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HANSARD

Tuesday, November 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to help me welcome a few guests who are here today for one of the tributes: Dr. Patrick Rouble, who is the new president of Skills/Compétences Canada National Board; Samantha Hand, the executive director of Skills Canada Yukon; Suzan Davy, the director of training and programs at the Department of Education; and Lenna Charlie, who is the industrial training consultant at the Department of Education.

Thank you for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month

Hon. Ms. Frost: Drin gwiinzii; good afternoon. I rise in the House today to recognize Indigenous Disability Awareness Month. In 2015, the Province of British Columbia, together with the BC First Nations Summit and the Métis Nation of British Columbia, dedicated the month of November to recognizing indigenous people with disabilities. The following year, the Council of Yukon First Nations as well as the Province of Saskatchewan and the Assembly of First Nations also officially proclaimed the month.

These proclamations are important ones because they recognize the ongoing intergenerational effects that European contact and colonialization has had on indigenous peoples across this country, including the history and legacy of residential school systems. According to the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, the disability rate among indigenous Canadians is approximately 30 percent — a rate that is two times higher than the general population.

Indigenous communities, families, and individuals face many challenges and barriers. These can include reduced economic and job opportunities, lack of adequate housing, education inequity, geographical remoteness, transportation issues, and limited community supports and services. These factors can affect access of indigenous people with disabilities to the health and social services that would enable them to reach their full potential and lead healthy, productive, and happy lives.

Indigenous people also face another major obstacle: the social stigma associated with some form of disability. Removing these barriers and inequities so that indigenous people with disabilities can access the care and support they need is an essential step toward advancing reconciliation.

Here in Yukon, we are working to address these systemic issues. The Department of Health and Social Services has moved away from the old medical model that required a disability diagnosis before providing services. We are breaking down barriers by providing support to anyone who can demonstrate a disability regardless of whether or not there is a medical diagnosis. We have brought together people with lived experience, community members, government departments, and NGOs to collaborate and identify the work that is needed to improve the lives of all Yukoners with disabilities.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, advancing reconciliation is a foundational element of *Putting People First*, the independent expert panel's final report. Specifically, the report recommends mandatory cultural safety and humility training and a continuous education process for all health and social service providers, managers, and leaders. In response to this recommendation, Health and Social Services is working with Yukon First Nations to develop mandatory cultural safety training for Health and Social Services and Yukon Hospital Corporation staff which will begin to roll out in the spring of next year.

To quote *Putting People First*: “Cultural humility is a continuous process of self-reflection used to understand the personal and systemic biases that affect our interactions with others.” This approach will improve health outcomes for indigenous Yukoners — in particular, those with disabilities. I would like to say mahsi' cho to all Yukon First Nation governments for their collaboration and guidance as we move this important work forward. I would also like to thank the many Yukon community organizations that provided valuable supports and services to people with disabilities, including the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, Inclusion Yukon, Teegatha'Oh Zheh, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Options for Independence, Autism Yukon, and the LDAY Centre for Learning.

As we recognize Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, I encourage all Yukoners to reflect on their own biases and to acknowledge themselves as learners when it comes to understanding the experiences of people with disabilities.

Mahsi' cho, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Indigenous Disability Awareness Month in Canada. The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, or BCANDS, created this awareness month to draw national attention to the barriers facing indigenous people living with a variety of disabilities. BCANDS is an award-winning, indigenous, not-for-profit, charitable society that supports the unique and diverse barriers in First Nation communities. This is the only

organization of its kind in Canada, and it assists people across the country.

These barriers include but are not limited to poverty, lack of coordination between federal, provincial and territorial governments in relation to areas of responsibility, limited access to supports due to remoteness, transportation, and accessibility to health services.

Often, data collected and distributed on disabilities affecting Canadians is done about entire populations across provinces and territories; however, according to Statistics Canada, rates of disability among First Nation people living off-reserve and Métis were higher than for non-indigenous people across all age groups and geography.

In 2017, 30 percent of First Nation people living off-reserve and 30 percent of Métis had one or more disabilities that limited them in their daily activities. There is limited research on disability types among indigenous people, but disabilities most frequently reported are chronic health issues such as back pain, hearing impairment, vision problems, learning disabilities, and cognitive or mental health issues.

We acknowledge and applaud the BCANDS for their work on this important initiative. Their contribution of face masks and pins in commemoration to members of the House is appreciated and will raise awareness. The fact that this society is able to assist indigenous Canadians to overcome some of the barriers is commendable. The people who are helped will in turn bring significant contributions to communities across Canada.

I look forward to the expansion and recognition of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month across Canada. Again, thank you to the wonderful work of BCANDS and to all the other organizations that work jointly with us to better lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I am pleased to join in recognition of November as Indigenous Disability Awareness Month. As we've already heard today, conservative estimates from Statistics Canada indicate that there are more than half a million indigenous persons of all ages living with a disability across Canada.

Here in Yukon, the prevalence of a disability among indigenous Yukoners, combined with challenges such as income inequity, limited access to resources and infrastructure, lack of access to transportation, discrimination — often outright racism — presents continued obstacles.

You know, at times it appears little has changed in the 40-plus years since my first visit as a social worker with a family in a Yukon First Nation community where the husband was a childhood polio survivor.

Childhood polio survivors in major urban centres faced daunting challenges. A small community in north-central Yukon faced huge odds trying to respond to the care needs of this person and his family. At about the same time, it became clear that there were different — I would say discriminatory — practices when it came to care for First Nation Yukoners with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. Families talked about

children and other family members who were somewhere; they didn't know where. Over several years, visits were paid to institutions and group homes outside of the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to remind this Assembly that there was no Jordan's Principle. Equity of care and connection to family and community were not high on either the Yukon or federal governments' radar. There was resistance from both to repatriating and reconnecting people who, by rights, should have been living in Yukon close to family in familiar surroundings.

Over the years, the lived experience of indigenous Yukon citizens has evolved, often at great personal cost. In a society that devalues and sometimes punishes differences of any kind, women especially faced many barriers. One such woman was Judi Johnny. Many in this House will remember Judi. Her persistence made her difficult to forget. Judi was a First Nation citizen from Smith Sound, BC, who made Yukon her home. She was confined to a wheelchair for the last 25 years of her life. She had post-polio syndrome, cerebral palsy, and arthritis. Despite the serious challenges her physical health posed, Judi said — and I quote: "I've been disabled all my life, that's just a physical sense, because I've hardly ever thought of that as a major inconvenience, I thought of trying to get the services as an inconvenience, but not my disability..."

Try she did. She was adamant that she and all disabled people should have access to restaurants, stores, sidewalks, and public spaces. She was especially passionate about the importance of improved public transport for people living with physical disabilities. The number of calls that I got, along with mayors and other politicians, over the years about the challenges that she and others faced trying to use public transit to get to and from medical appointments or meetings was evidence of her persistence.

Judi believed that disability should not be a barrier to engagement with community. From her initial involvement in the mid-1980s with DisAbled Women's Network Canada to serving on the Status of Women Council, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Council on DisABILITY, Second Opinion Society, the Whitehorse Food Bank, the Whitehorse Public Library, the Yukon Association for Community Living, and Yukon Learn, Judi believed that her voice mattered. With her trademark red flag flying above her motorized scooter, Judi loved showing up where people least expected a disabled person to be.

She knew that by making her voice heard, others living with disabilities would recognize that they have rights and that they have a right to have those rights respected. Judi dealt with systemic racism throughout her life. Imagine being told that government would not approve additional oxygen because you had used your allotment for portable oxygen bottles. When she most needed that help, that was the response.

Mr. Speaker, Judy's death in February 2015 reinforced our understanding that there are people in our midst who sometimes irritate us because they challenge the systems that govern us. They are the people who take risks, sometimes surprising themselves at the risks that they take, and who realize that they

do have a voice and that they have both a right and an obligation to engage in civil society.

Judi Johnny, a disabled indigenous woman, challenged us, as citizens and as politicians, to live up to principles, such as equality, through equitable access to services. Just as Judi Johnny never took the easy way out, in her honour and through her, in honour of all disabled indigenous people, nor should we. As we mark Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, we are challenged to see that making a difference with and for disabled individuals is about more than words. We're called to listen and to act.

Applause

In recognition of National Skilled Trades and Technology Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise on behalf of the Yukon government to pay tribute and recognition to National Skilled Trades and Technology Week 2020. It takes place this year from November 1 to 8. This event is sponsored and organized by Skills/Compétences Canada.

Congratulations to the vice-president of Skills Canada Yukon, Dr. Patrick Rouble, for his election as president of the Skills/Compétences Canada national board. It is always so valuable when Yukoners take on the challenge of becoming the voice of national organizations.

This week we recognize and celebrate tradespeople, technicians, and technologists who provide essential services to our communities. They build our buildings, bake our cakes, pave our roads, improve our bandwidth, fix our faucets, cut our hair, design our clothes, repair our cars, electrify our homes, and prepare amazing and innovative food — to just name a few. If we didn't properly appreciate and understand the critical role of these skilled workers and how they play in every corner of our territory before now, the last seven months have made that perfectly clear.

As with so many events, the National Skilled Trades and Technology Week activities look different this year. Throughout this week, virtual activities and events will take place to raise awareness and highlight the critical role of tradespeople in our Canadian society and economy.

In recognition of this year's many challenges, the theme for this week's celebration is "Digital". During this week, Yukon youth have a chance to participate in many activities. There is an online social media challenge to bake cookies with a digital theme; there is a sewing workshop hosted by YuKconstruct's Makerspace; a 3D game development workshop with YuKconstruct; and an inventor's academy series focused on graphic design hosted at Yukon University — all projects and experiences involving unique skilled trades and technology that youth may not have thought about or experienced before.

These experiences will showcase careers that are personally and financially rewarding and really offer unique opportunities. More than 400 trades are designated by provinces and territories — 56 of those are red seal trades that comply to national standards and examinations.

Approximately one in five employed Canadians work in the skilled trades. Encouraging youth to consider trades or a

trades career will help our economy thrive and prevent a shortage of these highly skilled workers.

I would like to take a moment to thank the many people who support Yukon students to explore careers in the skilled trades. They include Yukon parents, our businesses and makers, Yukon University, secondary school teachers, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, and the Department of Education's apprenticeship and trades certification unit staff. I would like to recognize Vernon Beebe — who couldn't be here today but I understand is listening online and is the industrial training consultant — and, of course, volunteers. This is also the time of year when we usually celebrate apprenticeship graduates and their amazing accomplishments. So, I would just like to take this moment to congratulate the 32 recent Yukon apprenticeship graduates who received their certification recently and wish them every success in their careers.

Let's remember this week to recognize and to thank all of our tradespeople for keeping our communities and economy moving and for making our lives better through their hard work and innovation.

Thank you. Merci. Shaw nithän.

Applause

Mr. Kent: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 1 through 8 as National Skilled Trade and Technology Week in Canada. This event aims to promote awareness around the opportunities that are presented to those who enter skilled trades and technology. This year, Skills Canada is planning to host activities virtually to encourage and educate students, parents, and others about the different opportunities that trades and technology have to offer. The theme for this year is "Digital", focusing on one of the essential skills used in so many trades and technology professions. Digital skills enable the use of a number of evolving technologies and are ever-changing in our fast-paced technological world.

From simpler devices such as cash registers and basic office software to more technical tools and applications, learning to comprehend input, analyze, and communicate through the use of digital technologies will be useful across all professions. We are fortunate here in the Yukon to be home to individuals, organizations, and institutions that focus solely on getting people into trades and technology.

Skills Canada Yukon does such an amazing job throughout the year promoting skilled trades and technology to youth as they move toward choosing an education and career path. The organization offers such experiences to Yukon youth as school presentations, workshops, and the Territorial Skills Competition, which unfortunately was cancelled for this year due to the pandemic.

Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, or YWITT, offers programming opportunities to high school-aged girls to allow them to try out different trades to see whether one might be a good fit for them. The organization offers bursaries and opportunities to women furthering their education in the trades and technology, making access easier.

I would also like to mention that the Yukon is home to an incredible and innovative career training facility, the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, or CNIM. Located at Yukon University, CNIM offers industry training on-site and via their mobile classrooms and simulators. Students gain invaluable and customizable programming suitable for a number of mine-related professions.

To all our skilled tradesmen and tradeswomen across the Yukon: Thank you for following your passions and getting into truly fulfilling careers. Your skills are needed and appreciated across the territory.

For youth who would like to find out more about trades and technology, chat with a teacher or get in touch with Skills Canada Yukon or YWITT to find out more on how to get involved and hopefully find your place in trades and technology.

