child Development Centre has had to and continues to seek funding from any and all sources.

Forty years on and with the evidence before us of the benefits of early, sustained therapeutic intervention, perhaps it is time for us in this Assembly to look at the funding model for these essential services. If, as the CDC annual report indicates, certain therapeutic services were unable to be provided in a consistent manner or had to be delayed, should the consequence

be that some children will have to wait almost a year before receiving ongoing services with a therapist? Clearly, this is not ideal, given what we have learned over the last 40 years about early intervention.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Child Development Centre, let us also face the fact that, through the efforts of the many professionals and volunteers who have worked to make the Child Development Centre what it is today — an integral part of the lives of so many Yukon children and their families — the reality is that it is 2019, and government does have a serious obligation and a role to play in working with the Child Development Centre to fund the essential services provided by the Child Development Centre to decrease the wait-list for therapy services that cannot and should not be delayed.

In closing, I want to paraphrase a quote from the parents of one child who received services from the Child Development Centre — parents whose involvement with the Child Development Centre was not something that they had in mind when they anticipated the birth of their child, a child born prematurely with a number of serious complications. They said — and I quote: We have been so fortunate to be able to access the remarkable and reputable resources through the CDC. The CDC has connected us with programs designed for children and parents to encourage language development. Our relationship with the CDC is invaluable, and we accredit our child's progress to the services and resources they provide.

The mom said — and I quote: I have often shared that our son is with us today because of love and science, and the CDC therapists who work with him have ample of both. We look forward to the continued work and success of the Child Development Centre.

Applause

In recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to pay tribute today to all people who strive to end gender-based violence. Every year, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence launches on November 25, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and concludes on December 10, Human Rights Day. These 16 days are an opportunity to raise awareness and educate ourselves on the violence that women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ folk experience everyday.

We are no strangers to violence in the Yukon, Mr. Speaker. Many Yukoners have been intimately involved with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We know that there are now 42 confirmed cases of indigenous women who have gone missing or been murdered in the Yukon. We know the impacts on our homes, our families, and our communities.

The Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate has worked closely with colleagues on the Yukon advisory committee during the inquiry to support families and to discuss priorities after the release of the final report. The Yukon advisory committee includes representatives from families,

indigenous women's organizations, and First Nation governments. The women on this committee are leaders and experts in their field. They are supporting their communities in times of crisis, leading conversations around ending violence and advocating publicly about the need for change. The national inquiry was created as a result of the advocacy of these women and many others across the country.

From the report of the national inquiry, Yukoners are becoming more actively aware of the violence happening day to day to indigenous women. We need to continue to provide opportunities for all Yukoners to learn the truth about what has happened and what continues to happen to indigenous women in this country. We commit to working with partners, stakeholders, all levels of government, and in communities to develop a whole-of-Yukon strategy on MMIWG2S+. Together, we can and must change the story for indigenous women and girls. We need to do this work in collaboration with men, women, and non-binary and trans people in the Yukon on the front line who are organizing marches, setting up websites, and holding community events. This year's theme for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is about moving from awareness to accountability.

In the Yukon, the campaign will aim to start conversations at the individual and community level about how to apply the calls for justice in Yukon communities. The campaign will also be recognizing the organizations that are champions of this work already: Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Les EssentiElles, the Yukon Status of Women Council, Yukon College, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Women of Wisdom drummers, the Yukon Human Rights Commission, the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon, Yukon Women's Transition Home Society, and Engineers Yukon. These organizations have been leading the work to support victims for years and to work to end violence.

We must remember that ending gender-based violence is not a women's issue. The role of men in ending violence is critically important. Campaigns such as White Ribbon and the Moosehide campaign call on men to address gender-based violence. I would like to invite all my male colleagues and all Yukon men to take a stand on gender-based violence. Get involved. Support an organization leading this work. I would also like to invite all Yukoners to attend the upcoming events that are part of this year's campaign.

On December 6, community organizations will hold a vigil for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. here at the Legislative Assembly.

I would like to conclude by raising my hands up to all those who are leading this work — those who are standing up in support of the people who they know who are experiencing gender-based violence and those who are helping to build a future without gender-based violence.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, which calls for the

elimination of all forms of gender-based violence. This year's campaign takes place between November 25 and December 10. This is the reason we wear the White Ribbon today in a pledge of commitment to stand together against gender-based violence and to position ourselves against all forms of discrimination, harassment, and violence. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of gender-based violence at the local, regional, and global levels, as it is a widespread and worldwide problem.

The 16 days of activism serve as a global platform for individuals to share real stories in the effort to inspire change, solidarity, action, and a commitment to act on it. #OurActionsMatter has been the theme for the 16 days of activism since 2017 and calls on all individuals to think about what they would do if they were to witness or be in a situation of gender-based violence.

There are a number of significant dates that fall within the 16 days of activism campaign. It begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ends on World Human Rights Day. In between those two important dates, we acknowledge, among others, World Aids Day and the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women in Canada, which marks the anniversary of the Montréal massacre.

The end to gender-based violence starts with all of us on an individual and local level. As a society, we have seen violence, harassment, and discrimination for generations. When we consider the lives we want for our children and our grandchildren, it only makes sense to start making things right ourselves and, next, to ensure we pass on a healthy set of beliefs and non-discriminatory teachings to our children. They deserve to live in a world free of violence and free of fear.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus in recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. We honour and amplify the voices of survivors and the grassroots organizations that support them.

This campaign has always been a time to bring to the forefront the disproportionate levels of sexualized violence faced by women and girls as well as our diverse populations, including indigenous peoples, people of colour, LGBTQ2S+ community members, gender-non-binary individuals, those living in northern, rural, and remote communities, people with disabilities, newcomers, children, youth, and seniors.

The roots of gender-based violence continue to be all around us, in sexist jokes that degrade women and the language that we use to other or isolate, in the media messaging that objectifies women, and in the rigid gender norms that we impose on young children. In these tributes, we often talk about the number of women who have been harassed, assaulted, or raped, but we don't seem to talk about how many men harassed, assaulted, or raped women. We talk about the gender-based violence faced by young women but don't talk about the young men whose actions are to blame.

Violence against women doesn't happen in isolation of others; this violence happens at the hands of intimate partners, acquaintances, and strangers. By not addressing both sides of

every story, we absolve men of all responsibility for their actions. After the #MeToo movement, issues of sexism, misogyny, and gender-based violence have been dragged out into the open and are being discussed very publicly. These conversations are incredibly important. Canadians led by the courageous voices of survivors and their families have continually been challenged to reflect on their own actions and determine how they could best support ending gender-based violence.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard about this year's campaign, and it continues to build on the momentum brought forward by the #MeToo movement. Our actions do matter, and it's a call to action that again asks everyone to take real steps to question, call out, and speak up against acts of gender-based violence — to listen to the experience of others, to believe survivors, to speak out against violence, to intervene safely when you see gender-based violence, and to act by volunteering your time to an organization that supports those who have faced gender-based violence.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a role to play in ending gender-based violence.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to hire an educational ASL interpreter to provide interpretive supports to Yukon students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release the plan for the youth panel on climate change as announced in the throne speech of the 2019 Fall Sitting, including information about:

(1) the age group included in the definition of “youth” for the purpose of a youth panel on climate change;

(2) the budget to be spent on the creation and continuation of the youth panel on climate change;

(3) the criteria for selection on the youth panel on climate change as it concerns proportionate representation of the youth across Yukon;

(4) the application process for the youth panel on climate change, including when Yukon youth can expect a call for application;

(5) the timeline for the creation of the youth panel on climate change; and

(6) the terms of reference on the purpose of the youth panel on climate change, specifying how the goings-on of the Youth Panel on Climate Change will be incorporated into government decision-making.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release the plan for the group home at 22 Wann Road as mentioned again in the 2019 fall throne speech, including information about:

(1) the process by which those in need of the services offered by Yukon group homes will be selected to reside at 22 Wann Road;

(2) the timeline to a full-time operational plan being in place at the 22 Wann Road group home;

(3) terms of reference on the services to be offered at the 22 Wann Road group home;

(4) the cumulative cost of purchase, renovation, and program development for 22 Wann Road; and

(5) the forecasted costs of 22 Wann Road becoming operational.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Community nursing shortage

Mr. Hassard: We have discussed many times how the Minister of Health and Social Services' lack of leadership has contributed to the nursing shortages in our communities.

On August 29, the minister wrote to the Official Opposition, indicating that four of the nine positions at the community hospitals were vacant, but that the government had undertaken — and I quote: “Aggressive staffing efforts...” and that all nursing shifts would be filled starting in September. Well, today is November 25 — three months since the minister told us that those positions would be filled — and according to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's website, those four positions are still vacant.

Can the minister tell us one action that she has taken since August to end this nursing shortage?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Hospital Corporation was here just on Thursday in fact and they spoke about the capacity at the hospital — their responsibility, which is separate from that of Health and Social Services. We in fact work in collaboration with them and support them where necessary. The responsibilities for the nursing workforce and recruitment of health care professionals very much speak to the pressures across the north, but also very much speak to the responsibilities of the Hospital Corporation to fill the vacancies.

So, we do our part, and that is to ensure that we look at the challenges. What we have done most recently — in the last couple of years — is to start with the hospital to look at nursing pressures across the north, across the government, with our health care sectors like the hospitals to ensure that we take a collaborative approach when we have recruitment and retention strategies across the country. That means that we look at challenges, but we don't try to solve them alone and in silos.

We work together, and we address the level of continuity of services across the Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: The minister's letter from August 29 about the Watson Lake hospital stated — I quote again: "Aggressive staffing efforts were undertaken and have been successful in filling the vacant shifts for the remainder of August and September." That is from August 29. However, the Official Opposition has obtained internal correspondence from senior Hospital Corporation officials indicating that the minister's statement was not true.

An August 28 e-mail shows that the corporation was still unable to fill shifts at the hospital for the following week. In fact, an e-mail from the afternoon of August 29 — the very same day that the minister sent her letter claiming that all vacant shifts at the Watson Lake hospital had been filled for August and September — shows that they were still trying to fill shifts at the hospital for early September.

So, Mr. Speaker, why did the minister not tell the truth in her August 29 letter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that the government is, within its means, providing the supports necessary to the Hospital Corporation.

Now the Watson Lake hospital, on November 5, utilizes 8.9 full-time employees to fulfill the nursing schedule in order to maintain a full staffing complement. Staffing meets the clinical needs at the hospital. The current state of staffing at the Watson Lake hospital is stable until January 25, 2020, with no immediate need to trigger a contingency plan. That is the relationship with the Hospital Corporation. Nursing schedules are done three months in advance and the Hospital Corporation books necessary agency nurses and makes additional arrangements as necessary to fill the shifts.

Just a few days ago, the Hospital Corporation chief executive officer spoke and indicated that Yukon hospitals use a number of strategies to maintain operations and appropriate staffing levels, including the use of fly-in nurses or agency nurses. They have also looked at utilizing our resources on a limited basis where we see difficulties in specialized areas, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, the department is working with the Hospital Corporation to ensure that we have consistent recruitment and retention strategies across the government.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, this speaks to the lack of credibility and leadership from this minister. An August 30 e-mail — one day after the minister claimed all August and September shifts at the Watson Lake hospital had been filled — shows that the corporation was still scrambling to fill those shifts. A September 6 e-mail suggests the same, yet the minister claimed on August 29 that all shifts at the end of August had been filled for the end of August and September.

The entire correspondence we have received shows the story of hard-working officials at the Hospital Corporation trying to do their best with the resources that the Liberals are giving them. This shouldn't be the way. The minister should be stepping up to give the hospital the resources it needs so that it isn't scrambling at the last minute to fill shifts. The e-mail states that the hospital requires nine full-time nurses to run properly. We know that four are still vacant.

What is the minister's plan to fill these positions?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Yukon Hospital Corporation hired two advanced care paramedics and we are working on a joint recruitment strategy with the Hospital Corporation and Health and Social Services. The Hospital Corporation, as indicated a few days ago, are booking agency staff. They are providing supports if there are shortfalls.

Recognizing that the process in terms of structure goes out three months to ensure consistency — that's not just at the Watson Lake hospital, Mr. Speaker. We have health care centres as well in these communities.

We collaborate together to ensure efficiency of services. We are not responsible for staffing at the Watson Lake hospital, but we do rely on the information provided by the Hospital Corporation and we will endeavour to support them as much as we possibly can — more so than the previous government; we have given them more resources in the last few years than they have seen historically. We've worked with them; we have a better relationship with them in terms of resolving and finding solutions for specialist care, collaborative care, bringing health and social supports, and ensuring that we provide support for healthy Yukoners in our rural Yukon communities, which we have not seen historically. I'm very proud of that.

Question re: Health care specialist wait times

Ms. McLeod: The Official Opposition has obtained documents showing that the government is significantly missing its own benchmarks for wait times for specialists in our health care system.