I would like to thank and recognize a number of individuals — of course, Dr. Patrick Rouble, president of Skills Canada and part of the Skills Canada Yukon Board of Directors; Gerry Quarton, president of Skills Canada Yukon; and Samantha Hand, executive director for Skills Canada Yukon; as well as President Linda Benoit and executive director Brenda Barnes from YWITT. Both of these organizations made time for me earlier this fall to discuss their priorities, plans, and challenges during the pandemic. Their work and dedication to youth in helping them to find their way into trades and tech is much appreciated.

Applause

Ms. White: On behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, I stand to recognize National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. Although 2020 will have a different look and format, Skills Canada's ultimate goal has not changed, and that's to create an increased awareness of the rewarding and lucrative career opportunities in the trades and technology sectors.

This year's activities will be hosted on virtual platforms across the country using fun, engaging formats that will educate everyone who is interested about skilled trades and technology career choices.

We're lucky in Yukon to have two NGOs fully engaged in the trades and technology fields. Skills/Compétences Yukon encourages, supports, and promotes skilled trades and technologies to Yukon youth. They engage youth in elementary and secondary classrooms across the territory through skills clubs, hands-on workshops, and in-school presentations. They showcase trades and technology training in exciting and creative ways. Imagine skateboard building and *Chopped*-style cooking competitions. They support teachers and volunteers to offer content that engages and inspires the students. This week, they are hosting a heap of activities to introduce young people to trades and technology. We thank them and all of their volunteers and mentors for their continued support and involvement.

Yukon Women in Trades and Technology is an industry leader, forging partnerships with local businesses and tradespeople to expose young women to the possibilities of a career in the trades or technology sectors. This year, since the

last week of October, every Monday until mid-December, YWITT is facilitating an eight-week afterschool program called "Power Up". These skilled trade sessions are held at various locations around Whitehorse. The weekly sessions explore carpentry, plumbing, electrical, tiling, and fabrication technology as well as other offerings.

We thank Skills/Compétences Canada for knowing how important it is to expose folks to skilled trades and technology. We wish to express our appreciation for the teachers, tradespeople, parents, educators, workers, employers, and volunteers who are part of the skilled trades and, of course, the students who take part in National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. We wish every success to the youth of today in building tomorrow's future.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 3 — response

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise to respond to Petition No. 3. This petition is calling on the Government of Yukon to ensure that dock access for the Tagish River waterfront lot owners is built into the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area management plan.

I thank those individuals who have taken the time to sign the petition and take part in the public meetings to review the draft management plan. Establishing the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area and a management plan for it is a commitment under the *Carcross/Tagish First Nation Final Agreement*. The planning process started in 2015 by a steering committee with representatives from the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the Government of Yukon, and the Government of Canada, with participation by the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council and the Tagish Local Advisory Council.

In developing the draft plan, the committee held eight community events, sent a questionnaire to residents, and conducted interviews with citizens. The committee heard concerns regarding shoreline water use, disturbance to swans and other wildlife, and access to the Tagish River. The steering committee considered these concerns when creating the draft management plan. The draft plan balances the diverse natural, social, and cultural interests in the Tagish River area and takes a unique approach in braiding traditional knowledge and storytelling to form the basis of the plan.

The steering committee hosted public meetings of this draft plan and its 33 recommendations throughout October. These meetings were well-attended and generated constructive dialogue, including potential options for the waterfront access. These were not easy discussions. This is a special area, and people are passionate about how it will be managed in the future. That is exactly why a management plan needs to be established and why establishing that plan must respect the

process established in our agreements for having these conversations and moving forward together.

Now that the public engagement period has ended, the steering committee will consider the suggestions that it received and will work to recommend a final management plan to the government for approval. While I appreciate the concerns raised by the Tagish River waterfront property owners, the Government of Yukon will not pre-empt the work of the steering committee, nor will it dictate terms of the final draft management plan. The Government of Yukon has committed to a collaborative planning process, and we believe that it is important to support the steering committee in conducting its work through the proper process.

I would like to once again thank the steering committee for its dedicated work. The committee has demonstrated exceptional intergovernmental collaboration while navigating these challenging issues. Mahsi'.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?
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 review its policy regarding school operations in extreme weather events in order to:

- (1) prioritize staff and student safety;
- (2) ensure that Government of Yukon directives do not contradict directives from First Nation or municipal governments; and
- (3) reflect the impact that climate change has on extreme weather events in Yukon.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

F.H. Collins Secondary School track and field facility

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The F.H. Collins track and field facility was finally completed this year. We're very proud to have a sporting asset of this calibre in our community. At the end of the summer, I had the privilege of commemorating its grand opening, along with partners from Athletics Yukon, the Yukon Soccer Association, and F.H. Collins. I was lucky enough to break in the track with Darby McIntyre during the first unofficial race on the new track. Congrats to Darby who beat me soundly.

Mr. Speaker, the new track is an eight-lane, 400-metre, rubberized track built to international standards. It also features shot put, steeplechase, pole vault, two long-jump pits, one high-jump pit, an area to play volleyball or tennis, and our first artificial turf soccer pitch — the first outdoor pitch north of 60.

Community recreation infrastructure like this helps bring people together. An outdoor complex such as this one provides a safe, spacious place for people to connect with each other and get fresh air and exercise while staying safely distanced. The

amount of use that the facility has already seen illustrates what an important asset it is. The track has already evolved into a community hub. This track and field will be instrumental in attracting future tournaments and games to the Yukon, and it will allow our elite athletes to become more competitive when they go outside of the territory.

I would like to thank the people who helped advocate for this facility, including Athletics Yukon, the Yukon Soccer Association, schools, and other organizations. Thank you to Dave Stockdale who has been instrumental in Yukon soccer and other sports for his vision and drive. Thank you also to Don White, head coach for Athletics Yukon, for continuing to push for opportunities for Yukon athletes. These partners and others initiated planning for a complex in 2014.

Thanks to the hard work of these organizations, our Sport and Recreation branch, and our Infrastructure Development branch, we secured federal funding and provided our own Government of Yukon contributions to build this new facility.

Sidhu Trucking was responsible for construction and Associated Engineering did the design of the facility, and both did a fantastic job. Thanks to ATCO Electric for helping us to move power lines to allow for the regulation-sized track and field.

Now our partners at the sporting organizations plan to use this track to take sporting in our community to the next level. Athletics Yukon plans to register this track to the International Association of Athletics Federations' standards so that the track can be used for national track and field competitions in the future. The new complex will also provide Yukon with the opportunity to host national events and major games in the future, such as the Canada 55+ Games and the Western Canada Summer Games. It also opens up opportunities for Paralympic sports and allows Yukoners to train locally on a world-class facility.

Ahead of the opening two months ago, I spoke with Jessica Frotten. She said — and I quote: "I remember when I was first getting started in Para athletics and having a facility to train at home was a dream. To see a state of the art facility accessible to all is a dream come true! I want to send out an earth shaking thank you to all the builders and the drivers behind this. A lot of thought and work has gone into making this facility accessible to everyone. Sport for all! I can't wait to come get my first laps in at home!"

We look forward to bringing people together from around the world to compete here in the Yukon when conditions allow.

Our government has always been committed to building healthy, thriving communities that are wonderful places to work and live. I am very proud that our government played a part in the construction of this new, great addition to our community.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this today. I appreciate the minister updating us on an announcement that he made at the beginning of September. We, too, agree that this sport facility will be a big benefit to the community, and Yukon athletes will benefit from it.

We are happy to see it finally completed and look forward to years of community benefit associated with it. Thank you to all the sport groups and Yukon athletes who worked so hard and played a part in getting this across the finish line.

Ms. White: Today in speaking about the new track and field at F.H. Collins, there is one person who I know has been involved since the beginning and has followed the construction very closely every step of the way. My dad, Don White, is a runner and has been a running and track and field coach for as long as I can remember. He is currently a director of the board of Athletics Yukon, a board where he has sat since 1987. I have adapted his speech from the opening ceremony to respond to today's ministerial statement.

For him and others like him, it had always been a dream and a hope that, one day, we would have a real track to train and compete on here in Yukon.

When he first began running at F.H. Collins in 1985, there was a paved track on the upper bench where the parking lot now sits. The track was maybe 400 metres around, maybe four or five lanes wide, with frost cracks, hills and steep bumps. It was replaced with a gravel track that was six lanes wide, plagued with mud in the spring and subject to rutting by eager young men who wanted to race around an oval in trucks. It was maintained by volunteers with Athletics Yukon. It was a 400-metre track, but as measured in lane 2 and not lane 1 as required.

With the construction of the existing F.H. Collins Secondary School, Athletics Yukon volunteers measured, marked and mowed out a 400-metre track on the grass field on the lower bench. The power line that used to run adjacent to the track impeded the configuration of the track. The track was really long and really skinny. A gravel track was subsequently built on the site, and permission was received from Yukon Electrical to encroach on the powerline right-of-way, but the track was still really long and really skinny. It measured the required 400 metres around, but that was on the cement curve marking the inside of lane 1, but not where athletes run in lane 1.

When the volunteer Yukon Outdoor Sports Complex Association started planning for an outdoor sports complex that would incorporate two soccer pitches with a track facility, it was the first time that groups other than Athletics Yukon began looking at developing a facility such as what we have here today. This is what he said: "Thank you to all of those who served on that volunteer board for your foresight and determination to build that facility."

When the new track was being discussed, Athletics Yukon always pressed for it to meet the World Athletics specifications. The requirement is for a minimum of eight lanes with a 400-metre distance measured 30 centimetres into lane 1. The main reasons for this are that we wouldn't be able to hold any certified competition on the track if it was shorter than 400 metres in lane 1, and we couldn't hold any event other than local, regional and school meets on the track if it didn't have a minimum of eight lanes. This track, with its synthetic coating, starting lines for all of the running distances, lane lines, markers

for the placement of hurdles, steeplechase barriers, water jump, and finish line — also with its horizontal jump pits, pole vault box, area for the high jump pit, and a shot put throwing area — meets most of the requirements for Athletics Yukon to host a territorial, a national, and even an international competition. As he points out, we still need a site to throw the discus, hammer and javelin on. He hopes that this will be in phase 2.

At the time of the opening ceremony, Athletics Yukon and F.H. Collins had already begun using the track for practices and training purposes. It is his hope that they will be able to attract more athletes to join them, running, jumping, and throwing in Yukon. Yukon athletes will now not arrive at a national competition having never worn a pair of racing spikes, never run on rubber, thrown in a real shot put circle, or long jumped in a sandpit. He goes on to say that there are a few things that they need yet and a whole lot of equipment, but, as of today, he says that we are so far ahead of where we were when this project started. So, Mr. Speaker, he waited 35 years for this track, and I can assure you that he and others at Athletics Yukon are pumped about it.

So, I have a few questions for the minister: Why are the lights on at night illuminating the track in the middle of winter? How will the track and field be protected for now and into the future from misuse?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to thank members opposite for their support for this really important project for the territory. It is a new standard for us — a new moment to note.

It's tough, when looking earlier this week or yesterday when we got like two feet of snow on top of that track — but one of the reasons that we have this artificial field and this track is because in the springtime, when we start putting our students and athletes on the tracks, they're just so eager to get on those fields that they destroy them right away. What we need is something like this — an artificial turf that will allow athletes to get out there and play early in the spring while saving our grass pitches just for a little bit longer until we get into the spring and that ground gets a little more unfrozen.

I'm just so excited that we have something that is so inclusive and that it's going to be for all Yukoners. I just love the phrase "sport for all".

I will happily check on the questions from the member opposite about lights. I do know that there has been a committee struck that is working on how to get as much access as possible to the track and the field while protecting it over the long term. I know that, when we first made announcements about the track and field opening up, we did some work to talk to the public to educate them about how to keep the track over time.

So, just a quick note I can say for all Yukoners — please don't take your dogs on the track. It's not a place for them to go to the washroom.

Mr. Speaker, I am so happy for the Yukon. I thank all the members of this House for showing their appreciation and support for this — just a moment to mark for the Yukon.

Applause

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Secure medical unit incident

Mr. Hassard: So, we've heard from several members of the medical community about an incident at the secure medical unit at the hospital here in Whitehorse. A psychiatrist at the unit was assaulted by a patient.

Staff who use the space had indicated previously that their workspace was not safe. The result of this incident is that contracted psychiatrists will no longer provide services at the Whitehorse General Hospital until safety issues and conditions in the secure medical unit are addressed.

Can the minister tell us if she was aware of this and what she's doing to resolve it?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Yes, I was made aware of the incident. We are certainly looking into it and meeting with the CEO of the Hospital Corporation and the department to look at rectifying the situation after looking into the matter.

Mr. Hassard: The new emergency department was constructed with additional upstairs space for future development. It was always our understanding that this shelled space was intended to be used for the badly needed new secure medical unit. Now we know that the Yukon Hospital Corporation has been asking this government for the funding needed to develop this new space, but unfortunately the government has refused.