The documents show that the government's benchmark for neurology wait times is six months; however, according to the documentation, in the first quarter of this year, there were 435 Yukoners who had been waiting 28 months.

On Thursday, in response to questions about these wait times, the Hospital Corporation said that they were bursting at the seams when it comes to visiting specialists.

Are the Liberals going to provide the Hospital Corporation with more resources to reduce these wait times so that the government can actually hit its own benchmarks?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to benchmarks, I would say that we've exceeded the benchmark; we provided orthopaedic surgeons. We've now provided to Yukoners further supports for paediatricians. We have reduced the wait times at the hospital for orthopaedic surgeries. We've reduced the wait-lists in fact on quite a lot of services and the wait times for specialist services. We've seen significant improvements in cataract assessments, for an example, and surgeries.

We will continue to hit the target. We will exceed that target. I'm very proud of the collaborative work with the Hospital Corporation, the Yukon Medical Association, and Health and Social Services.

Ms. McLeod: The Hospital Corporation confirmed on November 21 that there is an outstanding financial decision to be made by the Liberal government and it's about giving increases to their core funding and to support orthopaedic surgery. They stated that this decision is required in order for

the corporation to have a balanced budget. Meanwhile, we see the hospital unable to meet its benchmarks for wait times.

Looking at cardiology, Mr. Speaker, the benchmark is a wait time of two months. Sixty Yukoners have been waiting for 16 months, which raises the question: Why are the Liberals sitting on this financial decision about the Hospital Corporation's core funding, and how long have they been sitting on that decision?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That is a very interesting question. The budget for the Hospital Corporation — the work that we are doing right now with the Hospital Corporation — I would say that it is still pending. We are continuing to work with the Hospital Corporation to ensure that we meet its demands and its pressures, recognizing that we have all of Health and Social Services and we have specialized services. We have done significant work, and that means that we have reduced wait times for specialist services. Of course, we will work with the Hospital Corporation, and we will continue the good work with them to identify some recent trends that we are seeing there and that they would clearly have an insight on — those are the pressures at the Whitehorse emergency unit and where we are seeing pressures. As well, we are looking at reductions in cataract surgery wait times. We have a target of, by December 2020, a four-month wait time reduced down from what the previous government was seeing — almost two years. We are doing good work and we will continue to do that. We will ensure that the Hospital Corporation has the resources that it needs to meet its target, recognizing that we have to put in some contingencies to ensure that we meet all of the demands and all of the pressures that are put on Health and Social Services.

Ms. McLeod: Officials from the corporation were here only four days ago to tell us that there is a pending decision from government about core funding. In the document that the Official Opposition obtained showing how the hospital is not able to meet its wait-time benchmarks, we see that they are tracking 15 specialities and that they are missing the benchmarks on 14 of them.

Will the minister commit to provide the hospital with the resources necessary to reduce these wait times?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is saying that there are some budgetary conversations that are somehow slowing down a process here. That is absolutely not the case, Mr. Speaker. The conversations that we are having now in November are conversations that the previous government would have waited to have in January. We have set our dates for the Legislative Assembly in the fall earlier than normal so that we can make sure that the budgeting process takes in more consideration and more dialogue, whether it be from the departments themselves or from the corporations on which we serve.

The member opposite can say that they have obtained some secretive documents saying otherwise, but basically, Mr. Speaker, what you see here is a government that has decided that the budgetary process is so important that it needs to be done sooner, not later. We've totally revamped the way in which we have done these considerations compared to the way that the Yukon Party used to do it.

Question re: Government of Yukon auxiliary-on-call employees

Ms. Hanson: On October 28, 2019, a motion for the production of papers was put forward to find out how many auxiliary-on-call staff are currently working for the Yukon government. Because of the nature of auxiliary-on-call work, it is important to know how many of the Yukon government's workers are currently working without employee benefits, such as dental care, long-term disability insurance, and a public service pension plan. As of today, almost a full month later, the minister has still not provided the information requested.

Can the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission tell this House how many auxiliary-on-call staff are currently employed by the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to talk about auxiliary-on-call employees this afternoon on the floor of the House. I thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for her question this afternoon.

Auxiliary-on-call employees are an important and valued segment of our Yukon government workforce. They help us fulfill our public service obligations when departments determine that there isn't operational justification for regular hire. They are called into work as and when required to replace other employees who are sick or on other leave and to provide coverage for peak periods and special projects.

Auxiliary-on-call employees are members of the Yukon Employees' Union, and their terms and conditions of employment are covered in that collective agreement. We jointly monitor or use these employees with the union.

Ms. Hanson: We can appreciate that providing a written answer to questions can sometimes be complicated for this minister. However, it is astounding that this government and the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission cannot give us a timely answer to the simple question of the number of staff currently working in an auxiliary-on-call capacity. Without solid numbers, we cannot be sure of the number of positions designated as AOC, casual, or term. However, anecdotally, it appears that the Yukon government's reliance on these positions is on the rise, and while some Yukoners may enjoy the flexibility of these positions, most accept them because they have no other choice. Stories of Yukoners being in AOC positions for several years are not uncommon, and that precarious employment makes life difficult.

Does the minister realize that, by relying on auxiliary-on-call, casual, and term employees, his government is contributing to an increasingly precariously employed Yukon workforce?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I did give some context for the auxiliary-on-call employees in my last answer. I will note for the member opposite, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, that since coming to office, we have actually delivered on about 231 legislative returns to this House. I do have the notice for presentation of papers. We are looking at and compiling those numbers, Mr. Speaker. When we have those numbers, we will do as we have done — as this government — and provide a succinct answer to the House.

Ms. Hanson: We look forward to succinct answers. However, in abstract terms, precarious employment means that you fill a permanent job but you are denied permanent employee rights. However, this type of employment has other real-world impacts. Being an AOC, term, or casual employee can make it more difficult to get a mortgage or take out a loan. It means that you don't get the same benefits as your co-workers, who may be doing the same job as you are.

There is one benefit, and that is to the employer — in this case, the Government of Yukon. Staffing positions in this manner is cheaper and provides employer flexibility. However, for a government that says that they respect all public servants, there are an awful lot of precariously employed Yukoners on their payroll.

What steps is this government taking to limit the number of Yukoners who it is putting in precarious work positions, and what are they doing to ensure that AOC, casual, and term position classifications are the last and not the first option when it comes to hiring in the public service?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will note for the member opposite that staffing within the Yukon government — especially these days — is very tricky, Mr. Speaker. I won't make any excuses, but the fact is that hiring for the Yukon government in these times when we have so many changes in demographics, so many changes in the workforce in terms of a lot of retirees, and a lot of changes in the way we do business — it is complicated. We will use whatever tools we have as best we can to make sure that we have the staff required to run the government and provide the services that the Yukon public deserves and needs.

I have said already that auxiliary-on-call employees are part of that matrix of hiring options. We work with the union. They are unionized employees, and we will continue to work with our public sector unions to make sure that we have the staff we need in the Yukon government to run the services that Yukon citizens depend on.

Question re: Sexualized assault response team

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, in December of 2017, virtually two years ago, this government announced that resources were being put in place to establish a sexualized assault response team, or SART. The stated purpose was to provide coordinated, victim-centred, low-barrier services to victims of sexualized assault. All of this was to happen by the spring of 2018.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Yukon has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in the country. We also know that the majority of sexual assaults are not reported. My question is a simple one: Has the sexualized assault response team been established?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The sexualized assault response team, also known as SART, has key components that are absolutely necessary for a team approach. We have structured that team between the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Women's Directorate. While we, too, are concerned about the length of time that it has taken to negotiate the details of the response team, I can indicate that this work is ongoing and has been ongoing since 2017. It was one of the very first items in the mandate letters of

a number of ministers, but also, more importantly, it was one that we brought to the table because we recognized the seriousness of these types of offences — that a cohesive and compassionate response was needed for victims of sexual assault no matter where they enter the process. That is the design of SART and is the work that is continuing to date so that we might be better able to have all aspects of government services police, hospital, medical, and services for victims be coordinated in response to these types of offences.

Ms. White: The commitment was made in December 2017 for the spring of 2018, and here we are, nearing the end of 2019. It's not as if creating a response team is uncharted waters. Models exist and there are many capable organizations and individuals in Yukon and elsewhere that could provide support and insight. The sexualized assault response team was to improve the coordinated services for individuals, providing support to people when and where they needed it. The team would be able to provide support to the individuals even if they did not want to report their assaults to the RCMP.

The news release on this initiative talked about a coordinator who would work to create a victim-centred delivery model. Included would be an after-hours response line offering 24/7 support to victims. SART would enhance the delivery of all services to ensure wraparound support for victims — lots of talk, Mr. Speaker, but nothing to show. The sexualized assault response team does not exist.

One wonders how many Yukoners have gone without the comprehensive support the team was to provide.

Mr. Speaker, what is delaying the establishment of the sexualized assault response team?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. It's an important one. The development and implementation of the SART team is a high-priority initiative and we're taking the time that's needed to ensure that it will be successful. The implementation of SART involves working with several government departments and external partners. Our goal is to create a gold standard of holistic care — as I've noted earlier — on a reasonable timeline. We agree that it has taken longer than initially anticipated to do so. We are keen to not compromise client or team health and safety as we proceed and build the structure necessary for this service to be successful.

Victims can access services that will assist them whether they are in a time of crisis or even responding to a historic trauma or something that is a problem for them. We can indicate that, during the implementation phase, we have continued to offer core support for victims through Victim Services, through the project links, hospitals and health services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, the RCMP, the Crown witness coordinators, as well as other services and supports within the territory. It is not the case that victims of sexual assaults have been left without services. We are working to achieve the SART team.

Ms. White: It was such an important issue that, in December of 2017, we heard an announcement in here, and here we are in 2019 — still waiting.

Today marks the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign and one of this

year's themes is "Our actions matter." Mr. Speaker, government inaction matters too.

When this announcement was made two years ago, there were quotes in the news release from the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and the Minister of Justice highlighting the importance of this initiative — wraparound support, a 24/7 crisis line with improved service, and ensuring that victims' needs and choices would come first — important support to victims of sexualized violence, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

Mr. Speaker, the SART team was to start in Whitehorse and then to expand to the communities — big hopes and expectations for something that has yet to materialize. Mr. Speaker, either this is a service that needs to happen or it isn't.

When can the community access this very service that was announced by this government two years ago?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The engagement with the Council of Yukon First Nations health commission on the SART and development opportunities to collaborate occurred in November 2018 initially and then continued. The sexual assault examination training with physicians and nurse practitioners began in January 2019. The victim support coordinator was hired by the Department of Justice in February 2019. The clinical coordinator for the Department of Health and Social Services was hired in June 2019. There have been many discussions with respect to the operation of the telephone line that has been considered. The implementation committee, including the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the RCMP, and Yukon government officials, meets every two weeks. The work to develop, implement, and go live with the phone line is ongoing. This is a very important initiative. The impression being given by the question, unfortunately, is that no work has been done, and that is simply not true. We need to make sure that this is a structure that will be maintained going forward and will provide the services needed for victims of sexual assault.

Question re: Diesel energy generation costs

Mr. Istchenko: Earlier this Sitting, the minister indicated that this government had rented four diesel generator units in 2017 for backup power. In 2018, they rented six units. In 2019, they are renting nine units. This year, the price tag for the rentals is \$2.2 million. I am hoping that, with the minister having his briefing binder in front of him, I can get a bit more information today.

Is the \$2.2 million the final cost associated with these rentals? What are the additional shipping and O&M costs of those rentals? Also, is the minister able to provide us with the total price tags associated with the 2017 and 2018 rentals of diesel generators?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are a number of questions there. It might take supplementary questions 2 and 3 to get through them. Happy, yes — my briefing binder is in front of me. I know that you were excited there to jump up and get that question out finally, so we will go through it.

The recommended response here on these particular items — the government is working with Yukon Energy as its parent — which we have talked about — and with the Yukon Development Corporation to pursue a mix of new energy products. That is straight from the briefing note here for the Member for Kluane.

In the short term, Yukon Energy continues to rent portable diesel generators each winter as its insurance policy to protect Yukoners. I think that is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. Previously, that wasn't done. An N-1 scenario basically means that, if your biggest asset goes down, you may not be able to keep the lights and heat on. We think that is a good cost. We want to look after Yukoners — something that wasn't taken into consideration in the past. Of course, renting these diesel generators is still a significant cost, but it is something that we feel is appropriate.

During the winter of 2017, Yukon Energy rented four two-megawatt portable diesel generators for four months to ensure that the corporation had enough capacity to meet Yukoners' electricity needs under emergency conditions. During the winter of 2018, Yukon Energy rented six two-megawatt portable diesel generators. This year, the corporation is looking to rent — as we did, of course — nine two-megawatt portables. I will go through the costing and the rest of this for questions two and three.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Mr. Kent: A confidential briefing note to the Minister of Highways and Public Works says that there are risks to the timelines of Whistle Bend elementary school as a result of the Liberals forgetting to consult prior to initially issuing the tender in July.