Will the minister commit today to providing the funding needed to develop a new secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That's absolutely not correct. We have been working with the Hospital Corporation on a secure medical unit. We have been working on a design model. I'm happy to say that we have a plan in effect and that is to look at completing the project that the previous government started and left a shell of a facility. We're now incorporating some models and that's being done in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation.

Mr. Hassard: We recognize that the government provided planning money to the Yukon Hospital Corporation a year and a half ago and that planning work is done. Now the Yukon Hospital Corporation is looking for the funding to actually begin the development. It's clear that this space is needed. So, why did the minister not include funding for the new secure medical unit in this year's budget?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The secure medical unit, as presented to the department by the Hospital Corporation, was to look at the establishment of the new secure medical unit and looking at the business model. Certainly, I took the time that was necessary and provided the Hospital Corporation the resources in this year's budget to look at planning and design. The Hospital Corporation provided the department with a business case for review.

As part of that, we have secured the resources in the capital planning exercise. I am doing that in collaboration with my colleague from Highways and Public Works and the Hospital

Corporation. The facility is being planned, but it also is in the stages of being finalized to move forward to development.

Question re: School busing operations communication to parents

Mr. Kent: The overnight snowstorm this past weekend caused many problems for those in the southern part of the territory. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Yukon government's municipal maintenance crews for their efforts in getting things moving yesterday.

However, the first official message to parents regarding school operations didn't come out until 9:38 a.m. yesterday morning — so, approximately an hour after school started.

Can the minister explain why there was such a delay in getting information out to families about what was happening at schools yesterday morning?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The situation with respect to buses and schools yesterday, of course, was unusual. It was certainly an unusual weather event here in the territory. Communication responding to those sorts of situations is absolutely key. Standard Bus — who I would like to take the opportunity to thank — was working extremely hard, as they do every day. They are currently under new management, and I want to thank them for the work that they do every day and especially on days like yesterday. It was certainly weather that no one can predict.

The Department of Education was working with the bus company as early as 7:00 a.m. when buses started to get rolling and information was available that there would be difficulties — which routes were delayed. We indicated to parents that they should review My School Bus Monitor. Information was provided to the Deputy Minister's office before 7:30. The Education team was fast at work. Schools were to remain open and buses that were able to provide service to students were doing so. Of course, some of them were late and the school openings for some places were late as well, and we thank all the parents and students for their patience in responding to an extremely unusual weather event.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister mentioned that communication is the key, yet that first official e-mail didn't come out until 9:38 a.m. With 511yukon.ca advising that highways in southern Yukon were closed for portions of the day yesterday, many parents who reached out to us were left wondering about afternoon school bus services for students.

We contacted the minister's office to seek clarification and the response was that, if parents wanted updates, they should listen to the radio and that each school would be e-mailing the parents. But it wasn't until 3:03 p.m. — after school ended, in many cases — that there was a note to parents saying that buses would be delayed and students may not be let out at their normal stop depending on road conditions. This left many parents scrambling to figure out how their kids would get home and where they would be dropped off.

Why did the message come out so late in the day — in some cases, minutes before students would be getting on their buses?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The health and safety of our students is always our first priority and our schools offer safe places for students during extreme weather conditions and every day.

The situation involving yesterday's school bus delays, the Department of Highways and Public Works issues around road clearing, and the City of Whitehorse issue around road clearing were changing minute to minute. The information was provided to individual parents by their schools. The My School Bus Monitor website was updated as well. There were many parents speaking to the administrators and the teachers at the school getting up-to-date information with respect to how that proceeded.

I should also indicate that communication came from the Department of Education to local media between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. yesterday morning. There were some issues, of course, because teachers and principals couldn't quite make it to their school as well. There was a number of things happening in real time. I'm not sure that the member opposite is correct about the timing of an official e-mail, but nonetheless, communication was made much sooner than that to parents and to individual families. We appreciate all of their patience in dealing with yesterday's situation.

Mr. Kent: As a parent, I will provide the minister with a copy of that e-mail that came out yesterday morning at 9:38 a.m.

We also heard that teachers in schools were told not to speak to the media about what was happening at their individual schools. From what we understand, this direction was sent out prior to any official communication with parents. In fact, the first communication with parents, as I mentioned, appears to have come out at least an hour after students would have arrived at school. It appears it was more important for the Liberal government to not get a bad news story than it was to inform parents and students of what was happening at their schools.

My question for the minister is: What changes to emergency communications protocols is she going to implement as a result of what happened around school openings and busing yesterday?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I didn't know that snowstorms could be quite so political. Nonetheless, parents are best placed to determine whether they will send their child to school, but it remains essential that school buildings be open during extreme weather conditions to provide safe shelter for those arriving at the building and for those students who may have nowhere else to go if parents have to go to work. The health and safety of our students is always our first priority, and our schools offer safe places for students during extreme weather conditions.

The situation yesterday morning involved a number of moving pieces. School buses were, on occasion, getting stuck in snow. Communication back to the central office, and therefore on to parents, may have been slower than we had wanted it to be, but nonetheless, everybody approached the situation with patience and as an opportunity to determine what is best for their particular family.

Teachers — I would like to the opportunity to thank them for not only making it to school but for putting their students first in the priority of how the safe place could be dealt with and

how schools are, in fact, a safe place. Teachers and administrators worked extremely hard to get to schools, including to Golden Horn, where there was difficulty with the road plowing — and the opportunity for students to arrive at those safe places — many thanks to the students and teachers.

Question re: Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit

Ms. White: The staff at Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit provide seniors with information on a variety of services, such as extended health care benefits, pharmacare, the pioneer utility grant, Yukon Capability and Consent Board, and the Yukon seniors income supplement. These important services support Yukon seniors to receive the assistance they need to encourage aging in place.

In the 2016-17 budget — the last time statistics with regard to numbers of seniors were included in the budget document — there was a caseload of 60 and close to 300 consultations. We know that these numbers could have only grown with our aging population. Can the minister confirm if the offices of Seniors' Services/Adult Protection will be moving? If yes, what is the timeline for that move?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The supports that are provided to seniors come from a number of areas. Moving seniors support — I don't think that's the objective. I think the objective is to ensure that the services that we provide within each one of the departments are meeting the needs of our seniors.

So, the aging-in-place document — which over 1,200 Yukoners participated in and gave critical feedback on — was to look at ensuring efficiencies across the government as we look at supported senior efforts.

Yukon Housing Corporation has provided significant supports to seniors through our various seniors units. As well, we have Health and Social Services that provides critical essential services for home care and such. We are working collaboratively on ensuring that we bring the best possible services to our seniors in a collaborated approach.

Ms. White: The question was specifically about Health and Social Services and the Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit.

So, is the unit moving, and if so, when is it moving? The Seniors' Services/Adult Protection office is currently located on the main floor of a building that has ample parking, is on public transit routes, and has no stairs to climb and no elevator to rely on. In other words, it's accessible.

Moving this program to the second floor of adult services does not meet any of these criteria. Parking is next to impossible with government workers, businesses, a school, and clients all jockeying for parking spots. Offices for seniors on the second floor of a building with few accessible parking spots makes no sense, even with an elevator.

Why is this government moving a program for seniors from a fully accessible building to this new location?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can certainly speak to the services that we provide to Yukoners.

We have not made any decisions yet. It is certainly not about parking spaces; it is really about providing adequate,

appropriate services to our elders and our senior population in the Yukon to ensure that they have the best services possible where they reside, and that means looking at services and supports in rural Yukon communities as well.

That means not always looking at it through a Whitehorse-centric or an urban-centric lens; we have to look at ensuring that we provide adequate and appropriate services to all Yukoners, and that means we want to ensure that we look at elevating services to our seniors, providing the best means possible by collaborating within the departments and ensuring that seniors certainly are well-supported as defined for us in the aging-in-place submission and any feedback that we have received through that process.

Ms. White: The Whitehorse offices of Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit are vital to many seniors. Being able to go to an office that is accessible, doesn't require lining up out the door, and has accessible parking and public transit close by are important when considering services for seniors. There is no information about the upcoming move on the Yukon government website.

Can the minister tell Yukon seniors when and how they will be notified of the move and whether or not other groups providing services to seniors have been informed of this move?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am certainly not going to make any decisions on the floor of the Legislative Assembly or commit to any such thing. The work that is being done right now, as I indicated in my previous comments — no decisions have been made. As we look at the aging-in-place document and the recommendations, it is to look at ensuring that we provide the best possible supports. That means that we want to look at the supports that we have available right now and look at evaluating whether or not an office even should be moved. I think that it is really about ensuring that we provide the best supports. We certainly want to ensure accessibility and mobility. That is part of what we consider when we speak about home first, about home care, and about supports to seniors where they reside, and that means bringing the supports and services to the individuals in their home communities as well.

Question re: Fiscal management

Mr. Cathers: Before the start of this pandemic, this Liberal government had a spending problem. Despite claims of sound financial management, their actions were to grow government spending and increase the size of the public service by 568 full-time equivalent positions. To put that into context, they hired the equivalent of a small town larger than Mayo or Carmacks.

The Premier blew through the surplus, depleting the Yukon's total net financial assets from over \$274 million at the start of their term to less than \$172 million today. Yukoners are over \$100 million poorer since the Liberals took office.

I will again ask the Premier a simple question: Where did that \$100 million go?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is very hard to hear the member opposite. I heard a question, but I didn't hear the end of it. I apologize for that. I do know that the member has been up a few times trying to convince people that, under our leadership,

we are not in a better financial situation. I completely disagree. We are one of only two jurisdictions in Canada with positive GDP growth through the COVID-19 pandemic. This is thanks to our sound financial management and the strong support to the economy over the last four years.

We are focused on getting projects out the door and completed. We think that this is something that is extremely important and something that the previous government very much struggled to do. We are taking advantage of significant federal funding that is currently available to invest in Yukon's future. We are doing that by working in partnership with Ottawa to get the flexibility that Yukon deserves when it comes to capital projects, when it comes to base-plus funding, when it comes to the unique circumstances of the north. When it comes to growth of FTEs — if that is part of the question, as well — I will take our record compared to the Yukon Party's record on that any day.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier can be in denial all he wants, but the facts are the facts. Yesterday he dodged our questions and used the excuse that it is a complicated issue. He is choosing to toss around arcane terms and use talking points designed to confuse Yukoners, but I will make it simple: Government revenue last year grew by a healthy margin of \$75.8 million, which works out to almost \$1,900 per person in the Yukon. That is the growth in revenue that year: \$1,900 per person. Despite that, the Liberal government blew through it all and spent money even faster. Their spending was out of control before the pandemic.

How far into the red is this Liberal government planning to go, and how long will it take for the Yukon to enter a total net debt position?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The only person who is trying to mislead right now is that statement from the member opposite. The Yukon Party borrowed significantly against the Yukon's debt as they were leaving office. Yukon's current debt level is \$228 million. It's \$228 million, Mr. Speaker. The Yukon Party borrowed \$201 million of that. The remainder — let's do some simple calculations — \$27 million is all we have borrowed so far. The member opposite yesterday even tried to confuse it further by talking about net financial assets and net financial debts as if that had something to do with borrowing — again, trying to confuse by using all the language that he said in his preamble.

We are committed to working with First Nation partners on infrastructure priorities and we are investing in communities. We are investing in a way that respects the decisions of Yukon communities which they are making for themselves.

When it comes to the amount of borrowing that this Yukon government has done, the member opposite can look no further than his own offices for the \$200 million that was borrowed. \$201 million of the \$228 million that had been borrowed by this government is all from his previous government.

Mr. Cathers: There is a problem for the Premier. That is simply not true. All one needs to do is check the Public Accounts to see that he is understating the amount that the Liberal government borrowed. The Premier has tried to blame

their increased spending on health care costs, but I have to remind him that last year his Cabinet increased spending across government by \$81.5 million. That is more than the entire budget for the Hospital Corporation. So, the Liberals' increased spending cannot be blamed on health care. They blew through our financial assets, they added 568 full-time equivalent positions to government, and last year revenue grew, but they increased total government spending by even more than that. The Liberals were already spending beyond our means when the sun was shining; now winter has arrived, and they've blown the bank account.

How far into the red is the government planning to go and what's the timeline for returning to a balanced budget? Or does the Premier just plan to leave that problem for future generations to fix and pay the bill for?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this year, we were in a surplus position. Because of the pandemic, we are now in a supplementary budget of about \$30 million to \$31 million of a deficit now with lots of recoveries from the federal government.

The opposition can't have it both ways. On the one day, they say that we're spending too much money; the next day, they say that we're not spending enough. So, which one is it? It depends on which day that the member opposite speaks.

Our budget commitments to money and to capital projects and to the Public Accounts — they're there, and they show that we are spending the money that we committed to, whereas that didn't happen in the past.

We committed to the projects in our mains. The Public Accounts prove that we are sticking to those commitments. We're getting out the door the capital projects that we promised — not like the opposition — big talk on the mains and when the Public Accounts came out, we saw that they didn't commit to the projects that they said they were going to spend to. All talk, no action — the members opposite.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Istchenko: Yesterday, I asked a question about the cancelled events fund. The fund program expired on July 31. We asked the government if they would extend this fund to cover off the remainder of the year. The minister responded with: "Send us an e-mail and maybe we'll reimburse." So, despite the fact that the program doesn't exist any longer, there is no formal application and there are no formal criteria. If you send the Liberals an e-mail, maybe they'll send you cash. Generally, you need to have a program in place with set criteria to provide oversight to the taxpayers as it's their money that is being sent out.

So, how is this informal e-mail process for government cash good governance?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Let's just be clear on the facts: First of all, what was mentioned yesterday by the member opposite was that — was there going to be a way to offset costs for personal events such as weddings? That was the example. We also have something that was coming down the line, which was geoscience. We have to make sure that they still have an

opportunity to make sure that they can pull their event off and it is helped to raise funds. My response at that time was that we are funding and helping to fund the geoscience conference in its virtual format. I met with the Chamber of Mines in the last week and a half or two weeks, and they were thankful for that commitment and they said it was critical in ensuring that this event happened.

When it came to personal weddings, we hope that people are seeing what's playing out right now with this pandemic. We're not going to be able to offset the personal costs that people incur if they're planning their wedding. Hopefully, now they've seen what has been happening over the last number of months — and in many cases, they're pivoting to something that works within the protocols — but for those companies that are out there, if they are seeing a decrease in revenue and they want to be in a break-even state and make sure that they sustain their business, they have to look no further than the business relief program, which we have extended. It is a program that has been looked upon across this country as an effective way to continue to support the private sector. I look forward to questions 2 and 3.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister actually said: "Hey, if you want your event reimbursed outside of the expired program or outside of any existing application criteria or oversight, just send us an e-mail or put it in writing." Giving out taxpayers' money based off informal e-mails did not seem like appropriate governance or oversight.

So, a question for the minister: How much funding have the Liberals given out based on simply getting an e-mail?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand and speak to the questions from the member opposite today around the event cancellation fund — which was exactly that — it was about events that were cancelled in immediate time. I mean, we had a number of really large events. It was unplanned that these events would have to be cancelled due to a global pandemic.

While I'm on my feet, I would like to just talk about some of the other funding that went out to organizations. We at Tourism and Culture and other departments extended funding for all of the events that were planned within the Yukon, such as the Dawson City Music Festival, the many, many arts festivals — Adäka; all of the festivals received their funding. We knew that they would not be able to go ahead with their plans for these events due to the restrictions, so we allowed for them to have the funding and plan for virtual events or other ways to have these events.

Now, we know that there were a lot of businesses impacted. As the Minister of Economic Development just said, we have the Yukon business relief fund for that.

Mr. Istchenko: These are the minister's words — the program expired on July 31 — and for the minister, there are still events being cancelled — so we asked for the program to be extended to cover after July 31. The minister said that if you want taxpayers' money, just send us an e-mail.

So, what criteria are these informal e-mails reviewed under? Who will determine if these informal e-mails meet the criteria?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, Mr. Speaker, we put these programs in place very quickly to respond to the needs of our Yukon businesses. We provided them within that time frame. We have also put in place programs like the Yukon business relief fund. We also put in place the accommodation fund just a week and a half ago.

These are all programs that are supporting businesses. Businesses know the reality of what is happening today, and folks are planning for events that follow the chief medical officer of health's recommendations and some of the guidelines that have been put in place. Again, we are putting out all of the funding that we have planned for events.

I am not sure where the member opposite is receiving complaints, but I would really recommend that he have those businesses or folks who are raising these concerns get a hold of the departments so that we can help them. There are a lot of programs that are out there. I think that the member opposite should be concerned about helping those businesses and getting them to the right place.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. It is Motion No. 268, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. It is Motion No. 297, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel): The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

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. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that I answered the last question from the member opposite, but I do want to take the opportunity of these 12 minutes to go back to continue on my notes here in response to questions that the member opposite asked about this budget in our previous year's supplementary budget on October 8 — again, questions that were asked during debate of *Supplementary Estimates No. 3* from 2019-20 that were more pertinent to this debate and conversation.

For example, there was a question from the member opposite about if there was money in EMR for Trans Canada Trail management. Was it spent? Yes, the forest management branch has spent the projected increase of \$29,000 through a partial funding agreement with Trans Canada Trail to implement the Trans Canada Trail agreement.

He went on to ask a question about the money that was included in the agricultural regional collaboration partnership agreement — was it spent?

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Agriculture branch added an additional \$71,000 in funding to cover operation and maintenance costs under the agricultural regional collaboration partnership agreement. Additional funding through the regional cooperation partnership agreement supported a joint review of agricultural legislation undertaken through a partnership between our government and the Government of the Northwest Territories — \$49,000 of this funding was spent in 2019-20.

In the 2019-20 Supplementary No. 2, EMR requested \$20,000 for First Nation strategic alliance for the Gateway agreement — was that spent? The answer to that question is yes. Energy, Mines and Resources has spent the additional \$200,000 allocated for the First Nation Gateway project agreement.

To date, the Yukon government has spent \$2.57 million in eligible expenses under the Yukon Resource Gateway Project funding. The government has signed four project agreements with Yukon First Nations for projects with total estimated capital costs of \$164.7 million. The eligible expenditures to date are in the areas of project agreement negotiations, implementation, pre-engineering, geotechnical investigations, environmental assessment, and preliminary design.

I was asked if I could tell the member opposite what I would do to solve the issue around farmers collecting carbon rebates and how farmers obtain a carbon fuel tax rebate.

The Yukon government actively supports farming in the territory through various programs and services — one of which is the tax exemption program for fuel usage in the operation of commercial farming in Yukon. The Department of

Finance and the broader government interpret legislation in conjunction with the latest decisions across Canada, where there is a process for individuals to apply for reconsideration.

Again, Mr. Deputy Chair, there is more to that, if you'll just bear with me for a second. It is the federal government that does determine who is exempt from paying the carbon levy. Of course, we have lobbied for particular exemptions and rebates, but farmers are exempt from paying the federal carbon levy on gasoline and lighting fuel oil used in farming operations. That is on submission of federal tax form K402, which is the fuel charge exemption certificate for farmers. The federal rationale for this exemption was to avoid increasing food prices. The federal government did not include propane in this exemption, as the member opposite has asked.

We have discussed in the past that a comprehensive review of federal, provincial, and territorial governments is due by 2020-23 to establish the approach to carbon pollution pricing, including expert assessment of the stringency and effectiveness that compares carbon pollution pricing systems across Canada. This really will provide an appropriate time and venue to present and represent the interests of all Yukon stakeholders at that time. We are looking forward to that review.

I was also asked by the member opposite — again going back to the 2019-20 budget, the budget contained \$5 million for the Yukon diverse fibre line — and was that money spent? Again, it was not a question I was prepared to answer when we were debating *Supplementary Estimates No. 3*, which was about two specific departments and not the Yukon diverse fibre line. I am happy to report that, in 2019-20, \$2.81 million was spent on the project at that time for that budget year.

Another question was about how the budget contained \$600,000 for historic sites — was that money spent? With regard to the \$601,000 referenced around historic sites — including Fort Selkirk and Fortymile — \$498,000 was spent as one of the latest figures for that allocation.

I was asked about how the budget contained \$1 million for the secure medical unit — what is the status of this unit? Was the money spent? What is the status of the project? Has it lapsed or has it been spent? Has the government approved the business case plan? Again, this question was asked in the Legislative Assembly today, and \$1 million has been transferred to the Hospital Corporation for this project.

Another question was — the budget contained \$1.7 million for youth initiatives. Was this spent? The answer to that, Mr. Deputy Chair, is yes. Over \$1.7 million has been spent to support youth initiatives across the territory. Included in those funds was more than \$1.5 million that was paid directly to youth-serving organizations through transfer payment agreements. Some of those agreements and organizations are: the Association franco-yukonnaise, \$25,000; BYTE — Empowering Youth Society, \$274,000; Boys and Girls Club of Yukon, \$277,000; Heart of Riverdale Community Centre, \$198,000; and the Youth of Today Society, \$271,000.

I was also asked — the budget contained \$3 million for portable classrooms. Was this spent? The \$3 million for portable classrooms was included over two years. The 2019-20

budget contained \$2 million for this project. Of that amount, \$1.156 million was spent.

I think the final question from that day that was not answered — or was not specific to the Supplementary No. 3 estimates — was — the budget contained \$58 million for social supports and mental health services. Was this spent? If so, how much of that? Mr. Deputy Chair, the 2019-20 main estimates included \$58 million for social supports and mental health services. This was increased to \$63.08 million in the supplementary estimates. In 2019-20, \$64.89 million was spent on social supports and mental health services.

The member opposite did go on to ask some further questions, so we do have a couple questions from November 2. I think I still have some time left here, so I might as well get into some of these before we get to some new questions.

This is from the member opposite: Can the Premier tell us which lines from which departments that he is referring to when he's talking about increasing funding to Yukon Hospital Corporation compared to the Public Accounts, page 199, schedule 9? Yukon Hospital Corporation funding is less than the growth of government for the same fiscal year — that was the question.

That question was answered in the House, but I can reiterate that if the member opposite wants me to, but that question was answered in the House.

Also, what was the rate of increase for Yukon Hospital Corporation funding in all years of this government's mandate? That was also answered in the House, but I could reiterate if the member opposite wants me to reiterate.

I'll wait. There's a long answer here for an extended-family care agreement question. I will leave that to supplement answers to supplement questions.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate those answers.

I'm going to begin, first of all, with the issue that the Premier raised regarding the impact on farmers of the carbon tax, as well as changes that the government has made in reinterpreting their own rules and policies pursuant to the Yukon's legislation around fuel tax rebates.

I have to point out to the Premier that the reason I keep raising this matter — and am going to keep raising it until it's resolved — is that the act itself has not changed. However, the government, under his Department of Finance, has chosen to reinterpret the rules as they pertain to farmers applying for the fuel tax back. That has resulted in excluding some activities that used to be eligible. This is a direct cost to farmers and to farmers who are providing services to other farmers who own land but don't own equipment. There is a simple solution. It's to change it back to the way it used to be, but this continues to be an issue and is entirely caused by this government, under this Minister of Finance, reinterpreting the rules, and it's directly costing my constituents and other Yukon farmers.

As well, in the area of the carbon tax and for farmers overall, we continue to have the problem that the entire carbon tax rebate structure — while government has continually argued, "Don't worry — farming is exempt" — the reality is that farmers have no way of getting back their carbon tax paid in what the government classifies as the "indirect carbon tax

costs". When you're bandying about all these terms, people can get lost in terms that don't necessarily make obvious sense to the average person, but I'm going to simplify it. What the "indirect carbon tax cost" means is that, if a farmer goes and buys fencing, feed, building materials, and a number of other things or if they ship equipment up the highway, they pay a carbon tax on those items.

Their costs have increased as a result, but they have no way to get a refund for it. While this Liberal government and the federal Liberal government can claim that they are creating an exemption for agriculture, in reality, the structure that they have established means that farmers pay more costs in carbon tax and don't have a way to recover that. With the Liberal government's insistence on proceeding with an increase to the carbon tax rate, this problem has become worse this year than it was the year before. This continues to be unacceptable and inconsistent with either the territorial government or the federal government actually living up to its commitments to support our agriculture sector.

Additionally, in the area of the fact that farmers are using propane for heating barns and other farm facilities, they can't get a carbon tax rebate back. Again, that is something that is directly affecting Yukon farmers, including my constituents who are paying an additional cost — an additional tax created by government on their usage of propane to heat their barn. In one case, I would point out that this is a facility that is being used to directly contribute a significant portion of locally produced food to Yukon grocery stores. They, as a farm, are directly and significantly contributing to the Yukon's increased production of local food, but instead of thanking them for that and supporting them, government is, in fact, taxing them for heating their building to keep their animals warm. That is an additional, unnecessary, and inappropriate cost that is not fair to my constituents and other farmers affected by it.

I may not get more of an answer from the Premier at this point, but I'm going to again advise him that the reason I keep raising these issues that are directly affecting farmers in my riding and elsewhere throughout the Yukon is that every month that this government fails to take action to solve the problem is another month that they are out of pocket.

Every time they pay a carbon tax on fencing, on feed, on building materials, and other supplies, that is money that is out of their pocket and it makes it harder for them to balance the books. Government can use all the talking points they want, but it comes down to the simple question: Are they solving the problem?