The section of the briefing note specifically says — and I quote: "Delays to the project timeline due to increased and unexpected consultations activities." A senior official in the department is on record in the e-mail saying — and I quote again: "Year one deadlines were already challenging to begin with, especially considering past experience with the French School where the..." — statement of requirements — "... took long to complete. With this delay, it may be unfeasible to get the..." — statement of requirements — "... completed by March 2020."

Last week, we asked the minister to confirm in this House if the school was still on schedule to meet its timelines for construction to start in June 2021 and he refused to answer, so I will try again.

Is the school on schedule to meet its construction start date of June 2021?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can confirm for the member opposite that the timelines are still in play, Mr. Speaker. They are still on schedule and we plan to have the school ready for occupancy in the fall of 2023.

Mr. Kent: The confidential briefing note that the Official Opposition has obtained states — and I quote: "The school was originally planned in project meetings to be 250 students in size as per the program area, recently the school size has changed to 425, this will likely have an impact on the project site, cost and timeline."

Last week, we asked the minister to tell us what impact the decision to increase the size of the school by 175 students would have on the project's costs and timelines. He said that we were making assumptions, but this is directly quoting from his own confidential briefing note from the department. Again, the briefing note says that the change to the size of the school — and I quote: "... will likely have an impact on the project site, cost and timeline."

Can the minister tell us what those impacts will be?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am really glad the member opposite has access to a briefing note. The reason why it's confidential, Mr. Speaker, is because the members opposite made it confidential.

That is not the position of this government. We have taken strides in our new *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* to make our briefing notes public and accessible to the public.

So, when those regulations are finished on time next year, we will be able to make these public without having them confidential, Mr. Speaker. But confidential they are — the member opposite has the confidential document — ooh. All right, so here it is, Mr. Speaker: the school is on time and it's on budget. The projected budget for the school is up to \$32 million at this stage. That is the pre-planning budget, as the members opposite know. That will be determined once we get the bids when the project is actually tendered, but we are estimating about \$32 million. The school is for up to 425 students. That is based on Education estimates of enrolment for that area, and the project is on time. So, we anticipate having the school ready for occupancy in the fall of 2023.

Mr. Kent: So, according to this August 6 confidential briefing note, somewhere along the line, a decision was made by government to increase the size of the Whistle Bend elementary school by 175 students. Last week, in response to questions from the media, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that the decision to increase the size of the school was done as a result of the review of school attendance areas. However, in a letter dated October 7, 2019, to the Official Opposition, the Minister of Education said that the attendance area review was still ongoing.

So, it looks like the Minister of Highways and Public Works shared incorrect information with the media last week, which is becoming a bit of a theme with this Liberal government. So, can the minister tell us what the decision to increase the size of the school by 175 students was based on? Why did he give false information to the media last week?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The school attendance — the school size figures are done in tiers, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite knows that. The school to be built will be for up to 425 students. This school will accommodate, in the tier, between 275 and 425 students. The member opposite fully knows that this is how these things are done.

This is the first elementary school that this government will have built in almost a quarter of a century, and we are very proud of that fact. We have changed the way in which procurement is done to make sure that local companies have every opportunity to bid on this contract. We are getting away

from, you know, some of the errors of the past. We saw schools started, then stopped, and then started again at the cost of \$6 million — \$6 million for the F.H. Collins contract that was just wasted away.

The school project was launched. There were pictures of ministers with shovels long before they had the permits to actually have the shovels in the ground, and \$6 million was wasted. We also had the Teslin Tlingit bridge project — we talked about that last week, Mr. Speaker — where a \$14.5-million bridge upgrade project was supposed to go to tender on April 2, 2014. In that event it was cancelled because they didn't do the proper consultation, and \$6.7 million was lapsed. We're not doing that anymore, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 121

Clerk: Motion No. 121, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It is moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT, during the 2020 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly, this House shall stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, March 12, 2020, until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020, due to the Arctic Winter Games.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm very happy to rise today to speak to this motion, and I'm hopeful that there is support across the House. I'll just say a few words about the motion.

First of all, we've had the Arctic Winter Games folk in here a couple times for tributes, but I have just a few comments. We're collaborating with the City of Whitehorse to co-host the 2020 Arctic Winter Games. We know that working in partnership is the key to success of multi-sport and cultural events like the Arctic Winter Games.

If you recall, Mr. Speaker, originally the games were scheduled to be hosted in Iqaluit, Nunavut, but in 2016, Nunavut indicated that they were no longer able to host the games and so we began looking at possibly hosting the games by being in conversation with our sports communities and with the City of Whitehorse. This is the first time for us signing a hosting contract with the City of Whitehorse and the Arctic Winter Games International Committee. We, as a government, are providing a total of \$2 million over three fiscal years to support the implementation of the 2020 games.

The 2020 Arctic Winter Games Host Society was established a couple years ago and has developed into several divisions — 11 divisions, as a matter of fact. It is tasked with creating and delivering the vision of the games.

To date, over 220 planning volunteers are assisting with the preparation. The goal is for 1,800 volunteers who will be needed when the games commence. I said last week, I believe, that we've now hit the 1,100 target. Thank you so much to all Yukoners who have put their names forward.

I'm hoping that all of us here in this Legislature can all be volunteers as well. Just not wanting to have the work of the Legislature go on at the same time as the games — I asked the host society to develop a bunch of opportunities for all MLAs from all sides of this House. They sent me a list of opportunities. I'll just put those on the record for this motion.

First of all, there's orientation sessions for volunteers. We can be volunteering to help orient other volunteers ahead of the games. There's work around setting up of all the accommodations. There's some great work during the games with zero waste — so, at food services and cafeterias to guide patrons on bins and help them to make sure that, working with all participants of the games, we keep the games at zero waste. Working with youth ambassadors coming from the three northern territories, volunteering in the dining hall coat checks, and probably the one that I think everyone here would love to do is Ulu presentations. It's where we get to interact with the athletes and the cultural performers.

After the games, there's lots of work to do too in helping out. I know that some of the members here are involved with sports, and they may be working with a specific sport. I'm happy if there are others here who want to get involved with specific sports to try to work with them.

Overall, I'm hopeful that what we can do is begin the work of our spring session, go out and help out with the games, cheer on all the teams and all the athletes who are coming from across the north, take part in the 50th anniversary year of the Arctic Winter Games, and then come back refreshed to work again.

I look forward to further debate on the motion.

Mr. Kent: The Official Opposition Yukon Party will be supporting this motion that was brought forward by the Minister of Community Services in his capacity as minister responsible for sport here in the territory.

That said, Mr. Speaker, we did send a note to the government about the potential to start a week earlier: rather than going in the first week of March as we normally do, going in that last week of February.

The Premier mentioned today, of course, this new and improved and much better budgeting system that he has in place which, we would assume, would mean that the budget documents would be ready by that last week in February. Unfortunately, the government has not taken us up on our offer, but that is all right. Obviously, that is their decision. It was something that we felt was a reasonable suggestion.

But, that said, we will also, of course — given what has happened in this most recent Spring Sitting and the Spring Sitting before where we have had difficulty getting full and fair consideration of the budget mains, and then we get to the fall supplementary budget and general debate where we are to ask questions on departments that don't have requests in the budget — and then the ministers aren't provided to answer the questions. The Premier does the best that he can, but often the statements that he makes are incorrect, and it is difficult to get information that Yukoners need. So, we will again be requesting a longer Spring Sitting so that we can give those budget mains full and fair consideration. Again, I thank the

minister for bringing this motion forward. We will support it, and when it comes time to request or to set the time for the Spring Sitting, we will again be looking for a longer Spring Sitting.

Ms. Hanson: On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I thank the Minister for Community Services for bringing this motion forward. The Yukon NDP — like all members and many, many Yukoners — enjoys the opportunities of participating and volunteering in the Arctic Winter Games. As the minister was speaking, I was thinking, "oh my gosh" — back in the day in 1980, a friend of mine was managing the Arctic Winter Games and — being a somewhat younger individual at the time — a significant amount of fun was had volunteering at those games and at subsequent games. Arctic Winter Games as a parent is a whole different experience — as a young adult — and as an older adult through the Canada Winter Games. So, all of us have had experiences, and that will contribute, no doubt, to the success of the Arctic Winter Games in 2020.

I echo to a certain extent the concerns expressed by the Official Opposition. We do want to ensure that we have adequate opportunities and real time for exchange. We have been talking over the last three years about improving the ways — and the Minister of Finance has also committed to improving the ways — that we both debate and cover all matters in the appropriations for expenditure for the fiscal year. If there is an opportunity for us to look at opportunities to extend the hours for debate or the timelines, we welcome that discussion in this House. But as to the subject matter of the motion at hand, we are fully in support of it.

Mr. Gallina: I don't have much to contribute on this, but this is a debate and discussion that I am connected to personally in my past experience prior to being an MLA, and I wanted to say a few things on the Arctic Winter Games and the importance of games like this here in our territory and throughout the north.

I am happy to rise today to speak to this motion. I was happy to learn that Whitehorse would be hosting the 2020 Arctic Winter Games.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has volunteered and worked to organize several Arctic Winter Games and multi-sport events, the Arctic Winter Games means many things to me. As some members have shared today, they had experiences with these games. I would say that the experiences that I have had with the Arctic Winter Games have prepared me to be the person that I am today and in this role as MLA for Porter Creek Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the Arctic Winter Games are a celebration of sport and culture that brings people together from across the circumpolar north. They are about many lifelong friendships that have been created and forged during the games. They are about community, about coming together to host a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many in the north, whether through competing, volunteering, sponsoring, or working with the event. They are about personal bests — athletes, coaches, and

managers driving toward their goals and accomplishments — about learning, being a leader, and self-discovery. Games are about sharing — cheering on your mates when they need that extra push or a warm hug from a friend who may have had a particularly challenging day or who struggled in a competition. They are about being open to discovering new cultures and traditions and seeing how the north is captured and celebrated in other territories, provinces, states, and even countries. They are about experiences and stepping-stones to greater challenges and experiences that lie ahead.

Simply put, to me, the Arctic Winter Games are about family. They are about family, because what I just described — I could say — are the foundations of what I envision healthy families to be.

Yukon will welcome and host approximately 2,000 athletes, coaches, mission staff, officials, and cultural performers, who will arrive with nine contingents. To host these contingents properly and deliver these games effectively, the Arctic Winter Games Host Society will need upwards of 1,800 volunteers, as mentioned earlier.

As the Minister of Community Services stated, volunteers with the Arctic Winter Games will fill a variety of roles both before and during the games, assisting in areas such as accommodations, food service, box office, spectator services, logistics, and marketing. Tasks can be anything from taking tickets or serving special guests to fitting out venues or construction of bunkbeds and participant accommodations. There are also sport-specific roles including results and major technical officials.

One of the largest contributing factors to volunteer recruitment and retention is major employer leave policies which allow paid time off for employees to volunteer and participate. These policies are currently in place with Yukon government, as well as the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon College, private sector businesses like Northwestel, and First Nation governments such as the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

The Yukon government's policy was developed initially for the 2007 Canada Winter Games; it was revised in 2012 during the Arctic Winter Games hosted here in Whitehorse and has remained the same ever since. The Yukon government policy applies to two groups: participants such as athletes, coaches, officials, and members of the cultural contingent; and those involved in planning and organizing when Yukon hosts major games. Employees may be granted leave without loss of pay, in some cases, covering up to three weeks leave to allow them to attend planning meetings as well as requirements during game time.

Both the City of Whitehorse and Northwestel also allow for non-planning — also known as game time — volunteers to be covered under their policies. Northwestel employees may receive approval to volunteer up to four hours per day during the months preceding the games, during the entire period of the games, and the week immediately following.

Mr. Speaker, without these types of policies, the Yukon would be in a very tough spot when it comes to recruiting the required number of volunteers. According to Canada's Sport

Information Resource Centre, of the Arctic Winter Games planning volunteers alone, nearly half of them are covered under major employee leave policies. I'm encouraged by the number of businesses and organizations that have employee leave policies here in effect here in the territory. These policies contribute to the family fabric that I referred to earlier in that so many more people are able to volunteer and create lasting memories.

I would encourage anyone who is considering volunteering for the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse to sign up and to secure your spot as soon as possible. As I understand, the volunteer count right now is at 1,100, which leaves 700 more people for the host committee in reaching their target.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm supportive of the Legislature taking a break during the Arctic Winter Games here in Whitehorse. The Arctic Winter Games create once-in-a-lifetime memories for youth participating and the community supporting and celebrating. I would encourage anyone who is considering volunteering to register today and to secure their volunteer spot. With the break here in the Legislative Assembly and Yukon government employees being supported in the volunteer roles, I would like to believe that this motion will help the Arctic Winter Games host committee reach their goal of 1,800 volunteers.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on Motion No. 121? If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard on Motion No. 121?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all members for their comments. I will try to keep my closing comments very brief. First of all, this is about trying to plan so that everyone has a notion about what is happening. When I thought about how we went with regular starting times for the Legislature in early March and early October, that notion wasn't so much for us as legislators; it was really more for public servants so that they had a good sense of it.