In a similar area — in that it is a government-created problem — we have the loss this year of commercial waste disposal for Yukon farmers in my riding, as well as on the south side of town. I wrote to two ministers about this; I expressed the concern. I noted that there needed to be the ability — the importance of having this waste disposal service — to the ability of farmers to operate. Government, to their credit, did do something, but it didn't go far enough to actually solve the problem. They did reach agreement with the City of Whitehorse to allow commercial waste haulers to haul garbage in from outside the city limits and dump it in the Whitehorse facility.

I would just remind the Premier and others that, in the absence of that agreement, the way the system would operate is that the garbage would still ultimately be ending up in the Whitehorse landfill — it would just take a side trip to facilities like the Deep Creek solid waste facility first. In the case, for example, of my constituents down the Hot Springs Road, it would literally mean that the garbage would take a 40-mile side trip before ultimately ending up in the Whitehorse facility. That would be an increased cost to the farmers, it would be increased fossil fuel emissions, and it would achieve literally no good whatsoever for either the Yukon territorial government or the city.

So, the problem is that the agreement the Yukon government has reached with the city still doesn't prevent the instability in the rates and the unpredictability in the rates that the commercial waste haulers are charged for dumping the garbage. Meanwhile, we have a situation that farmers are then not receiving this service because waste haulers can't offer a predictable fee.

Government can choose to do as they have and say that is really an issue for the city, but ultimately — especially considering all the money that this Liberal government wastes in other areas — if the agreement just isn't providing stability and predictability, ultimately the structure is not there to establish the conditions for success of our agriculture sector.

There are several different models that they could choose to reach in agreement with the city, for the Yukon government to provide — whether through financial assistance or some other way — there are a number of different models, such as the one in the Member for Klondike's — the Premier's — own riding with the arrangement with the Quigley landfill. There are other different models that could be reached.

My objective is not to pigeonhole the government on which model they need to choose, but it is simply to say that if you are actually serious about supporting our agriculture sector, they need access to waste disposal and they need to be able to do that at predictable, affordable rates. If they can't do that — the two governments involved in dealing with it might have tried, but they simply are not recognizing what the business community — the farming sector — needs to succeed. If they are serious about wanting to set up the conditions for success, they need to take the additional step of coming up with a model that actually works for farmers and market gardeners. I hope that the Premier has understood the point in that regard.

I am going to move on to the issue of debt. I would just remind the Premier that, today in Question Period and yesterday during general debate, he made misstatements of the facts regarding government debt. Since I have the Blues from yesterday, he said yesterday, on page 1692: "Out of the outstanding amount, our government is responsible for just over \$20 million of that debt. The rest, of course, was incurred under the Yukon Party."

Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, that is simply factually not true. I would table a copy from the Public Accounts showing what the total debt was in March 31, 2017, just after the Premier and his colleagues took office. There is the tail end of the overlapped year between the Yukon Party and the Liberal government and

a year, as well, where the Premier can't very well dispute the numbers contained in these Public Accounts because he is the one who tabled them in the Legislative Assembly. They were duly audited by the Auditor General.

On page 51 of the Public Accounts from 2017, it shows that the total debt as of March 31, 2017, was under \$200 million. The amount shown is \$193,522,000 as of March 31, 2017. I will table that for the record.

I would note then, if we go to the current Public Accounts, that the number that we see on page 62 of these Public Accounts is total debt under the Premier as of the end of the last fiscal year of \$228,435,000. So, in fact, that's \$34.9 million. That's not \$20 million. It's \$34.9 million. The Premier should know that's a fairly significant difference and a fairly significant misstatement.

In fact, where he may have got his notes wrong is that this Liberal government added almost \$20 million in new debt in the last fiscal year compared to the year before. We still haven't seen a breakdown of all of these new debts. We see there are some additional amounts under the Yukon Development Corporation that we still don't have full disclosure for, but that's a gross misstatement of the Premier in terms of the debt by this Liberal government. Now that I have corrected him on that, I would hope that he will correct his speaking notes in the future so that he's not in danger of deliberately misleading the Assembly with his statements.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I want to move on to another area, and that is regarding the Hospital Corporation. As we debated yesterday and for the reference of Hansard and any listening, I'm referring to page 1691 of the Blues from yesterday afternoon. We've had significant debate throughout this term about the adequacy of funding for the Hospital Corporation. This began in the spring of 2017 when I criticized the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services for the lack of funding for the Hospital Corporation. The minister at the time confirmed — which is shown in Hansard — that they provided the hospital with only a one-percent increase in core funding for that fiscal year.

So, on November 2, yesterday, I asked the Premier: "... a very important question — how much has the core funding for the Hospital Corporation increased during this mandate? We know that it went up one percent during the first year. What has been the actual rate of increase or decrease in each of the years that this government has been in office?"

I am pleased that the Premier actually did finally provide us with some breakdown from his numbers where he noted, in fact, according to what he advised us on page 1691, that over the past five years, there has been an increase of only 10 percent. I will quote: "... a 10-percent increase in core funding..."

Now, the Premier stated — and I quote as well: "The total budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation for 2020-21 is \$81.3 million for its core operations and other requirements. This an 8.6-percent increase over the 2019-20 mains. The increase of 8.6 percent includes: increases in core funding for two fiscal years of about five percent..." The Premier went on to then list other items.

I would point out the fact that the Premier noted that there are increases in funding for two fiscal years of about five percent. When you take a look at that total 10-percent number and add up those increases, it does show you how little the budget was increasing before that period of time. It points to, as well, why the hospital has been under the strain that it has had, which has led to some of the situations that we've seen breaking out in news coverage last month and this month.

My point, at this point in time, is not to spend a lot of time continuing to debate the funding situation of the past, but again to emphasize to the government that, especially now that they are in a pandemic, they need to treat this area more seriously and need to ensure that the hospital receives the core funding that it needs. We should never be in a situation, as we've seen repeatedly throughout this government's time, where the hospital — a vital part of our health care sector — is seeing its budget grow at less than the general rate of growth across government. Typically, when funding is well balanced, health care increases at more than the general rate across government, but we've seen the opposite under this Liberal government, and that is part of why we see the pressures in health care that we do.

Again, as I mentioned earlier today in Question Period, it's important to recognize, for context, that when the government is blaming health care costs for the overall increase in spending across government, last year, according to the audited Public Accounts, spending across government increased by \$81.5 million, and that's more than the entire budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. When the increase across general government is more than the amount spent on the hospital itself, it's very disingenuous to suggest that health care spending is the primary cost of the increased rate of spending.

Ultimately, we've seen a very unusual narrative by the Premier earlier today when he was suggesting that the Yukon Party added too many employees to government during his time — but apparently his solution is then to add 568 new positions — which, by the admission of the government, through the numbers that they told us they are adding this year — 118 positions — added up with the numbers that the Premier told us on March 21, 2019, that being — and I quote: "... the total growth of FTEs by the end of the fiscal year will be 450..." — that growth of 568 positions, in real terms, is comparable to adding a town larger than Mayo or Carmacks to the government payroll and giving everyone positions.

What is additionally concerning with this is that we have heard multiple reports from within government of an increasing number of positions where the employees actually don't even live in the territory — and this includes management positions and director positions. The employees argue that they are primarily absent from the territory or partly absent from the territory for long stretches of time. That is a concern both in terms of the ability to operate and the fact that their paycheque is simply flowing south of the border and is not staying in the Yukon and stimulating the Yukon economy through seeing them buy their goods here in the territory. It is not supporting the local economy.

I hope that has addressed those particular parts. I do want to move on to another area, which is the issue of water licences. The Premier confirmed yesterday that there were a number of placer miners who are currently waiting for water licences. The Premier advised us — and I quote: “Currently, there are 17 licences before the board. Six of these were submitted in mid-to late summer and have not been processed yet. The remaining 11 have been before the board for longer. These longer timelines are due to proponents’ non-responses for information requested. Others are on pause due to wetlands issues and matters currently being explored with this hearing in the public interest, as we saw last week.”

So, my question for the Premier with regard to those placer miners who are waiting for a licence — many of whom are his constituents — and the unspecified number of others who are on pause due to wetlands issues: How many applications are we talking about and how many years have these applicants been waiting?

Hon. Mr. Silver: That was a lot. I will do my best to answer the questions that he asked.

We will go all the way back to the questions about the changes that the member opposite is inferring happened under the *Fuel Oil Tax Act*. Under the FOTA, an exemption permit may be issued for commercial purposes and activities conducted with the intention of earning income. As the FOTA does not explicitly provide the definitions for each use — including farms, in this case — we used the federal government’s interpretation, which is based on the latest and most relevant court cases, to guide our approach through these exemptions. The member opposite may make it seem like we are changing policy on the fly — no, we are following legal cases right across Canada — so let’s put that to bed right away. Hopefully, the member opposite stops with that narrative. We will see.

When it comes to support for the agricultural industry, I will, of course, let the minister responsible have an opportunity to talk about the amazing work we have done, pre-COVID and during COVID, to support the agricultural industry. Also, when it comes to recycling or landfill discussions — the Minister of Community Services, again, when he comes up on his specific department, would love the opportunity to correct the record from what we heard from the member opposite and clarify the work that he and his department are doing with the municipality.

In areas of recycling and in areas of tipping fees — the previous government was way too shy to even tackle those because they knew it was a tough decision. They decided to just abdicate the responsibility therein. We, on this side of the House, are happy that we are making tough decisions that are necessary and important, and they are the right things to do. I will leave that up to the Minister of Community Services when he gets on the floor in Committee of the Whole in his specific department to address the specific questions from the member opposite.

We do agree that we need to support our agricultural industry. We need to support our farmers. Through the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of

Community Services, I will leave it to them to explain the multitude of services and help that this government provides to these extremely important industries.

Where do we go from there? We will go now to the carbon tax exemptions for farmers.

“Was the farmer using propane?” — that was the title of the letter that we received from the member opposite, the MLA for Lake Laberge, to which we responded.

In that response, we identified, again, that the Government of Canada introduced the carbon pricing and they did that as a way to address climate change through the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* to meet emission reduction targets under the *Paris Agreement*. Provinces and territories agreed to the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*, which outlined the principles for pricing carbon pollution.

We went on, as well, to respond to the member opposite’s questions to inform him that the federal government, through its *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* — they charge a carbon levy on all fuel consumed in the territory, period. Canada also provides exemptions from carbon pricing under certain definitions — defined conditions. Exemptions are available through the use of an exemption certificate. The exemptions are limited to the operation of farm machinery for the purpose of farming. We attached to our response to him the federal tax form that I mentioned earlier, the L402, which is the fuel charge exemption certificate for farmers. Specifically, the GGPPA provides that a registered distributor can deliver exempt gasoline or light fuel oil to farmers at a farm if the fuel is used exclusively in the operation of eligible machinery or eligible farming activities.

Now, there are a few activities that are not covered by the exemption provided by Canada. Those are: barn heating for any purpose; crop drying — some farmers use propane for crop drying; residential heating; and also fuel that is used in licensed vehicles.

As we have discussed in the past, a comprehensive review of the federal, provincial, and territorial governments is due for 2020-23, of the federal carbon-pricing mechanism to establish the approach for carbon pricing moving forward, assessing the stringency and the effectiveness compared to carbon pollution pricing systems right across Canada.

The debate at the Council of the Federation at that time was based upon — I believe that British Columbia already had a model and already had their targets established — and looking at the comparison to the federal government — whether or not one would be a more appropriate mechanism or a more effective or stringent pricing mechanism. We should really compare systems to make sure that its purpose is served.

What I will say is that during that review — I wouldn’t mind working with the member opposite when it comes to specific types of rebates or exemptions that we feel would be something that we could put in that consideration. I mean, when you take a look at — these are carbon exemptions for farming and if one of those things that is not covered is something like barn heating for any purpose — well, I think that should be part

of the debate: Why? Let's push that. Let's push that for Yukon farmers. I will reach out to the member opposite.

Again, this would be something that happens in 2022-23 — so who knows where we all will be at that time? But I will make a commitment to the member opposite that if we are still in government in 2022-23 during the review — the federal review — then I would absolutely relish the opportunity to work with both opposition members and both opposition parties to establish — based upon the protocols and based upon reasons — why we feel that there should be certain other exemptions or rebates for our farming community.

I think that we answered the question there as far as any perceived changes and why those changes would have happened based upon litigation — federal and other provinces and territories — that type of thing. We've spoken about the fact that it is the federal government that does determine who is exempt from paying for the carbon levy. We explained to the member opposite why certain things are exempt and certain things are not — so I think we have answered his question when it comes to carbon pricing.

I will add though, Mr. Deputy Chair, that our Tax Administration branch is working with the Agriculture branch so that we can further develop our approach to Yukon farmers. That's some great work that's going on. I will again leave that to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to expand upon.

Let's go into the conversation about debt. What we've established from both sides of the House is that the lion's share of the debt that we currently have in the Yukon has been established by the Yukon Party.

Let's talk about long-term debt when it comes to the Yukon Development Corporation. That debt has increased over the years. We know of examples of the funded projects on their line of credit — which is part of that debt from the Yukon Party — the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line upgrade asset management software purchase and implementation and the replacement of the head gate and upgrade for Whitehorse hydro unit 2.

We saw also the Yukon Party spending money on the Aishihik water licence renewal, transmission line refurbishments — and the list goes on and on. The current credit facilities used by Yukon Energy Corporation, as of today, is \$31 million. The authorized limit on that is \$36 million. The breakdown of all of that long-term debt, again, is involved in the financial statements, brought out in the Public Accounts. If you want to take a look at the breakdown of those, you could go back to the 2019 Public Accounts — note 14.

But, again, Mr. Deputy Chair, we are talking long-term debt from these corporations and the Hospital Corporation as well — and over the year, from Public Accounts to Public Accounts, numbers do go up and do go down, but our portion of the debt that the government currently has is extremely small compared to the debt that we are left with from the Yukon Party.

With that being said, the things that I just listed for the Development Corporation alone — they are important pieces of work when it comes to providing power — providing energy

— to Yukoners. We have seen the debt limit increased by the members opposite several times — a few different times — whereas we have seen the federal government increase the limit once under us, and you know, just because it was lifted to \$800 million, that doesn't mean that we have spent the \$800 million that it has been raised to. We have given the numbers as far as where we are right now — as far as debt — and we also have said that, if and when we have some non-fossil fuel projects to invest in, then that is where that money is going to come from.

Hopefully, we can also continue to work with the federal government to find other pockets of money — other federal initiatives — that would help us to alleviate that cost to our transfer agreement. We have seen that in the past. We have seen some monies set aside for Arctic energy, for example, through ICIP funding. So, again, there are other opportunities. It would be great if we could work in partnership with the federal government. We have some really interesting projects on the horizon when it comes to Atlin — increasing the power out of Atlin — really excited about being able to partner with the Taku River Tlingit but also with the British Columbia government and with the federal government as to what we could do to increase the involvement of First Nation governments when it comes to these utilities and what we can do to work interjurisdictionally on reconciliation and also provide clean energy for Yukoners.

Again, I won't go too far down that road because, again, I will be spoiling the thunder for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who is very excited about the work that he and his department have done to get away from megadiesel as a permanent fixture here in Whitehorse and move forward to a non-fossil fuel alternative or suite of alternatives when it comes to energy security here in the Yukon.

The member opposite goes on about FTEs. We really missed an opportunity in shutting the Legislative Assembly down in the spring to speak of the increase of 30 to the FTE complement at that time. I don't recall, in the five years of the Yukon Party 2.0, that little amount of FTEs in a mains in their previous five years. The member opposite, again, can talk about increasing FTEs. We believe that there is a balance to be struck. We need to make sure that the programs and services have the human resources possible to make sure that we implement these programs and services for Yukoners, but we have also proven through the mains this year that we can do that and, at the same time — with a lens of working internally — trying our best to limit the amount of FTEs. So, 30 in the mains is extraordinary.

If we go into the numbers in the supplementary budget when it comes to FTEs — the number did increase, but again, a lot of those increases are not permanent. They are because of COVID and they are in response to things like border measures, and making sure that we had the human capacity to help out with the HEOC with the chief medical officer's team as we established a protocol and communications between communities. They are part-time FTEs.

We have talked about the numbers over and over again, but only 13 of those are full-time equivalents. Again, I think that, looking at this year's FTE count, we have done an

extraordinary job of making sure that we provide the programs and services necessary — but, at the same time, with a keen eye to making sure that, if we are increasing the FTEs, that we look internally first to make sure that we can work collaboratively, government-to-government, with our FTEs first and foremost.

If we need to add new professionals or if we need to add a new complement of human resources, well then, we will, because the most important thing during COVID times is the safety of Yukoners, and the most important thing is that government is making sure that the programs and services continue. We have answered this question a few times for the member opposite.

As of *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, there will be a total of 5,193 FTEs. As of the supplementary that we're speaking about here, the increase is 88.2 FTEs. Again, it's really important for Yukoners to understand that only 13 of those are permanent, to be added to the 30 that were added to the mains for this year. The rest are 75.2 term FTEs. The majority of these additional positions, as I mentioned, are for COVID supports to ensure that we continue to provide a high level of service for Yukoners.

To be very specific, the total number of FTEs also reflects an increase of 30.8 — 30.8 is the total number of FTEs between the 2019-20 budget year and the 2020-21 main estimates. If we take a look at our most current year and the addition of FTEs and if we compared that to the final year of the Yukon Party, it would be a huge difference. Remember, we've had the debate back and forth about the increase in teachers who were hired by the Yukon Party and were sitting in chairs already hired as FTEs before the election even happened and then the Yukon Party saying, "Well this is in your year, so that must be your FTE count." We could rehash that whole debate. I don't have the specific numbers in front of me, but again, that was something that the Yukon Party did and then told us that it was our year, so therefore it was our FTEs — not true, Mr. Deputy Chair.

I'll pick up where I left off here, Mr. Deputy Chair. We had a question also from the member opposite on the second question about the extended-family care —

Deputy Chair: Two minutes.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Two minutes? You know what, Mr. Deputy Chair — I will cede the floor because this particular answer is a little bit more than two minutes.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that the Premier did provide some answers, but I want to note that, in areas such as the issue of farmers not having garbage service, the Premier got up and first of all applauded themselves for the courage to introduce tipping fees, which I must remind him is actually something that government is losing money on at some of the facilities. They're spending more money than they collect while also making life more expensive for Yukoners.

They have blocked a number of roads — old secondary roads, gravel pits, et cetera — the cost of which they still haven't disclosed — and have done stuff like putting in \$155,000 power line connections to dump facilities. Ultimately, it is not a very fiscally effective way of doing things.

But I want to return to the more important issue which is the commercial garbage service for farmers. The Premier can say all he wants that the Minister of Community Services will rise and correct the record, but the simple fact is that it comes down to this: Where's the commercial garbage service for farmers? I don't dispute that the minister did actually do something after I wrote him a letter. However, the fact remains that it didn't go far enough because the model is still not predictable enough for business and it has resulted in a situation where farmers still don't have this service.

Again, if you're serious about increasing the production of Yukon food and if you are serious about our agriculture sector, you need to work together with the city to come up with a framework that actually provides them with reasonable options for this waste disposal service. If you don't, you're going to see one of two things: Either those farms are not going to succeed or, since they don't have good options for waste disposal, they're going to either have to haul it themselves to a waste facility like Deep Creek — where government will then haul it back into Whitehorse and pay them a tipping fee to take it in the same landfill — or else you're going to see things such as increased burning and burying of waste or dumping inappropriately.

I will mention the fact that government has a bit of a disconnect between what the Department of Environment is doing and what the Department of Community Services is doing. When the Department of Environment is repeatedly urging citizens — including farmers and gardeners — to reduce the attractants on their properties that might attract wild animals as part of their desire to reduce human and wildlife conflict, yet on the other hand, Community Services makes it harder to get rid of organic waste and other garbage on those properties, you have two branches doing two completely different things that clash with each other and leave farmers and other citizens left in the middle with a problem. Unfortunately, lip service and solutions that are well-intentioned but don't fix the problem are just not enough.

I want to touch briefly again on the issue of the fuel tax rebate — and I just want to reference briefly the act, which is the Yukon government's legislation, for which the Minister of Finance is the minister responsible. Under section 6 of the act, it very clearly identifies activities that can use fuel oil that would be exempt, and those include fishing, logging, hunting or outfitting, trapping, mining — including mining exploration and development — farming, tourism, and operating and maintaining a sawmill. Again, that is in section 6 of the *Fuel Oil Tax Act* — which Hansard and others will find on the government website. It is very clear that the intent of that legislation was to exempt farmers from paying that tax.

There is literally no mention in that act of relying on federal definitions or federal case law that relates to farming on or off of people's property. It is a choice that has been made by the government to come up with a new interpretation that, in my view, is completely contrary to the intent of the act. It is indisputably a change in government's policy that is resulting in Yukon farmers not being eligible for a rebate that they used to be eligible for.

I want to move on to another issue that the Premier mentioned, which is that of renewable energy and diesel. The Premier was talking about using terms like “megadiesel” while conveniently ignoring that facilities that were considered previously were looking at either diesel or LNG. I would remind the Premier that in the government’s own documents — in the draft 10-year renewable electricity plan that Yukon Energy shared with stakeholders this summer — we see very clearly that part of the government’s plan for the next decade — actually, beyond the next decade — includes using diesel, including using incremental diesel replacements. So, the Premier is trying to create the impression that his government is only focused on renewable, but in fact, we see that the Liberal plan is for a decade of diesel.

In that, it’s also interesting that the legislative return that we received from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources identified the cost of this Liberal government continuing to rent diesels, which, I remind him, started under the Liberal government, and we see that the rental costs right now — I should specify that the rental costs to date and the rental costs that the minister told us that they expect to spend this year — we are seeing that the cost of renting diesel is \$13.4 million. That includes a rental cost this year of over \$6.5 million for 10.6 megawatts of diesel.

I would ask the Premier: Over that 10-year period going forward, how much more money does the government plan on spending on renting diesels? We see their decade of diesel in their plans. We see that they have not invested in owning the assets but instead have chosen to rent the assets. Is it simply a case of extrapolating the cost for this year of \$6.6 million going forward? Will the next decade cost \$66 million in diesel rental? Or because the growth of energy is more than that, how much higher is the actual number that the government is expecting to pay because of their choice to rent diesel instead of owning an asset that would produce power?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to waste management, Community Services will be here to answer those very specific questions on waste disposal. The minister requests the ability to have a debate on this issue with the member opposite. If the member opposite wants to hear the department’s approach and make suggestions to the department, then he absolutely has the opportunity to do that when the department is here in the Legislative Assembly — when Community Services is here to debate the supplementary budget.

I think that there are definitely some things in what the member opposite speaks of as far as how we must support our farmers and that we must make sure that we invoke policy that makes sense. I know that the minister responsible is champing at the bit to have that debate and to listen to the suggestions from the member opposite when it comes to that.

I would say the same thing when it comes to the 10-year energy plan when it comes from the Yukon Development Corporation, the Yukon Energy Corporation, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. They are absolutely champing at the bit to debate with the member opposite the strategy of megadiesel investment from the opposition or LNG investment from the opposition compared to what we want to do here,

which is work with First Nation governments and invest in non-fossil-fuel futures.

Now, are we happy that we are in a situation right now where we have to rent temporary diesels? No, we are not. We really wish that the millions and millions of dollars that the Yukon Party spent in their next generation hydro activity actually involved First Nations. When they got down to their sweet 16 and started getting down in their list on that project — I will take a look and come back to the Legislative Assembly to remind the members opposite how much money they spent on next generation hydro. I remember being at a GA where the former Premier was there talking with a particular First Nation. The particular First Nation — I believe it was Selkirk — was not happy that some of the areas that they had identified historically where they would absolutely not be in favour of a major hydro project had made it onto these short lists.

Again, there were countless millions of dollars wasted in an exercise that really was doomed to fail — because, of course, the Yukon Party did not work hand in glove with the First Nations, whose traditional territory would be affected in these next generation hydro projects. It has been a long time to get back to the table with First Nations and talk about exactly that — energy and utilities.

When it comes to working with First Nations, I spoke with leadership just the other day. We had a great conversation about some exciting projects that we can work on together. Has that taken some time? Yes, it has. Were we starting from square zero? Yes, we really were.

We are not happy to have temporary diesels and we look to phase those out as other exciting projects with First Nation development corporations and governments — including transboundary First Nations — this is all reconciliation in action. Again, I can feel the minister right now champing at the bit to have this conversation about our strategy and long-term planning compared to what the Yukon Party did with millions of dollars — and really, at the end of the day, they didn’t identify any projects that were worthy of going forward with at the time, with First Nations’ blessings — those whose traditional territories would be affected.

It does give you pause to talk about the overall plan of *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. It is a Yukon-wide strategy. It has very ambitious targets and tangible actions to respond to the climate emergency. That strategy was developed in partnership with Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, and Yukon municipalities over the course of three years. The strategy outlines clear targets, timelines, evaluation criteria, and annual progress reported and will demonstrate to Yukoners that we are delivering on these commitments to make sure that we are able to meet the ambitious 2030 targets that we have set.

By 2030, Yukon’s greenhouse emissions — from all sources except mining — and we are working on that output-based system with the federal government — will be 30-percent lower than we were in 2010, and Yukon communities will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. By 2022, we will set intensity-based targets for the mining industry, and we will see Yukon’s mines operating more efficiently.