I think as well that, if we do pass this motion today — again, thanks to everyone for their supportive words — it will help the public servants who support the Legislature to know, going on, that there is a break at this time. I hope that, after today, we will have 1,119 volunteers with all of us volunteering, although I suspect that many of the MLAs here will have already put their names forward to help out.

I think that the ongoing process by House Leaders to decide on the length of this session is a fine process. I look forward to that process unfolding.

I think that the focus for today is on how we, as Yukoners, can support the games. One thing — and I think I have mentioned it in the House before, but just in case I haven't — is that the intention is that we will be hosting the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of sport meetings just ahead of the games. The opportunity is for us to share the difference of the Arctic Winter Games with all of those ministers of sport from across the country. There is something quite unique about the Arctic Winter Games with Arctic sports and Dene sports.

The notion of competition is so very different around those types of sports, and there is a real opportunity — and the engagement of culture.

I will do my best to find opportunities to invite all colleagues of this House to receptions around that time as well, which will be just ahead of the games. I thank all members for their support today.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 121 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel): The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 200: *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

We are resuming general debate.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It seems that we are concluding here in general debate, so I just want to thank everybody across the way for their questions and look forward to getting into Community Services.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1.

The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of the schedules is Schedule A, containing the departmental Votes.

Would members give the appropriate amount of time for the officials to —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to recess for five minutes?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Recess

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Department of Community Services

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Deputy Chair, I will just give a few introductory remarks. I would just like to welcome the officials here today in support of the questions that we are going to get from the members of the opposition. There are basically three things that have led us to be here today. The first is that we had a large fire season. The costs were much higher than we originally estimated. Every year, this is a challenge around wildland fire. I would like to thank all those folks, both from the department and from our First Nation fire crews, who work to fight those fires and keep all Yukoners safe.

Second of all, we have been going much further and much faster around infrastructure. This is infrastructure that is community-led by going out and talking with municipalities and First Nations and getting their priorities. We have been able to move further and faster on that infrastructure investment.

Finally, approximately \$10 million is going to enhance lot development across the territory.

I look forward to the conversation today and where the questions may lead on Community Services.

Ms. Van Bibber: I too would like to welcome the officials to the House. I am going to start with a few questions on the budget. This government increased the budget for Community Services by \$35 million in increased infrastructure spending.

It looks like there are a lot of projects connected to rough federal spending announcements. We asked the minister to provide a breakdown of project spending, but the breakdown provided only told us the spending increase per fund and didn't provide amounts for each project.

Can the minister provide us with a more detailed breakdown now?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me run down through the list, and I am also happy to sit down with the member opposite. Carmacks phase 3 waste-water upgrades, \$5.5 million — sorry. Hold on one second, Mr. Deputy Chair — okay. Thanks — I started reading from the recoveries column, not the total cost column — so apologies.

The other thing I want to say is that, when I give these numbers, more or less, our total will add up more than the dollars that we have allocated for the budget today because we still risk-manage under the envelope approach. I'm happy to get into a conversation about that.

My apologies to Hansard — I will do my best to share with them as well.

Carmacks phase 3 water upgrades, \$1.4 million; York Street lift station, \$3.4 million; Klondike Valley lift stations, about \$1 million; 5th Avenue King sewer upgrades, \$1.3 million; Front and Turner waterline, \$4.4 million; buried infrastructure, \$4.8 million; pumphouse repair, \$6.3 million; infrastructure upgrades, \$4.3 million; lagoon upgrades, \$3.2 million; water treatment plant replacement, just under \$2 million; lift station, \$1.5 million; buried infrastructure, \$5 million; Ross River sewage lagoon, \$2 million; pipe fire hall to water treatment plant in Tagish, \$420,000; Watson Lake wet well and lift stations, \$2.8 million; Watson Lake reservoir, \$2.9 million; Watson Lake lagoon and sludge drying bed, \$2.2 million; Dawson-Moosehide energy project, \$350,000; Mayo reservoir, \$3 million; we have a whole bunch of SCADA projects — it's an acronym for how this infrastructure talks to the operators — at just under \$50,000; Turner Street upgrades, \$2.3 million; Deep Creek water treatment plant bulk fill station, \$60,000; Destruction Bay dredging, \$60,000; and Keno water fill station, \$75,000.

I will keep going down the list, Mr. Deputy Chair: Dawson water and waste-water upgrades, \$850,000; Craig Street tower, about \$1 million; Old Crow lagoon upgrades, \$4.2 million; downtown Whitehorse upgrades, \$8.1 million; Burwash water plant, \$5.3 million; Carmacks arena replacement, between \$15 million and \$16 million; Dawson downtown upgrades at 5th and 3rd and Craig Street, \$10.2 million; Dawson water treatment and pumphouse, \$15.6 million; Haines Junction infrastructure upgrades — these are the in-ground upgrades — \$5.2 million; and Teslin connector road, \$2.4 million.

There are a series of projects across the territory to upgrade our solid-waste sites in the range of \$300,000; working on the Whitehorse aquifer, about \$500,000; downtown Whitehorse reconstruction of 6th Avenue, \$3.8 million; the F.H. Collins track and field, \$7.5 million, or just a little over; the Rock Creek water treatment plant assessment, \$600,000; across the territory, there are balers and compactors for our recycling depots, about \$150,000; across the territory again,

improvements to the solid-waste facilities, around \$2 million; Carmacks water system, \$500,000; Whitehorse compost facility upgrades, \$4.4 million; septic field replacement in Tagish, about \$400,000; Carmacks sewage pit upgrades, around \$200,000; and Teslin green retrofits to public buildings, about \$1.3 million.

There are other projects — for the member opposite — that are not yet tendered. I don't want to talk about those prices yet because they are in the system, but generally that is the breakdown of the numbers that we supplied.

Ms. Van Bibber: If the member could provide us with that list, that would be really great. As you know, this is ultimately public money, and we think that the public has a right to know where the money is being spent and why. If it is more or less and changes are being made per project or money is being moved around, people should know why this is happening as well. The previous governments used to provide a community-by-community breakdown of projects and how much was being spent.

So, now with the new budgeting process, we seem to get lump sum amounts. We really don't know where the money is going.

There is also \$182,000 out of the gas tax line item. We are wondering what those dollars were used for and where these adjustments are shown.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This year, the federal government doubled the amount of money that it was giving to the gas tax fund. In that fund, we allocate money to each municipality and to each First Nation. It acts sort of like a bank, and it depends on whether the community wishes to spend money on projects — there is a committee that looks to make sure that those projects will be approved, but basically, they are self-directed funds for the municipality and/or the First Nation.

In unincorporated Yukon, the territorial government does do projects, so our range of projects in Deep Creek — I already listed the water treatment plant and the bulk fill, Destruction Bay dredging, Keno water fill station, and Rock Creek water treatment plant assessment. I mentioned the balers happening across the territory, upgrades to our solid-waste facilities, the septic field in Tagish, the sewage pit upgrades in Carmacks, the Carcross water treatment plant upgrades, and updating recycling bins across the territory. We use the gas tax across the territory. I guess I could try to get a deeper breakdown, but that money is divided out.

We also do work to try to track how much money is going into communities to see that there is a reasonable and fair distribution across the territory.

Again, the infrastructure priorities — what we've done — the Infrastructure Development branch has gone and met with each municipality, each First Nation, and any unincorporated communities to talk to maybe the local advisory council or the recreation community to try to identify what their priorities are and then to fulfill them if we're able.

What we're doing with the envelope approach is not adding in projects that are our priorities. What we're doing is — if there is a way to continue investing and if one project has slowed down for some reason, we back-fill it with the next

project on the list. That dynamic type of work, which is challenging — I appreciate from the members opposite that they want the ability to track it all. I totally think that we always have to share all the spending on all the projects ultimately for Public Accounts. But the notion is that, if there is a slowdown, we can actually move faster. That's why, and it's difficult. What we may be able to do is to share across — this is how we see the breakdown across communities, but it will change over time based on whether there are delays — maybe regulatory delays, maybe public consultation delays or engineering delays or whatever they are. It allows us to keep the infrastructure dollars continuing to invest.

But the main point I want to make, Mr. Deputy Chair, is that the projects are prioritized by our communities.

Ms. Van Bibber: Under the heading Small Communities Fund, there was an additional \$19,267; Clean Water Wastewater Fund, \$7,959; Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, \$8,456, which totals \$35,500. These funds are reallocated to replace outdated and failing infrastructure.

Can the minister tell us what is being replaced, the cost per project, and when it will all be completed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The first thing I want to just be very careful to do is to clarify that those are not thousands of dollars; that's millions of dollars. These are significant investments.

Every one of these projects has a time scale. They are typically multiple years, but it depends on — some projects are small and they will just be one season. In my first response to the Member for Porter Creek North's questions, I listed the whole set. I didn't start by saying that this one is ICIP — Investing in Canada infrastructure plan, Mr. Deputy Chair — or that this one is small communities fund or this one is clean water and waste-water fund.

What I can say is that we do breakdowns based on which fund it is coming from, although that is not always as interesting to the public. The clean water and waste-water funds — what I want to say is that we adopted the projects identified by the previous government and just kept moving with those. We didn't want a hiccup or a delay. We wanted to keep going. That fund more or less will finish spending out, except for a little bit of leftover money this year. It totals, I believe, \$68.5 million for the clean water and waste-water fund. The small communities fund, which is underway right now, is a much larger fund, but again, it is typically — not exclusively, but typically — for meat-and-potatoes infrastructure — infrastructure in the ground, roads, and that type of stuff.

The Investing in Canada infrastructure plan is \$594 million over about a decade. We are just starting those projects right now. Each one of those projects that I listed off — the first half of the list of projects that I listed off are completing or are complete. The small communities fund is about \$350 million, meaning that our contribution to it is about one-quarter of that or \$85 million.

The other half of the projects that I listed in my first response are projects that are now under construction and will run over several years. If the member opposite wants

information on a specific one, I am really happy — but the answer is just so variable.

Ms. Van Bibber: One line item for the Town of Faro says that it is going to receive \$83,810. I am not sure what this is for and I wonder if the minister could elaborate on this amount.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not exactly certain on the — most of the work that we are doing in Faro is around water and sewer — the in-ground infrastructure. I would have to work with the member opposite — and I am happy to do that — to identify where the \$83,000 number is coming from, and then we could work backwards. It could be part of pre-engineering work which is leading to a bigger project around the water and pipes — I am just not exactly certain.

But overall, the work that is going on in Faro is around that in-ground infrastructure. There is work to replace their fire hall and, as part of the whole regionalization agreement across the territory, I know that there is also investment that is going into their solid-waste facility.

Ms. Van Bibber: I have a few questions on Wildland Fire Management. We saw a \$19-million increase to wildland fire fighting, and we understand that it was a high fire season and that there was of course a need to increase funding. But what I would like to see is an accountability of what those additional costs add to.

Could the minister provide a breakdown, including how much was spent on helicopter contracts, how much was spent on air tanker contracts, increased staffing costs for wildland fire, and increased costs for First Nation crews and other fire crews?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have a breakdown to some of the ways that the member opposite has asked, although I don't have a split in front of me on rotary wing versus fixed wing, so I don't have helicopter versus our air tankers. I just have aviation or aircraft broadly — which will include aviation fuel, fire retardant, and all the costs that are in there. The numbers that I give today are for that supplementary budget, but I also want to note that — which is based on our — when we bring forward the supplementary budget, it's before the fire season has completed and this year we had one late fire, so there are still more costs which will come to this Legislature. I suppose the way that will work is through a second supplementary in the spring. So, I want to be careful to not say that our costs are done today because the Ethel Lake fire was expensive as well.

Currently, here is the breakdown that I have for the member opposite: our aircraft were around \$14 million for the season; our heavy equipment contracts were just over \$1 million; for meals, accommodations, and goods — like catering; all of that — was just under \$2 million; for personnel — and again, I don't have the breakdown in front of me between the First Nation crews and ours, so it's blended, but I can work — if that's important for the member opposite — to try to get a further detailed breakdown. That's about \$7.5 million for personnel.

When we put in this budget — we have a forecast on future costs. That was a little over \$2 million at the time, but again,

those numbers are now going to be refined and we will be coming back later on. The total, then, is about \$26.7 million.

I have a breakdown as well by fires and can talk about those if the member opposite wishes. That's the information that I have in front of me today.

Ms. Van Bibber: If you could provide that list for us, that would be great — by fire.