We were criticized that the plan itself left some leeway in there to accomplish some targets — and I remember multiple ministers having the conversation with the amazing environmentalists who were helping us out with the plan about why we are leaving room. Basically, you see the exponential growth in these technologies as we speak — the price tag for things like solar panels and different types of non-fossil-fuel technologies. This is a booming industry. This is something that we really need to capitalize on as a government and as a region in Canada, because when you take a look at where the world is going when it comes to non-fossil-fuel futures, it's exciting. It would be excellent for our GDP to get involved with this industry.

When you take a look at those growths and that technology — over the next decades, things will change. To make targets right now based on modern technology but not the future technology, that's where there is a discrepancy in those targets.

But we are confident that this discrepancy will be made up by the increases in the technologies based on what we have seen to date in those initiatives.

So, over the next 10 years, the Government of Yukon will be partnering with the Government of Canada to invest half a billion dollars in climate change and energy. Over \$400 million of this will directly support economic development and recovery by investing in local renewable energy — infrastructure and building projects, encouraging purchases of green technologies, zero emission vehicles — that type of thing, Mr. Deputy Chair — supporting Yukon businesses and workers to develop new skills and new technologies, as well, in that green economy.

The Yukon government is leading by example in its commitments to reduce those greenhouse gas emissions from the government buildings by 30 percent by 2030, and we are going to achieve this by improving energy efficiency and also by offsetting fossil-fuel use with renewable energy. We have outlined a plan with tangible concrete actions that are modelled to have a very significant impact on Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions. This is not just a high-level strategy; it is a realistic pathway forward.

I will add to that — again, as I mentioned — we will work to close the remaining gap to the targets that I spoke of as we learn which actions are working well, which ones can be improved, and also, as I mentioned, the new technologies emerging in the next 10 years.

I would mention as well that, through fuel blending, by 2030, we expect to reduce non-mining greenhouse gas emissions by 70 kilotonnes per year and mining emissions by 25 kilotonnes per year as well.

I will go back — there were some questions from November 2 that I would like to get an opportunity to answer as well. The member opposite asked about the extended-family care agreements and if he could get a program description showing how much is being spent on them, what these agreements actually do, and the nature and the structure of those agreements. On a general basis, I can fill in some gaps there — but again, I would ask the member opposite to ask some more specific questions of the Minister of Health and

Social Services, when she has an opportunity in Committee of the Whole to get to her feet and to talk about the extended-family care agreements.

Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, when a child is in need of out-of-home care, the first choice is placement with an extended family member to enable closer connections to family, community, and culture. That is a sea change compared to the previous government.

As of June 2020, there were 131 children supported under the extended-family care agreement. That's compared to 115 children in November 2018. We've also seen an 18-percent reduction in the number of children in care over the last two years. As of July 2020, there were 78 children in care compared to 95 in November 2018. Those children are either on a continuing, temporary, or interim care order or a volunteer care agreement. As of July 2020, 15 children are living in group homes — 15. This is amazing work from the department and the Minister of Health and Social Services.

In addition to enhancing financial supports, we've also dedicated three placement resource workers to support extended-family caregivers in Whitehorse — one of whom is located in the McIntyre subdivision, working collaboratively with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

We will, of course, be evaluating this dedicated worker support model in the coming months to determine how effective it is. But as far as the cost and figures in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, which we're here in the Legislative Assembly debating today, Health and Social Services would receive \$400,000 of additional budget for EFCAs. This \$400,000 is entirely recoverable from Canada.

The member opposite went on to ask a question about the pandemic's impact on tourism — what precautions and information is government relying on when they are making their projections in the tourism sector, understanding that there is significant uncertainty? Can you commit on when you expect GDP to get back on track?

I do believe the minister answered that question a few times on her feet in the Legislative Assembly and she also corrected the record as far as how quickly we got out there to support the tourism industry. When COVID first came to Canada, we had to cancel the Arctic Winter Games. Cancellation of an event like that — and other events that were planned pre-pandemic — these are cancellations of tourism and culture events. The Minister of Tourism and Culture acted very quickly to determine what the need was as far as cancellations — whether that be for our aviation industry, whether that be for our hotels, whether that be for major events that were planned.

This government was there to support those Yukoners who — like us — at that time were grappling to understand the consequences of the global pandemic. Right away — with cancellation supports — we worked with the business community with supports. Right away with the Business Advisory Committee — getting people from different businesses from every sector in Yukon to come together and talk about what needs would be going forward.

The Minister of Economic Development and his team worked collaboratively with others and came together with a

plan — a fixed business cost — which was definitely being used by tourism industry providers and businesses from that very early response. Again, they offered a program of fixed costs — not loans; the federal government was giving out loans; this government was putting out grants. This was money in pockets to all the businesses right away to make sure that they were covered in these extraordinary times.

Our hearts go out to the business people in Yukon — I don't know too many people in the business community who wanted any handouts from government; they want to work. They want the pandemic to be over and so do we; however, in the interim, the government is here for them. We proved that quickly, despite what the opposition would tell you. We did that with programs that no other jurisdiction in Canada offered. We did that as well with our sick leave provisions right off the bat — and it's a program that the federal government is keenly interested in for the rest of Canada.

We continue to support that into this legislative session and this supplementary budget — when we take a look at hoteliers and accommodation support and millions of dollars over the next three years — to again forecast to the business community and the tourism industry that we are here with you and we will get through this together.

Specifically to the member opposite's question — the restrictions on travel across the country and around the world are weighing heavily on the Yukon tourism sector — absolutely. 2020 is shaping up to be the most difficult year on record. There is no doubt about it. Based on the year-to-date decline in the border crossings — which are down nearly 95 percent, Mr. Deputy Chair, over the first eight months, as compared to the same period in 2019 — and the very poor outlook for the remainder of 2020, it may be 80- to 90-percent lower than the 2019 levels for the same time of year.

Given this unprecedented disruption to the travel and tourism sector, forecasters have been hesitant to make predictions about the magnitude and duration of the impacts. We have been on the floor of the Legislative Assembly talking as well about the Canada Council and their statistics about who is willing to travel right now, even if there weren't restrictions. That number is extremely low.

For Yukon, a great deal will depend, as far as what is going to happen in the future, on how long international border restrictions remain in place, for example. I have been on the calls with the federal government asking them about specific jurisdictions like Germany. We have direct flights to Germany and want to know from the federal government — on a country-to-country basis — what their approach to epidemiology is going to be to allow the safe travel of folks from those areas. But we also have to work hand in glove with the communities and make sure that the First Nation communities and the municipalities are ready for changes as we move forward and take a look at what we can do.

Even when most travel and border restrictions are lifted, concerns over contracting COVID-19 while travelling will definitely have an impact on demand. It will have an impact on demand until a vaccine is approved and widely available. We are very hopeful for that time to come soon, but we have to

make sure that, from now until then, we are there for the business community and for the tourism community.

Under the current forecast and the interim fiscal and economic outlook, 2022 is the first tourism season projected — and again, these are projections — and you have to be very careful about projections, but that is the first year projected to be unencumbered by restrictions on travel or business operations. Again, as we look at second surges and international situations, it is very hard to make predictions. This forecast is based on the best information and analysis available at this time. However, I again have to make sure that we understand that this might change.

These assumptions on timing are consistent with other forecasters such as the Bank of Canada, which also states the following in its June monetary policy report, in overview 2 — and I quote: "... the central scenario assumes the following ... the pandemic will have largely run its course by mid-2022, likely because of the widespread availability of a vaccine or effective treatment."

Due to the potential for reduced demand of risk-averse travellers, the forecast includes an assumption that tourism does not return to pre-COVID levels until 2023, as anxiety from travellers will continue to the present. Those are, again, the forecast assumptions based on the questions — but also the reality of supports that have been there from our government. I could go on about the federal supports as well, but I will leave it at that for now and cede the floor to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I want to return to the issue of government's plans regarding energy and the fact that the public face of it — the presentation — is that it is *Our Clean Future* — that is what they call it, but the reality is that the Premier talks about renewables and his ministers talk about renewables, but the actual plans that Yukon Energy shared with stakeholders show the purchasing of new diesels. They show over a decade of reliance on diesel under this current government's plan.

Diesel is not renewable energy. Unfortunately, we also see a bit of a cognitive disconnect between the government's plans within their *Our Clean Future* document and the fact that, if you are doing stuff such as getting 4,800 zero-emission vehicles on the roads by 2030, ensuring that at least 50 percent of all new light-duty cars purchased each year by the government are zero-emission vehicles, and replacing 1,300 residential fossil-fuel heating systems with smart electric heating systems by 2030 — both of which can be found on, I believe, page 8 and page 9 respectively of the government's *Our Clean Future* document — those actions take electricity to power them. Right now, we have seen that the government's plan in the short term, the medium term, and the long term is to rent diesels.

Now, according to the legislative return that the Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation and for Yukon Energy Corporation tabled in this House on October 13, we see the cost that the government has spent to date on diesel. We then take a look at the Yukon Energy Corporation's plans — which they have called the draft 10-Year renewable electricity plan — although there is also diesel energy in that

plan — and what isn't clear is what the annual estimated future cost is of this government's plans to continue renting diesels.

I'm going to quote from the minister's legislative return: "During the winter of 2019, Yukon Energy rented nine portable diesel generators with a total capacity of 16.2 megawatts. The total cost of this rental was approximately \$4.37 million."

It then goes on to note: "This year, Yukon Energy will rent 17 units..." It later on tells us that is composed of "Nine units with a total capacity of 16.2 megawatts will be installed in Whitehorse and one extra unit will remain onsite as back-up. Six units with a total capacity of 10.8 megawatts will be installed in Faro and one extra unit will remain onsite as back-up."

So, we see that the costs have grown exponentially from 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, and then this current year. According to the minister's legislative return, it started out at \$700,000. It grew the next year to \$1.72 million, then it went to \$4.37 million and, this year, it's estimated to go to \$6.65 million. Now, I asked the Premier whether the government's costs — how much that's going to increase going forward. Is it just a case of the \$6.65 million that we're paying this year — that it will be required every year over the next decade? That seems certainly like less than the apparent growth of energy. That would be a cost of \$66.5 million in renting diesels over that time period. If the government is actually using more power than that — and I hear ministers laughing at this. It may be a laughing matter to them, but this is taxpayers' money we're talking about. Ratepayers are required to reach deeper into their pockets for another rate increase coming from this Liberal government's failed policies — these are topics of concern for them.

Again, I'm going to rely on the government and Yukon Energy's own documents. We see that the government's plans — as laid out in *Our Clean Future* — include electric vehicles. Those are referred to in Yukon Energy's draft plan on page 11 of the document that I have.

They are estimating that it will add 11 megawatts to the load. They are expecting another three megawatts to be added in demand based on electrification actions and another four megawatts due to smart heating, which would seem to relate to some of the heating commitments made in the government's plans. That is a load growth of 18 megawatts — again including — according to Yukon Energy's draft plans — what is shared with stakeholders.

Again, we are looking at the fact that — I will use the most comparable number from the minister's legislative return. Last year, they rented 16.2 megawatts at a cost of \$4.37 million. Obviously, 18 megawatts are more than 16.2, but I will compare government numbers to government numbers and give them the difference between just so that the minister can't suggest that we are using inaccurate comparisons of the costs. If you take that cost of leasing for the government's actions, it then leaves us the question: In addition to the other load growth, what is the actual cost going forward of diesel rentals to prop up the actual costs of implementing what government is pretending is a green agenda, but is actually being powered by burning diesel fuel?

Deputy Chair: Order. Would members like to take a quick 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. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is wanting to have a debate about long-term plans for Yukon Energy Corporation here in general debate. If he really wants to put his influence, suggestions, or criticisms to the department or to the officials — I did speak during the break to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. They are well aware of the questions, concerns, and criticisms that were given today. We will have answers and responses. Comparing what the Yukon Party was investing — the permanent megadiesel plant compared to what we are doing with an interim approach of backup when it comes to diesel now — the question of costs spent on diesel — I shudder to think of the amount of money that the government would spend on diesel if we went toward a megadiesel plant that the members opposite would have wanted, but instead we do have some rentals as backup.

Again, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is champing at the bit to have a discussion with the member opposite when it comes to our energy future.

The member opposite did reference *Our Clean Future*. I am not going to repeat myself as to the direction, intent, and dollar values there. I will say, though, that, in assisting us with this extremely flexible and extremely adaptive management approach, we have committed to clear, annual progress reports to update the actions of the strategy every three to four years as well. Through our actions, we will create or support an estimated 115 jobs each year for retrofits to residential, commercial, and institutional buildings, including renewable heating systems. Anything further than just general debate, I would ask the member opposite — those questions that he asked and those concerns and criticisms will be identified by the corporations and also by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. They will be responding in due time in Committee of the Whole when the department and officials are here to debate.