The government has acknowledged that climate change is likely to continue with longer fire seasons, but the concern is whether the government is actually changing our practices to adapt. This year, we understand that the government ended its contract with the First Nation fire crews in August, and they were no longer on standby. The fire near Ethel Lake and Stewart Crossing — when it flared up, the government was kind of left stranded, and then they took the highly unusual step of sending volunteer fire departments from the Whitehorse area up to Stewart Crossing to provide fire suppression.

We have a concern and a question. The concern is that these volunteer fire departments are often strained in their resources because of the limited number of people available to respond in their area — and recognizing they are volunteers.

Sending half of the fire trucks from some of the fire departments in the Whitehorse periphery reduces the ability of those departments to respond to fires in the communities that they serve.

The question is: Can the minister tell us which volunteer fire departments were required to send crews, and what was the additional cost of sending those crews up to Stewart Crossing and Ethel Lake?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I wasn't clear on whether the member wanted me to list the breakdown by fire right now or whether I could share it later on. I appreciate how many numbers I am rattling off for Hansard.

First of all, I will end my response by talking about what we are doing differently in light of the fact that we believe that the risk of wildfire is increasing. Let me talk about how things work normally here and then move to that response. It is highly unusual for us to have a fire in September — this was a first — specifically a fire of that type and nature. I do believe that we have had some discussion about that here in this Legislature, and my colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, was there. He has a lot of experience in this very field.

Whenever we have an interface fire or the threat of an interface fire — meaning a wildland fire that is coming in to hit human structures or built areas — we always work with our volunteer fire departments around that time. Their job at that moment is not to fight the fire. Their job is to help with protecting structures and just getting ready. It is things like putting up sprinklers on top of cabins and making sure that we are soaking that cabin to try to keep it safe. Whenever we do that — and we do it now and then — we always work to have in place mutual aid agreements with neighbouring volunteer fire departments, and everyone is informed that this crew is heading up and that the neighbouring crew is there to back up. I have seen that work in my own community. When crews respond, there is a quick call to the next-door crew.

It is always an issue whenever a fire happens after the season. This was a large fire. I do want to say that our crews and First Nation crews responded to that fire. The Wildland Fire Management branch put out a call for the First Nation crews. There was a response, and they were part of the response team.

What are we doing differently now that we understand that there is a higher risk? First of all, we are looking toward prevention. I will talk about it in three ways here today. The first one is to use the prevention techniques that we have and to enhance them. That is firesmarting. We are working to increase education and to increase our work within each community to just make sure that our communities are more resilient to those fires. We have been doing this for over 20 years now, but we are working to reinvigorate FireSmart. One of the reasons why that is happening is because there is a lot of interest from the public. They want to know what each person can do. This is a great program. It can be on a home-by-home basis, or it can be on a street-by-street or neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis.

The next thing that we are doing is working to review all of our policies around fire response — for example, our zonation policy and our zonation maps. We have introduced that conversation at the Yukon Forum with our First Nation partners. We are talking about the ways in which we want to keep our communities safe under the increased risk.

Finally, on sort of a broad program, we are working to reduce fuel loading broadly. This is much more than FireSmart. FireSmart — think of it as around your home and around your street. This is more about around our communities. It is a resiliency strategy for each and every community.

We will be starting that work with a pilot this winter, and we will be working with the federal government under the disaster mitigation adaptation fund to extend it out across the whole of the territory. The idea is that, if your wildland fire folks say or if traditional knowledge says — however the information comes in from the people in the know — and they say, "Here are where the biggest risks are to where that fire can come...", then we look to create strategic breaks by reducing fuel load. But we're not just stopping there, because we understand that, if we're going to be reducing fuel load, we want it to be ongoing. So, we're working with the Forestry branch to think about succession planning, but we're also working with the private sector and the Yukon Wood Products Association to think of it as a fuel — biomass, for example — and then, finally, we are working with the Department of Highways and Public Works to create a demand for that supply chain where we seek to heat some of our larger buildings with wood chips. This is an attempt to be very proactive and to reduce risk overall. That's how we're treating it. I'm happy to answer further questions.

Ms. Van Bibber: I understand from your answer that there are mutual aid agreements. The concern is for the ability of local volunteer fire departments to serve their communities if there are serious problems in the immediate area. Luckily, that didn't happen this year.

Sometimes, if there has been an incident and there are, say, two fire trucks and one is in, say, Stewart Crossing, and then there is another call and there is no one left to respond and no truck if there is a fire or a major incident on the highway close to town, what is the plan to ensure that, next year, you are not dipping into these volunteer fire departments as much and you are keeping the First Nation wildland crews on for a little longer?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I need to really separate these two questions. Our great local volunteer firefighters work on structural fires — fires around cars, buildings, and in our towns. It is a completely different skillset than our great wildland firefighters — be they First Nation crews or be they from the territorial government Wildland Fire Management branch. They don't do the same thing, so it's not one or the other; they are separate.

The way that it has been explained to me is that our Fire Marshal's Office has a group of volunteers as well from all of our volunteer fire crews, and they are called a "special heavy operation team". They are folks who want some additional training to deal with these interface types of fires.

What happens is that, when there is a fire — whether it is at the end of the season, the middle of the season, or the beginning of the season; it doesn't matter — that has a call for dealing with this interface, then the fire marshal will put out a call to these volunteers, and they come from across — I understand that there were folks who came from Golden Horn, Mount Lorne, Ibex, and others to cover this off. Whenever that team goes, all of those crews — Golden Horn, Mount Lorne, Ibex, et cetera — work right away to cover off the drop-in volunteers. So, there is a conversation that is happening. Okay, these volunteers have gone — okay. What we are doing is mutually supporting each other. So, again, a shout-out to Ibex, Mount Lorne, and Golden Horn in this instance to cover off those bases while the event took place. I think that our volunteers see this as an opportunity to learn, to grow, and to experience.

It is a coordinated effort to try to make sure that, in that time when there is a slightly elevated risk and if there were another fire — as the member opposite is talking about — then we would be able to cover it off.

Whenever we have a fire in one community, we often deploy neighbouring communities as well, and then we call on mutual aid besides. There is already a system in place. It is not just related to wildland fires.

Finally, with the question about keeping on the First Nation fire crews, it is always a balance. You need to pay money to keep crews on call. It costs all of us, and so there's a time. We have, for example, a meteorologist who is in the department and will talk about where the levels of risk are and how they're working. The climate is changing and risks are changing at the same time, but there's always this attempt to make sure that we have an eye on where the risks lie and that we have resources lined up. We will always be working to negotiate with our First Nation crews to provide them work and opportunities and to keep everyone safe. We're also always

trying to do our best to keep costs within reason. It's always a tension that's out there.

This time around, I asked the questions after that fire happened. What I heard — even from my colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — is that this has not been seen before. It wasn't that we could anticipate that this should or would happen. I think that this time we have to really acknowledge that it was quite a unique circumstance. Is it going to continue? That's a difficult question for me to stand up in the Legislature and answer. I think, though, that we have to make sure to prepare ourselves.

Ms. Van Bibber: Have individuals from Community Services been to Haines Junction to meet with the Village of Haines Junction, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Parks Canada, EMO, and local fire departments to discuss their community's safety in case of a threat of wildfire there? If so, when did this meeting take place and who was present?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I got a little note from the Fire Marshal's Office. I will just add for everyone that the special operations team is typically for large-vehicle accidents, materials incidents, urban interface fire — for example, what happened around Stewart on the highway — a building collapse, and search and rescue, so that is that group.

The question was around Haines Junction specifically. Let me just say that we are going to need and want these meetings with every community, because, even though there was the fire last year and it was at the beginning of the season just north of the community of Haines Junction — thanks, by the way, to Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, to the Village of Haines Junction, and to the folks in Haines Junction, because there was a lot of concern. I thought that, as a community, they did a great job.

We are going to have those meetings everywhere.

I said in one of my earlier responses that we had been talking about starting some work in Whitehorse. There are four other communities that we are actively working in right now. I will do my best to get these correct.

The four communities that we are working with initially in these types of meetings — where we are sitting down in sort of a planning and fuller discussion with them — are Watson Lake, Haines Junction, Mayo, and Teslin. I understand that those meetings have been planned. I am not sure if they have taken place. I will work to try to get some dates for the members opposite. As soon as I have them, I will share them either through a letter or a legislative return.

Also, after the Bear Creek fire, Mr. Deputy Chair, an operational after-action review took place on June 20 earlier this year. They did some meetings — key incident participants and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the operation. That included folks from Wildland Fire Management, the Emergency Measures Organization, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and the Village of Haines Junction. Parks Canada was invited, but they weren't able to attend. From the meeting, we did get quite a bit of feedback. That's not necessarily planning forward; it was a review of that fire and how the response had taken place, but it

will be very informative for that work that needs to happen across each community.

Ms. Van Bibber: Just recently, there was a request for bids listed on the tender forecast system for the Carmacks new fire hall and public works building. This was interesting, especially as the estimated tender is listed for February 2020 and the start date listed is one short month later — March 2020.

Can the minister confirm whether these dates are correct? If so, how can the department expect contractors to be ready to go on a project of this magnitude in one short month after they are tendered?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm not sure in this instance why there's only one month of time. I'm happy to check back with the department to get the story behind this particular project.

This is a forecast system. It's there to try to give an indication to contractors about what is coming up. I know that we work closely with the Contractors Association and with the procurement centre and others to try to get the information out as early as possible while maintaining the need for it to be a competitive process. I'm happy to try to look further at it.

What I want to say is that it's a forecast right now. I don't think that this is necessarily where it's landing. I'm happy to check in further.

Ms. Van Bibber: There was another forecast for the Whitehorse skate park upgrades as a tender for anywhere from \$1 million to \$5 million and also with the same estimated tender dates — February 2020 and a start of March 2020.

With respect to skate park upgrades, I think \$1 million to \$5 million is quite a spread for any project. Can the minister tell us what is budgeted for this project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is one of those times where my response for the Member for Porter Creek North — I don't want to give our estimate of the project — and so we use ranges because we want to allow for it to be a competitive process. I have shied away, in this Legislature in responses, from trying to say that this is the exact dollar figure against a project. In my experience, it can at times inflate the prices, and so I don't want to do that and I don't expect that work to take place in March — you will need snow off the ground for that work to take place.

What I do want to say is that we are happy — for example, I know that this project in particular has been a bit of a challenge over the years. I was on the city council at one point in time when — I think it would have been the Minister of Education who appeared in front of us and said, "Okay, let's please move that skateboard park." We were kind of shocked by that. I am glad that we have been able to find a solution for the French first language school, for F.H. Collins, and for the skateboard park. The thing I want to say is that the City of Whitehorse has really stepped up for us as a territorial government, because right now, it is our responsibility — and maybe it is under my department, or maybe it is under the Department of Education — of keeping up a skateboard park. That is not something that is our bailiwick typically. So, the City of Whitehorse said to us, "Hey, if you do the improvements to that skateboard park and get it up to a good

standard, then we will take it over." So, I just want to give them a shout-out for that offer. It is a much better fit, in my mind.

I have sat down with a couple of design charrettes with some of the local skateboarders. They have been very enthusiastic and excited about it. I am happy that it is on the forecast system. What I am just understanding is that what the TMS — the tender management system — says for the forecast is February 2020, with an estimated start date of May 2020. So, that sounds more reasonable to me. That is several months after.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister tell us if he has met with all the local advisory councils in the Yukon — which ones and when?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have met with all the local advisory councils. I meet once a year with all of them at a local advisory council forum which is hosted by Community Affairs and the department. We run over a whole range of issues. I think I have attended three of those — I think, once a year.

I have made a point of also trying to get to every local advisory council for one of their meetings. My recollection is that I have only been to one for Ibex Valley and was there at that time with the Member for Lake Laberge. I'm only hazarding a guess at the number of local advisory council meetings that I have been to in Southern Lakes. There are four there. They are Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, Tagish, and the south Klondike, which is Carcross. They have monthly meetings and I try to attend those as an MLA, but often get asked questions as a minister. I think I make it — my guess is — to about four, five, or maybe six for each of those communities per year. That is my estimate. I do keep track of all of those meetings, so I'm happy to try to get them across, although it's difficult for me to differentiate between my role as minister and as MLA.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Dawson City sewer project has been going on for several years now and there seem to be constant problems with installation — if not with trees and property lines, then with the weather. It has also caused a block to many businesses due to the road closing during the height of tourist season. Can the minister tell us when this sewer project will be complete? Is it on budget?

I also understand some of the streets have to be redone come spring. Can the minister enlighten us on his knowledge of any redos?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is true that Dawson's infrastructure is old and it has been in need of some significant investment for some time. It is also true that it is on a permafrost flood plain. As I'm sure the several house-moving companies in Dawson will attest to, it is a pretty dynamic area. I think it is also true that, whenever we dig up a road in front of a home or a business, it is disruptive — there is no doubt.

I have had some conversations with the Member for Kluane about concerns that his constituents have had and with the Premier as well about concerns that his constituents have had. I would like to start by saying that the crew at the Infrastructure Development branch has really been doing a fantastic job. That doesn't mean that there aren't moments of conflict and tension, but when you look at how much infrastructure we are doing across the territory, it's really quite

staggering. Overall, my impression is that the work has been going very well.

With the in-ground infrastructure for Dawson, not only has it been needed because the infrastructure is old, but Dawson is growing. There is a lot of pressure on it. We now know that the waste-water treatment plant — well, I call it the “waste-water treatment facility” — a little facetiously because it makes a much better acronym.

That facility is already not doing what we needed it to do all along. We are now in planning phases with Dawson for a lagoon. As Dawson grows, you also have to plan how you are going to get that sewage over to a lagoon. Even though the current round of work for in-ground water and sewer infrastructure in Dawson — the bulk of it — should be done next year in 2020, there still is going to continue to be more work needed to be done.

The last challenge that I’ll talk about with respect to Dawson is that, whenever we’ve been there — whether it’s under lot development or this work doing in-ground servicing — the cadastre of the community is quite complex. Where the lot lines are and where people think they are is a different thing. It can be very challenging. I appreciate that there are issues at all times, but it has been my experience that the branch and, for the most part, the contractors whom I have had the pleasure of working with have done a really outstanding job at trying to navigate through those challenges.

Ms. Van Bibber: It leads right into my next question, then.

Along with property lines and tree issues that happened — of course, it was very well-publicized in the papers. How long was the primary contractor down while they were waiting for this issue to be resolved? How much extra did that cost the government?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The delay for that project was in the neighbourhood of 10 days, and there were some costs.

I should note that this is a municipal infrastructure project. We are there partly as funders. We are partly there also as project managers, but I want to be careful in that it is not our infrastructure, ultimately; it is the City of Dawson’s infrastructure. We are there working with them. When there are challenges that arise like this, we are on the phone with the mayor and council to talk it through. I’m sure that the folks at the Infrastructure Development branch are in conversation with the city manager, and I am sure that the project managers from the Infrastructure Development branch are there in conversation with the contractors and with the neighbours.

The last estimate that I had was that the costs were around \$300,000 for that delay. Part of that was — as everyone started to understand where the property lines were and people were concerned, there was some dialogue with the neighbours to try to do our best to save as many trees as possible, because it is the entryway into the community and people felt strongly that, if we could try to save the trees, we should do our best. You are hopeful that some of those trees overwinter and there still might be some challenges around it, but when we look at that cost — potentially \$300,000 — the overall project was estimated in the \$10-million range, so that is still within the contingency. We

are still hopeful that the project overall is on budget and on track, so we’re not believing that it has changed the overall budget for the project. It is just one of the many things that we do — I will say with hundreds of projects that we have ongoing all the time — where we hit challenges.

Ms. Van Bibber: I understand from a little note slipped to me that there have been conversations that you have had with the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin regarding the phone service being restored across the bridge in Ross River. I was wondering if there has been any talk of reinstalling the conduit back across the bridge and if you have any updates for us.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This has to do with the Ross River footbridge, which was one of the first infrastructure projects that I was involved with in taking on this role. At the time when the bridge was put in, there were no customers identified on the far side of the bridge. There is one customer on the other side of the bridge and they do have a cellphone, but there is an interest to have a land line. What we are doing at the moment is that we have worked with Northwestel to identify — I think it’s our responsibility to put in a conduit on the side of the bridge. It will be Northwestel’s responsibility to run a line over to the other side of the bridge. After that was worked out, we sent a contractor up to take a look at putting up the conduit. The challenge was that the conditions were not favourable. By then, the weather was not working with us, so it now has to wait until the spring.

I appreciate that we will get there, although it will end up being a pretty pricey phone line, but there you go.

Ms. Van Bibber: Is it possible to do the work from the ice bridge and continue working this fall so that it is available to people across the river sooner?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is a really technical question. I’m not sure — whether the notion is that they work from underneath the bridge or on the side of the bridge. I’m just really happy to try to get a response for my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. If there is the ability to do it off of the ice — well, great. I think we just need a technical response to this specific issue.

Ms. Van Bibber: Are there any plans for newer upgrades to recreational infrastructure in rural Yukon communities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a range of issues. First of all, we have been looking at all of the boat launches across the territory and trying to take a more holistic view at working to upgrade those.

We have done work, as the Member for Kluane will know, in Destruction Bay on dredging out the marina there. We had a bit of a window of opportunity to do it — and thanks to the folks who got the work done — but we still don’t know, really. We did a bunch of studies on the lake to try to understand what’s happening with the lake, but we’re uncertain. But we took the opportunity to dredge because we had one.

We know that our pools are getting old across all of our communities, so we’re looking at those to try to see about upgrades there. We have made investments in the Carmacks rink and that work is ongoing. We have work that’s ongoing up in Old Crow for their rec centre. We have scoping work on a

couple of others — that is happening. The way I will finish this off is that — when I started talking about infrastructure, Mr. Deputy Chair, what I talked about is that we go to the community, we sit down with the First Nation and/or the municipality and ask them what their priorities are. We are very happy — if they identify their priorities as sport or recreation, we will work with them. So, we are trying to take the communities' lead on where they have identified that. That is true across the territory.

Ms. Van Bibber: You said that many of the community pools are being looked at to see if they need upgrading or restructuring. Can the minister tell us if there is going to be a swimming pool in Ross River next summer?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The issue in Ross River was not a structural issue. It was a concern that had been raised with environmental health. Unfortunately, we got there late in that discussion. It is my hope that we will work to resolve those concerns, although I don't have an answer as of yet if that has been completed. If memory serves, there was something about filtration and some technical fix there. There were a couple of small, minor points that are very easy to solve, but that filtration piece is one that we need to work on. We absolutely want our kids in Ross River to have access to a pool. They get a short window of time. We know from being in the community and talking to chief and council that they have expressed a priority around this.

What I want to say is that, once we figured out that there was a problem, we worked as well to get bus service there so that we could get the youth over to Faro to use that pool there, so we were working to try to backstop it this past year.

But I would like to say to the community of Ross River that I am sorry that we weren't able to get the pool up and running. We are working hard to make sure that we don't end up in the same boat next year.

Deputy Chair: Would members like to take a short recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Ms. Van Bibber: With respect to the mention of the First Nation administration buildings being built with federal and territorial resources, I'm wondering if this is part of one of the infrastructure funds and, if so, which ones.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a few possibilities. I know that when I first landed, there were dollars that were flowing under the small communities fund down to the Carcross learning centre, but most of it, though, is coming from the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan. There are several communities where we are in conversation about the energy efficiency of existing buildings and improving those — so, sort of retrofits or making those buildings greener.

If it's a new build, the new ones are also Investing in Canada infrastructure plan — that I know of — and there are several substreams under the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan. It could come from — depending on the project — any of three of those substreams.

My recollection is that they are community, culture, and recreation infrastructure and finally the green infrastructure fund — especially if it has to do with the retrofit side.

Ms. Van Bibber: I'm going to go to the minister's favourite topic: solid waste. The cost of waste is something we're all aware of. Can the minister tell us if increasing the cost of items at the point of sale has made an impact on the local waste facilities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We brought in fees on tires, electronics — on what would become e-waste — and electrical appliances. We also increased the refund and fees on more drink containers. We're still working to collect the evidence on this so that we have actual numbers.

What I can say is, through volunteering in the solid-waste facilities in and around our communities and visiting them over the past couple of years, I have noticed a change in e-waste. I've noticed a change in refundables — milk jugs, et cetera — the things that didn't used to be refundable which are now. There are more of those being collected. But I don't have any hard data yet to share with the Legislature. My evidence to date is just empirical, but we will be working to do that analysis or that analysis is taking place in order to get us the numbers.

What I want to say is that the Solid Waste Advisory Committee — in almost every community I go to, it is pretty clear that waste costs money, first of all. It costs more than we think, so the more we can reduce in the first place is our best goal. A good goal after that is stewardship. Stewardship is where the — our best one under that is when the industry is paying for that up front — they're paying for the recycling or reuse up front. We do try to achieve that by working in partnership, for example, with British Columbia and/or Alberta. If we are not able to achieve that, then our next goal is designated material regulations, which is where the tires, electronics, and electrical appliances have come under. It looks like it is working well, but we still have to take the time to do our work.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can you give us a timeline of when all the municipalities will have their waste areas staffed and tipping fees for dumping working across the whole territory? Are these fees going to be comparable with those in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will try to paint a bit of a picture — then maybe there will be a few more questions.

We are generally on track with the approach of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee to do a territory-wide regional system. Part of the design of that system is that we need to get rid of prices that change from one neighbouring place to another so that you don't drive from one place to — for example, let's just say that we don't have people from Whitehorse driving to Deep Creek to throw out their garbage because it's cheaper in Deep Creek.

The prices will be on a par, but they may vary from one region to another. I don't know that Dawson City will be the same as Watson Lake; I don't know that Whitehorse will be the same as Watson Lake, but they will be in and around the same, and neighbouring facilities will definitely try to use the same price.

We have been working on getting those agreements in place across all of our municipalities, and I think that work is on track with what we had anticipated for timing. That work is ongoing right now. We will work to introduce tipping fees in the periphery of Whitehorse this spring and then, I think, the rest of the territory roughly in the next year.

What I also want to say is that it doesn't mean that we are doing cost recovery in every location. What we are doing is setting a level price so that all Yukoners pay roughly the same tipping fee wherever they go. It has been important to help some of the people in the periphery understand that Whitehorse residents do pay a tipping fee — not everyone understands that. It has also been important to help Yukoners so that they know that waste does cost. I think that once they figure that out, most people are willing to do their part. We get into lots of conversations about how to make this work, about how to deal with illegal dumping, and we are working on that front to increase the fines and to try to crack down there.

The one thing I wanted to say is that, in most of our municipalities, our solid-waste facilities are already staffed, so that isn't necessarily new. In many of them, they already charge a tipping fee or have a way of charging something.

With these regional agreements, it's not us who will be charging the tipping fees in the municipalities; it is the municipalities themselves. We are working with them, but I will note that it was the municipalities that came to us and said they wanted to get this territory-wide system in place, because they know that we need to revamp our solid-waste system across the territory. I thank them, because it is heavy lifting to ask for these changes, and it's not always popular. It's not always easy, but when we get out there and talk with Yukoners, they understand that waste costs, and we need to have a system that will allow us to make it level across the whole of the territory.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to thank the staff for helping the minister and the minister for his answers. I am now going to hand it over to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: Hello to the officials who are in the House, and I thank the minister for the conversation.

Early in this Sitting, there had been a question in Question Period where we talked about the development or the sale price of lots. Hansard, I think, is a beautiful thing.

It is interesting, because on Monday, April 21, 1997, there was a conversation in this Assembly about the cost of lots. It actually lays out how it works. At the time, it was Premier McDonald, and what he was talking about was the way in which lots are priced. He said — I'm just trying to get the right quote. At the time, the principle of the matter around lots was that it was either development cost or market cost, and they were sold for whichever was cheaper. So, sometimes they talked about the development cost, and it might be higher if it

had five inches of concrete and curved curbs and things like that, but what was being talked about was the principle of the matter about the cost of lots and how that should be viewed.

One of the reasons why I want to ask this question is that, initially, the policy that the Yukon government had with regard to lot development was to develop lots and sell them at development cost or market price — whichever was lower. This tended to keep the lot prices reasonable and constrained government bureaucrats — government people — from spending a lot of money on lot development and then just passing it to the buyer.

We saw examples of that. For example, the previous government with a loan to a golf course, and then it got incorporated into the lot cost in Whistle Bend for some of them. Then the policy changed to development cost or market price — whichever was higher. The reason why that's a big change is that, when we talk about affordability — so affordability, I think, is a big issue right now for everyone in the Assembly and the people in Yukon.

I just wanted to ask the minister if he's able to pinpoint more where it went from — whether it was development cost or market price — whichever was lower, and now it has switched to development cost or market cost and whichever is higher. I would like him to talk about the cost of lots, to start.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In Question Period earlier this year, I have listened to questions from the members of the Third Party, and I think both have made comments about it. I don't have the same policy that they have. I'm not sure when it changed, because I don't have it before me.

Here is how I understand the policy right now — and I will just reach out to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and try to get a hold of the material that she has so that I can try to look back in time.

Here is how I understand the policy right now. There is a technical classification of the land. I leave that because we are allowed to classify it however we want — whether it is a residential lot or special — but once it hits that different designation, you then have this ability. The ability says something like this: You can go with market prices, or you can go with the development costs charges. You can actually go for a blend of those two if you want, but you would have to turn back to Cabinet to get special permission. That's how I understand the technical rule. There is nothing that I see in the policy that says that you will charge the higher or the lower of the two, so there is some discretion.

When I have been looking at it around Whitehorse — and I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — the two are actually coming pretty close to each other. The implication, as I understand it, is that if we go for a price that is lower than the development cost charge — and that can happen. If, for example, the market prices were lower and we went with those lower market prices, then we have the responsibility to do cost recovery at some point. It can be later on.

The two pressures, as I see them — from where the policies and practices come in front of me — are: cost recovery, and trying to keep the prices as low as possible. We work, for example, with the Land Development branch to do everything

that we can to keep those prices down as low as we can, because we want to get that price as low as possible for Yukoners.

Let me just stop right there, Mr. Deputy Chair, and then I'm happy to answer further questions.

Ms. White: Sorry, "policy" was maybe the wrong language, but that was the prior practice, and then it changed. Did it actually change during the Duncan era? That gives a time frame.

In reading these excerpts from Hansard in 1997 — it is really interesting, because we are talking about mobile homes and security of tenure, and one way that the security of tenure could be increased was by making affordable lots available within the City of Whitehorse. There was a discussion on how lot pricing went.

Just to follow up on what the minister said, recently we heard — I believe that the number was \$23,000 more — so, I believe that, similar to a lottery, it went to the highest bidder, and the highest bidder was \$23,000 over what the lot had been released for. I am sure that other people in the Assembly — and definitely other people in the world — look through the real estate guide and can see the steady increase of costs. For example, if a house on my street sells for \$450,000, then the next house listed will be much closer to \$450,000 than it may have been without that. One of the concerns that I want to highlight is that, if the government is prepared to sell lots at \$23,000 more than what they were asking, what does that do for the general market?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I want to say is that the example that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is citing is a very atypical example for us.

Let me describe that we have a high demand for lots across the territory. We have been working — and even in this budget that we are debating here today, we are spending, if the money is approved, \$30 million more or less on lot development. As I have noted previously here in this Legislature, for the four years prior to us coming into this position — the four years added up to \$24 million, over all four in total, in lot development. So, this one year, we will eclipse those four years combined.

We have said that we need to get the branch reinvesting, doing much more lot development, and we said — or I was tasked by the Premier and colleagues — to find other ways to explore lot development.

It's not usual that the government is the lot developer in most jurisdictions. So, we said, "Okay, we're going to start to explore some private sector lot development." This was one of those examples. It didn't work. So, that lot which went out for sale didn't have services in the ground — or those lots — they were undeveloped lots. So, the thinking was that the private sector would come in and they would take those lots. They would develop them, then they would build a house on them, and they would put it up on the market. That was an attempt of ours.

What we got, through conversations with the private developers, is that they needed bigger parcels. They needed to actually do a little bit of subdivision and do some work. So, we will try again on that front.

The other front that we are going to work on is working with First Nations in support of them because, as we saw, Kwanlin Dün First Nation has now registered title in the Land Titles Office and that's a bit of a game-changer. So, there is an opportunity there as well.

That lot that we were discussing didn't have an option to sell it at the development price because there was no developed cost. It was a different scenario altogether. That's not what we're doing generally. We will continue to work as the developer until such time as we see that it's working better with another system. The \$30 million that we're talking about right now is about historic development in the way that we have developed lots through the branch, and it is to get more lots out there.

I'll just stop there, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Ms. White: So, just to ask in a much shorter way: Does the minister believe that selling a lot for the \$23,000 over the asking price will affect current prices and future prices for others in the City of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yeah, of course. When you sell any lot anywhere, it affects the neighbours, just as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King noted in her earlier example. It always has an impact.

As I said, this was a trial. It didn't work out from our perspective. We're not continuing with that methodology. If we get single lots in the future, we will develop them. We will put them out for sale as per our current policies and practices. But we will continue to look for ways in which to try to engage the private sector.

What I'm trying to say here is that it is our hope that this will get lots on the market — number one — at a better price than if it were us. I don't know that will happen, but that is our goal. Also, the other thing that could be different is the speed at which those lots come to market. It takes a lot of time for us to get them to market currently, because there's a lot of prep and planning work that has to take place. Our goal is to try to expand how we do this work to see if we can improve it.

If we can't improve it, we're not going down that path.

Ms. White: One of my favourite topics — it's not going to change until security of tenure is achieved — has to do with mobile homes and mobile home parks. I'm not sure if the minister is aware or not, but there were a number of increases this summer. Some are now paying — in some parks, there is the calculation that, if you pay by a certain date, you can save yourself \$100, so it's not a penalty; it's phrased in a different way. But if it were phrased in any other way, it would be a \$100 penalty, which wouldn't be allowed.

I want to know — we have talked a lot of different times about security of tenure in mobile home parks. I want to know if the department is doing anything to look into the mobile home issue. Also, I brought it forward last year, when the residential tenancies office had made a recommendation or had made a decision during arbitration, that they follow through. It turned out that they hadn't followed through until we brought it forward. The minister told me that the residential tenancies office didn't follow up on whether their recommendations had been completed.

I would like to know where we are on the issue of mobile homes and if the residential tenancies office has changed their business practice and follows, especially when there are multiple people who will be affected by the recommendations.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am going to have to reach out to the branch directly and talk about the specific situation that happened. It is well over a year ago now — it might be two years ago now — when it was first brought to my attention by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I am sorry that I don't know today whether that changed. It was about whether the branch could — or how they would be able to follow up to make sure that their rules were being followed and whether they could be proactive or not. I am sorry that I don't have an answer today.

I know that we have been doing more outreach and public education, so I just have that general answer for the member today, and I will look to try to get some more specific information.

I know that the residential tenancies office is also working to work through all of its internal procedures so that they can ensure that they have got clear and consistent decision documents, and that hopefully will also help. When they have decision documents, they are also working to get peer review on those before they go out as a decision so that they can get some — so that it's not purely subjective all the time and that there is another group of eyes that are looking at them to try to see whether they are being consistent.

Ms. White: I guess that, in part, answers the question. The reason why I highlighted that issue specifically is that it was with 280 homes, and a decision had been made by the residential tenancies office to re-write leases. Almost a year later, it hadn't been done, which was way past the timeline. So, the reason why I am highlighting it is that it is different — and we have acknowledged here that it is different if it is one landlord and one tenant, and then we both agreed that, if it's one landlord and many tenants, it's a different situation, so I just wanted to know if the practice has been changed, but I will leave it.

The other concern that I've always had about mobile home parks is the sheer number of people who live there and, again, there is not that security of tenure. I wanted to know if the department or the minister has reached out to mobile-homeowners to have conversations about the challenges that they face or things that they would like to see.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have not reached out in what I will call a more formalized and proactive form. I certainly have had conversations with mobile-homeowners — not mobile home park owners, but mobile-homeowners — and have had correspondence from them and dialogue with them over time.

Let me also say that if the member opposite would like to have me come and speak with them, I would be happy to. I bet she could organize such a meeting, and I would be more than happy to come in and talk with them — or, for example, maybe folks from the residential tenancies office, if that is preferable. I could also work to make that happen.

I agree that there was a real concern that we are discussing here. There was a situation where there was a lease that was not

appropriate in its language. How we could be proactive around addressing that — again, I make the commitment to follow up with the residential tenancies office and get back to the member opposite.

The other thing that I wanted to say is that I agree that there are differences between mobile-homeownership because you are renting a space in a park. You both have some ownership of property, but you also are renting, and that makes for a very different set of relationships. I have always appreciated that this difference exists. I have had conversations with, for example, the City of Whitehorse about that situation and the security — or lack of security — around that. I don't have a silver bullet around this issue. I know that we have some disagreement about the correct approach to address this issue, but I am more than happy to have the conversation — and, in particular, to have it with the mobile-homeowners.

Ms. White: One could say that a petition being tabled with hundreds of signatures was the attempt at having a conversation with government. What I really want to know is if the government, through the Minister of Community Services, who is responsible for the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, will actually engage in a more — what's the word I'm looking for —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: — not so much “collective” — I appreciate the suggestion — in a more formal way with mobile-homeowners. So, in the 33rd Legislative Assembly after many years of conversation, the then-government sent out a survey to mobile-homeowners asking a selection of questions. It came back. The number that I can use is that about 89 percent of people in mobile home parks say that their homes are not mobile any longer, et cetera, et cetera.

What I wanted to know is if the minister plans on reaching out in a more formal way to those who live in mobile home parks?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's a fair point — the petition that came last year expressing concerns. Again, all I can say today is that I'm happy to sit down with mobile-homeowners, hear their concerns, and talk with them directly. I'm happy to do that through —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, I think the Member for Porter Creek North has a mobile home park in her riding; I think the Member for Copperbelt North has a mobile home park in his, and there are a couple outside of the city.

All that is to say — I appreciate that there are concerns, and I'm very willing to sit down with mobile-homeowners if they would like to sit down.

Ms. White: The Member for Porter Creek North has two parks, the Deputy Chair has one park, and I have the other three within the City of Whitehorse — which is the only one that's covered. The one in Faro is owned by the municipality. It was a campground with longer leases. As far as I know, the six within the municipal boundaries are the ones that are affected, but the minister can correct me; I stand to be corrected.

There was a Wood Products Association meeting a number of years ago talking about biomass. It was fascinating, and I

don't have all those numbers here. At the time, they were talking about how, if the Yukon pushed toward biomass for home heating, we had a number of generations of heating fuel — so standing dead trees within the territory that could be used as home heating fuel. The reason why I'm asking about this is: Through the FireSmart program and the piles of wood that are left behind, is that wood able to be sold? Or is that just — someone picks up a permit and then they are allowed to go collect it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, earlier when I was talking about this difference between FireSmart — which is sort of like the local scale around our homes and streets — and the broader scale landscape management — that is how it was first described to me, and we will call it “community resiliency”. The wood that is there on the scale of FireSmart is sort of small-end neighbourhoods, and because it's typically on Crown land — or it might be an individual who is doing their property, and they will keep the wood or give it to a neighbour as they wish. The wood that's there on the Crown land piece is typically stacked and left for anyone coming by, usually the neighbours, to use. It's not at the scale that we're talking about. We still want to see it used as biomass because it has that opportunity.

At the scale that we're talking about with the Wood Products Association — no, this is that bigger piece where, around communities, we're going to reduce fuel load. It won't be just a one-off sort of thing. The idea is that we should work with Forestry to decide: Are we going to replant with, say, aspen, poplar, or willow — some deciduous sort of plant? But we'll think of it as going through, and then — maybe within 10 year's time — we're right back on the cycle, and we just keep cycling through to keep those risks in check.

Wherever that fuel reduction is near, say, a roadway or is accessible, then that is going to yield wood that we think will be of sufficient quantity to make up this whole biomass-type market. I should note for the member opposite that, when we talk about this, some of it might be for home heating, but most of it — because our better solutions for home heating are retrofits and insulation, and at the home scale, it is usually to get the energy loads down and then just go with a simple, small heat source — electrical baseboards, typically, so fuel switching to electrical. Again, we are back to that whole renewable question. But it is at the bigger building scale like a school, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, or buildings the size of the Legislature and smaller where we talk about more commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings where we think that biomass will be the marketplace.

Will we work with the private sector? Yes, the Yukon Wood Products Association, for example — absolutely.

The last thing that I want to mention is that, when I first stood up in the Legislature this fall and talked about retrofits, I said that our plan was to try to get the legislation and the regulations here for us in the spring. I was mistaken. The time that we need in order to engage with the public will push us past the spring. I just want to correct the record and say that the department is targeting next fall for coming back to the Legislature with the retrofit local improvement charge program

— or whatever form it takes. I just wanted to add that to this response.

Ms. White: I had totally forgotten about that program, but what an opportunity to go back on it.

One of my concerns that I had highlighted, again — I insulated my house with access to a loan through the Yukon Housing Corporation. My mortgage has a lien on it that is owed to the Yukon Housing Corporation. When I finish paying off that loan, it will be removed from my mortgage, and I will obviously not owe the corporation any money if I sell my house.

The reason why I was asking questions earlier in the fall about the ministerial statement — when we talked about how it would be tied to property taxes — was the concern I had that, if a person purchased a house, accessed the program to be able to do energy retrofits, which increases the value of the house, and then sells the house at the higher cost because of the increased value with the property tax money still being there essentially a new homeowner purchasing that house could pay for those improvements twice: once by the increased value of the house, and again by paying back the loan through the property taxes.

I just wanted to know if the minister had anything further to add to that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm happy to get up and talk about this. The way I think we need to think about this is that — whether it is a local improvement charge or whether it is a lien or whether it is some other borrowing instrument, the important principle is that borrowing instrument is held against the property itself. Okay. Why? Because then the improvement is to the property, and the money owing is associated with the property so that, if that property is put up for sale, then it moves with it. The improvement moves with, and so does — I understand that the member opposite doesn't think that's right, but that's how the logic works with me — not just me; I think we're talking about — let me use the example of a well, because right now, someone can go and ask to borrow money to put in a well. When they borrow that money, it comes as a local improvement charge on their property. They have invested the money in the well, and that's an improvement to that property now. When they sell the property, that improvement is there. But there's also money outstanding on that just like there would be with a lien. That outstanding money is known to the seller, to the purchaser — to everybody. So, it's the difference between those two — the improvement and the money outstanding or owing — that is the overall net gain for the value of that property. Everyone is going to negotiate however they negotiate. That's their business. But it should all be transparent to the buyer and the seller.

That will work just as well for an energy retrofit. I don't know that we're going to end up agreeing here, and that's fine. I'm happy to have that debate and to carry it further. I will just simply trust in the professionalism of the department to do its diligence around this to make sure that there is no double-dipping, that it is all going to be transparent, and that we are working with municipalities to make sure that we are not

adding a burden to them — because local improvement charges can be a burden to them — and that everyone is on board.

Today, anyone is able to go and, if they wish, not turn to the government. If they want to make an investment in their property, they are very welcome to do so. They can borrow money against their property on a mortgage if they wish to do so — or a line of credit which is held against their property. A local improvement charge, in the same way, has to be disclosed in a sale.

I think that these are all just various versions of debt instruments that will allow us to get at the retrofits. It is so important to do this because not every Yukoner has the ability to have the cash on hand to do it, but if they can get the improvement — in other words, by reducing their energy costs — and if that is how they are able to pay back the LIC over time, then everyone can win.

Ms. White: The minister is right — we will disagree. I say this in terms of how I bought a house in Takhini north. There is a local improvement charge that I think I'm nearly done paying in 2020. It might be 2024. Houses in Takhini north were all on the same plumbing. If the person at the bottom of the street had their shower or dishwasher going and flushed their toilet, the person at the top of the street had no water. That was tied to the property, but it didn't increase the value of the house. The house wasn't worth more because I could flush my toilet and so could my neighbour at the same time. It wasn't viewed as more.

My concerns — and I think that I have expressed them — are that there are people who purchase and then flip houses here. They do some improvements and you can sell it for more, so I have those concerns. I will highlight them and hope that the department speaks to the realtors association and others because I think they might have some feedback. I have put it on record, so if it turns out to be a problem later on, I know that I have said my piece — so that's okay for me.

We have talked a lot about the exceptional wildfire season — climate change and how it's affecting us. Last Monday, it was plus 12. We were the hottest place in Canada and all the snow we had melted. It's now an ice rink and it's terrifying. I have heard friends talk about driving to a dry spot of ground to get out and walk the dog back and forth numerous times before they get in the car and drive away. The dog was not impressed, by the way.

The one reason why I want to talk about the exceptional fire season is also an acknowledgement of the work that was done, because it was incredible. It went much longer; it was a much longer season than has been typical in the past. I wanted to know if there has been discussion within the department about extending the wildland fire management season to better respond to late-season fires like the one we saw this year.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: By the way, I really appreciate the question. I'm just going to run back for a second — not to be pedantic or to stretch it out. I think that if someone were buying a house at the top of the street where the plumbing wasn't working, and if they were able to ask — that brings down the price of that house, whereas the local improvement charge, when it goes through, is to redo the plumbing for everybody.

So, you know, when you get it on a street level, everybody pays the same. It's probably true that it benefits those people at one end of the street more than the other, depending on the situation, but everybody will benefit from the fact that there's new plumbing that's out there.

I will take the suggestion from the member opposite and make sure that the department is looking to try to make sure — we want the system to capture the improvement and reflect it — and that there is a way to pay it back over time. That's the whole point.

Onto wildfire management — I'll break the question down in a couple of ways. The first one — and the most important way — is that we can't just keep going on with what we have been doing. We can't just wait for the fires to come and then respond. We need to be more proactive.

We've always had a piece of that proactiveness there, which is the preparedness piece, if you like. But now we need to work more on prevention. That is a whole phase.

Do we know, for example, from one year to the next that prevention is going to pay off? No. You can't know these things. What you have to do is trust that it is a better investment to put into prevention so that, over time, your situation improves.

But the challenge is that it's not easy to measure those things and you don't know, and — knock on wood — I hope we never have to know. I hope we never have the type of situation where we are threatened, but we need to do the work around it ahead of time. So, prevention has to happen and preparedness has to happen.

How are we doing the budgeting? Yeah, we recognize that our current budgeting, where we put in \$6.5 million — not quite \$7 million — to wildfire fighting — the average over the past five years has been much more than that. From a budgeting perspective, we need to adjust how we're doing — although we'll never be able to anticipate when it will be a large or a small fire year with certitude ahead of time. So, we still will have some uncertainty in wildland fire, but I think what climate change says to us is that we have to do more work to prepare and to prevent.

Ms. White: We had asked during the appearance of the witnesses from the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board as to whether or not wildland firefighters were going to be considered in presumptive legislation. I just wanted to know if the Minister of Community Services has been having that conversation with his colleague.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I understand that there is a conversation which is underway. I don't have a definitive response. I know that, on principle, when we were talking about first responders, it was more about the notion of the trauma that they encounter — whereas you certainly can't take away from the hard work that wildland fire folk do, but they are often not on the front lines of trauma.

I don't have an answer today, just that I understand that there is a conversation underway between the department and the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Ms. White: I would suggest that the front lines of high stress situations — life or death — could be traumatic, so I will

just leave that there. I mean, it is a valuable conversation to have in the future.

With the announcement of glass jars — non-beverage glass, non-deposit glass — no longer being collected from Raven Recycling, for example; Whitehorse Blue Bin Recycling is not picking it up either — I just wanted to know if the department has any plans on maybe alternative uses to glass jars, or what kind of pocket industry might pop up in Yukon to deal with Yukon's glass issue now.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have had several conversations around glass. So, when our recyclers came to us and said that they were no longer going there with glass, it was, of course — how can I frame it? It is not what we were hoping for, but we understand why it is. I have had several conversations in the community since then, and I do want to say that — not just around glass, but overall — recycling is still a very large challenge for us as a territory. I wish there were simple solutions; there are not. I know that the recyclers and also the Solid Waste Advisory Committee are working hard to try to come up with some solutions.

Here is what the smart folks at Environment and the recyclers and Community Services have tried: as an aggregate for cement, as a material for asphalt, and as sand for our roads. They have gone, for example, to Lumel Studios to try to talk to them about whether they could use it. The problem is that there are so many different types of glass, and once they are just all mixed together, you can't separate them, and whenever you work with that type of glass and you fire it and then you anneal it, it just shatters because they cool differently or something like that. They have been trying a bunch of solutions.

My next step — and I have talked with both the Department of Environment and the Department of Community Services Operations branch — is to try to move over to a group like NorthLight, the Cold Climate Innovation centre, or some folks who are outside of our normal sphere to work on a bunch of brainstorming around materials. I have to say that, even though I was really disappointed about glass, our bigger problems today are with plastic and cardboard. Although it is unfortunate about glass, if I could get a solution, I wish I could get it on plastic or cardboard. So, when I do turn to these innovators to try to task them to come up with solutions, I am not going to constrain it to just glass. I will look to solutions on any of these fronts.

What we are looking for is a local, scalable solution for us. We have done well. With glass, for example, I am thankful that we still have glass bottles being reused — not all of them, but some of them — and that is a good thing. So, the refund system still stays in place and still happens. On the compost front, we have had more local solutions, which are great, because that has been a real problem for our landfills. We need to scale it out to the communities, though.

There are a few other small wins, but generally this is a real challenge overall.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that. It's one of those things where — and again, I've said it before — we did a really good job telling people that recycling was free and it was never free. People had this misunderstanding that glass was actually being

shipped south. It wasn't. It was being crushed and being used as weight at the transfer facility. It costs money to crush the glass and it costs money to transport it. It costs for all those things. So, I do understand why, for example, the recyclers were forced to make that decision.

It is super fascinating that in Vancouver, effective January 1, 2020, businesses are required to comply with a city-wide ban that restricts licence-holders from serving prepared food and beverages in foam cups and foam take-out containers. The City of Vancouver is upping their game, I would say, in removing those single-use things.

I know that the minister and I both share a passion for waste reduction and recycling. I just thought I would highlight that I saw that online today and thought, "Well, this is exciting." We are lucky in the Yukon that a lot of businesses have already moved away from single-use foam, but in Vancouver, where they have a lot more food and beverage businesses, they still haven't. I'm excited to see that.

One of the things that we often talk about here is our diversion. One of the things that we had discussed previously — but then was committed to in the throne speech — was the banning of single-use bags. I wanted to know if the minister could tell us where we're at and the expected time when we might arrive at the day when we don't get those plastic bags at the grocery store any longer.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for her comments. It is true that waste costs, and recycling costs, too. Although, one of the places — and there are some great champions out there — reduction doesn't always cost — right? If you can find ways to reduce, I think that's great.

Kudos to the City of Vancouver, by the way. We have been in conversation with environmental health on how we can make this work. There are some competing forces there, and I'm hopeful that we get there.

With respect to single-use bags, we did sit down — the Minister of Environment and I were briefed recently by the folks working on it. I will note for all of us here that it will, at some point, move out of my — because typically, when we were thinking about a designated material regulation and there was going to be a price on bags well, then it would be the Department of Community Services putting that price on the bags. Now that we're talking about a ban outright, it's a little bit different. It will be done mostly through the Department of Environment. We were trying for a timeline of this spring for the plastic bags. We had a conversation with the business community about timing that would work for them. It looks, though, that, because we have gone with the option of a ban, it will require more engagement.

I recall, when we had the ministerial statement, that there were lots of questions posed by members opposite about whether — a range of bags on the periphery, for example, like dry-cleaning bags, or bags within bags, and so all these questions. From sitting down with the department recently, it looks like working with the business community to understand it all will likely take us to the fall of 2020. That looks like our current timeline.

I think there is still a question that we've had with the business community about whether we start with plastics and then move to paper bags. I note that there aren't as many places, or there is no place — no jurisdiction across the country that I know of — that has put in place a ban on paper yet. But again, the more we can reduce, the better we are.

Ms. White: I was doing multiple things at the same time, and I'm not sure if I heard necessarily a timeline, so maybe the minister can add that next.

Does the department work with any private businesses — for example, Blue Bin Recycling — to collect numbers on the number of folks who are accessing that service just to have an idea of what the diversion rates might be at this point?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I did say that the timeline that we were looking at was the fall of 2020 for the start of the single-use bags — probably starting with plastics and then probably phasing in with paper, but that's part of the engagement that has to happen.

All of the folks involved in the solid-waste and diversion community all work in and around each other. Sometimes it's the municipality that works more closely with Blue Bin Recycling because they are within this municipality. I'm not exactly sure where we go to get all of our data. I think we do it more at the sorting stations at the end. Once it all comes in, then I think it all gets collected up and you do sampling or waste audits. I know the member opposite has been a part of some of those audits. I've done some of them with her.

I don't know how closely we work with Blue Bin Recycling, but we do need to work with our recyclers in order to understand all of the processes — for example, how the markets are working, et cetera, and in collecting data.

Ms. White: The reason why I say that is that, when the City of Whitehorse tried to encourage or push toward Blue Bin collection so that the recyclers would have a more guaranteed source of funding — the reason why I was wondering if the Department of Community Services works with that private business at all is to find out, for example, what the uptake has been — it is just about trying to do things better. I can say for myself that, in my household of many people, it was me who would go to the recycling depot and it was me who would sort everything, so when I was assured by Raven Recycling that Blue Bin Recycling was making enough to make it viable, I switched, because my time was worth substantially more than the money I spend a month on the recycling pickup. So, I appreciate the service, for example.

I wanted to know if the Yukon government is doing anything to encourage social enterprise or any other entrepreneurship when it comes to waste management.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just got a note. My understanding is that Blue Bin Recycling is approaching 900 to 1,000 customers, and I thank the member for her comments about Blue Bin Recycling and about it being a service that people can pick up.

My understanding is that, overall, recycling rates are around 30 percent in the City of Whitehorse. In rural Yukon, it is around 25 percent, which is great but not as high as it needs to be ultimately, and there are some real challenges.

The question was around social enterprises. Yes, we are working at it on two fronts. The first one is just broadly with social enterprises and how they work as societies or as businesses, because they have to fall under a piece of legislation, so we work with them through Corporate Policy and Consumer Affairs. Also, we work with them. By the way, I will say that Raven Recycling has said to me that they believe themselves to be a social enterprise, which I appreciate.

We are happy to work with groups because, however we get there, we are going to need to have all hands on deck. As the member opposite has said before, "Waste costs money." The phrase I like to use is "There is some heavy lifting to do, and we all need to do our part".

Mr. Deputy Chair, noting the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

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

Chair's report

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Written notice was given of the following motion November 25, 2019:

Motion No. 127

Re: Establishing the Select Committee on Electoral Reform (Silver)