I think that's it for that. I will cede the floor to the member opposite to see if there are any more questions.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier is very fond of his "ask someone else later" approach to responding to questions. Unfortunately, our experience — in this Sitting and in previous Sittings — has been that, if we do that, we find that we often don't get the answers then either. Sometimes the government doesn't even call a department for debate — such as we saw during the one Spring Sitting when the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education — the

largest department, in the case of Health and Social Services, with roughly 35 percent of government's operation and maintenance expenditures — and Education, one of the other largest departments — had only 4.4 percent of the time of the Legislative Assembly during debate — in fact, less time than the government spent in re-announcements through ministerial statements that we had to listen to ad nauseum throughout that Spring Sitting.

I will continue asking the Premier questions, and the Premier will find that the quickest path to actually clearing general debate is to provide a reasonable response to the questions that we are asking, rather than to say to ask someone else later. We have been burned on that too many times, Mr. Deputy Chair.

I do have to correct the Premier. This talking point is interesting that the Liberal government has come up with. The Premier and his minister have come up with this talking point about a megadiesel plant, which, apparently, they claim was the Yukon Party's plan for meeting our energy needs. It is funny that, depending on which day or which you're hearing from them — the Liberal government used to accuse the Yukon Party of supporting megahydro. Then they decided to make megadiesel the bogeyman. In fact, the 20-megawatt plant that was being talked about — first of all, both diesel and LNG were being considered as options.

Secondly and most importantly, it wasn't the Yukon Party that took that plan out for public consultation; it was the Liberal government. The need to meet some of our power needs with a thermal option was, indeed, part of the long-term energy plan that had been identified through the resource planning work in 2016, but that specific proposal and project was, in fact, taken out for public consultation by the Premier's Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. The corporation under his watch, with his approval, took that project out. Then, after the Liberal government had apparently planned on going forward with that project — certainly expended taxpayers' money on developing the project proposal, holding public consultations, and so on — the Liberals decided that they were going to make a political decision to kill that project and pretend that they actually weren't actually going to rely on diesel or LNG for their energy needs, and instead they have chosen to rent rather than purchase. They are renting diesel, not LNG, and refusing to tell us about the total cost of their long-term rental of diesel. But we do see that, in their plan — again, I'm going to point to the Yukon Energy Corporation's plan, not our talking point and not something developed under a previous government, but the draft 10-year renewable electricity plan prepared by Yukon Energy Corporation with their new logo that they spent money on, under the current government, and dated July 2020. In that plan, we see a plan to add at least 18 megawatts to the load for the government's supposed green energy plans.

We flip the page to see energy existing and planned, and capacity existing and planned, and — surprise, surprise — we see that the government is planning on using diesels and buying diesels, in addition to their rentals, out to 2035-36, which is the last year shown in this plan.

Their green energy plan — their supposed *Our Clean Future* plan — is not really as clean as advertised. It includes renting diesels and includes the purchase of diesels, but that doesn't line up with the talking points, because the Premier's talking points and the minister's talking points would have you believe that it's all about renewable energy. Unfortunately, that is not what the plans actually say. Their talking points are undermined by their own plans and their own documents.

Again, we recognize that sometimes a utility needs to use thermal energy as part of their mix if they don't have sufficient renewable capacity. We were faced with that choice and had to choose the development of the LNG facility as the least objectionable option that we had available at the time. I would remind the government that we started out with two turbines. They made the choice to add another one to it.

I acknowledge that sometimes using thermal energy may be the best option. The key issue here is that government should be transparent about what it's doing and not pretend to the public that they are opposed to diesel energy, wouldn't want to touch diesel energy except just very, very temporarily, but have embedded within the heart of their plans the continued use of diesel energy going forward.

This comes back to the question that I asked earlier and received a long non-answer from the Premier about. They have diesel energy use, including rental diesels, in the plan. Over the next decade, how much money does the government expect to spend by renting diesel units? How much does it expect to spend on the fuel for them? Last but not least, of that increased cost, how much of that is directly due to meeting the commitments outlined in the government's supposed green energy plan, *Our Clean Future*?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, this concept of us not answering the questions when today, coming back to the member opposite and adding answers to the questions asked previously in the wrong places — asking questions about mains or Public Accounts when we have supplementary estimates, asking for us to speculate or for me to speculate on costs of diesel into the future when we are here to debate the supplementary budget for this year. Again, if the member opposite actually wanted answers to these questions, then he would — when the minister comes in with his department — have a debate with him about our intention to get off of fossil fuels and to turn to a clean energy future where we have invested over half a billion dollars over the next 10 years with the federal government in this initiative.

He keeps asking the same question over and over again. He has been warned in the past about that, but it is not going to change his tack. Again, the question was about going out in consultation for the Yukon Party's plan for next generation diesel — again, consultation ended with: "No, we're not going to do it." The minister answered that question already in the Legislative Assembly again. So, the members opposite's approach of saying that we are not answering the questions just doesn't cut the mustard, if you want to use that expression — "cut the mustard".

I remember being in debate when I would just go: "You know what? I am not getting these questions answered." So, I

would just list all the questions to the government of the day. Never once did they ever come back and answer those questions. Again, even if the questions are being asked in the wrong part of the Legislative Assembly, the wrong part of Committee of the Whole, we still do endeavour to get back to the member opposite with those questions. He has asked me a few times now to speculate on future diesel costs. I have said to him several times already that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is champing at the bit to have a conversation with him about their plan for next generation diesel compared to our plan for a green economy and clean growth.

No new question here — already answered the question. We are ready to go with more responses to the member opposite's questions, so what I will do is use this time to continue down the road of answering specific questions that the member opposite has asked in the past, which really busts open his whole narrative of us not answering these questions — but, oh well, we will continue to go through that.

The member opposite did ask, when it comes to the Public Accounts, what the percentage increase of expected revenues and expenses is as compared to previous fiscal years. If we look at a year-over-year comparison on a consolidated basis — comparing the 2019-20 actuals for Public Accounts to the 2020-21 main estimates — and if you take a look at revenue, revenue has increased from \$1.476 billion to \$1.573 billion, or about 6.6 percent. Expenditures as well have increased. As I say, comparing the 2019-20 actuals from the Public Accounts to the 2020-21 main estimates, the expenditures increased from \$1.48 billion to \$1.553 billion, or about five percent. Comparing the 2018-19 actuals to the 2019-20 actuals, Public Accounts to Public Accounts, revenue increased from \$1.4 billion to \$1.476 billion, or about 5.4 percent. For the same comparison of those actuals of 2018-19 to the actuals of 2019-20, the expenditures increased from \$1.399 billion to \$1.48 billion, or about 5.8 percent.

There are no consolidated comparators in supplementary estimates for 2020-21 as per normal practice — just making sure that we clarify that as well. However, we can show the percentage growth from the 2020-21 mains to the supplementary estimates on a non-consolidated basis, as we are here discussing the supplementary budget. Revenues in that consideration — and this, again, is percentage growth from the 2020-21 mains to the supplementary estimates here today on a non-consolidated basis — that would be revenue increased from \$1.526 billion to \$1.568 billion, or about 2.75 percent in this COVID year.

Expenditures did increase. They increased from \$1.522 billion to \$1.6 billion, or about 5.11 percent. We've already talked about the comparison between expenditures but also recoveries. We've already touched on that as far as the differences there, so I won't get into that. It is worth reminding the member opposite that, when we're speaking about these things, there are recoveries as well. He sometimes forgets that part when he's talking about what we spend.

When comparing the 2019-20 mains to this supplementary budget, revenues are increasing by 9.65 percent and expenditures are increasing by 11.39 percent. If we wanted to

compare the 2019-20 actuals from Public Accounts to this supplementary budget, revenues are increasing 8.4 percent and expenditures are increasing by 10.3 percent.

Of course, as we have the Public Accounts now here, we can continue to speak about the Public Accounts as they have now been tabled in the Legislative Assembly. I haven't seen too many of those questions from the member opposite now. He asked a lot of them when we were in the 2019-20 supplementary budget general debate over two departments. He asked a lot of questions about the Public Accounts at that time, but we do have it tabled now. Hopefully, we'll see some more questions there.

He did have a question about government pandemic spending. The question was: Does the government have any limit to its spending? We did answer it on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. We talked about fiscal anchors as well at that time, but it is again worth mentioning that, in the final report of the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel, they did indicate that adopting a fiscal anchor is intended to ensure that long-term shocks do not permanently push the government off the path leading to a long-term goal. I'll quote the report. It went on to say — and I quote: "There is a wide variety of forms that a fiscal anchor can take. A simple and transparent version of a fiscal anchor might be to simply require the government to restrict the rate of growth in spending. The general form of these restrictions are called 'tax and expenditure limits' and, as the name implies, constrains the choices governments make with respect to tax and spending choices. These restrictions can be imposed permanently or for short periods of time. For example, the government might consider restricting the rate of growth in spending to the combined rates of growth in population and inflation. In this way, real per capita spending is held constant perhaps until such time as its budget imbalance is corrected."

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel also indicated that a fiscal anchor that is often considered is a balanced budget restriction with varying levels of strictness. Our primary focus — and our primary fiscal anchor during this mandate, which has been made public through our long-term forecasts — has been a return to surplus, as I mentioned yesterday and I am mentioning it again today. This was a fairly prudent first step that our government took toward righting the fiscal ship and one that we are on track to meeting. We had that with the tabling of the surplus budget in the spring, and we were on track there — again, a year ahead of schedule.

It is important to keep in mind that the trade-offs with adding or adjusting fiscal anchors is flexibility to respond to changing conditions. One example is that the government has heavily restricted itself to a balanced budget. If we didn't get to that fiscal anchor and if we didn't have that fiscal acuity, we wouldn't be able to support Yukoners and Yukon businesses through this global pandemic as we are currently doing and to the extent and rate in which we are doing it. Our government has continuously struck a balance between our fiscal goals and remaining flexible to ensure that the territory, the people, and its businesses are supported today and supported tomorrow as well.

Of course, as we all know, the global pandemic has disrupted our fiscal targets; however, I would again point to the surplus budget that was tabled in March as this government's commitment to and success on that goal. I did touch on that yesterday as far as anchors go. We talked about the Public Accounts, page 10, and the fiscal anchors therein, but I also just want to reiterate that one of those fiscal anchors that we did achieve in having a surplus going into the mains of this year.

The member opposite did go on — and we did respond to this the other day, but I want to add more to the answer — again, breaking apart his narrative that we don't answer questions. How far is the government prepared to go in subsidizing part of the economy that may not be working? Again, we did talk about that yesterday. We talked about the limits on COVID spending, but our anchor right now — and we mentioned this yesterday as well — is ensuring that Yukoners have what they need to come through the global pandemic in the best shape possible from an economic point of view and from a public health perspective.

We were clear in answering that question yesterday, and we are answering it more again here today. We are balancing fiscal prudence with those outcomes by listening to Yukoners. We have been listening to businesses. We talked about the Business Advisory Council yesterday. We talked about the Department of Tourism and Culture working with industry stakeholders therein and about the public health officials responding quickly and effectively — we spoke about that in answering the question yesterday — while making best use of the financial support packages as well — answering the question yesterday and again here today.

At the same time, we remain committed to responsible spending. That is a hallmark, and we take it very seriously. As we consider the impacts of all fiscal decisions on future generations, our fiscal liabilities or net debt are growing, but so is the territory. Our population is growing and aging. Our mining and other sectors are growing and are supporting infrastructure — well, it was aging. Again, we could go back to the Office of the Auditor General's scathing report from the previous government. They really didn't keep up on the aging facilities.

We, on this side of the House, are remaining flexible in our responses to these changing conditions by partnering with each level of government to strategically invest in the future while also moving toward spending less than we take in. Again, that flexibility is a really important thing to consider, as we are in a global pandemic.

We balanced our budget and then found ourselves in this bizarre situation that has made Yukoners, Canadians, and the world population reel under its weight. That flexibility and financial anchor is extremely important to understand as well. Now is the time to make sure that we have funding in place for Yukoners. This government has proven, in our four years of budgeting, that we are able to get back to a surplus situation, and we have seen bigger deficits in the past — that is for sure — from the previous government. We have proven our ability to get back to a sound, stable, surplus situation a year ahead of schedule, and now that we are in the grips of the pandemic and

we have shown numbers of our per capita spending compared to other jurisdictions and how we have been doing this by addressing the needs of health and social services, by addressing the needs of the business community and individuals and making sure that we had supports out there. We have also done it in a way where, if you take the averages of spending in all jurisdictions, we are in a very, very sound position right now. The unknown is how long the pandemic is going to last, but what is not unknown is that this government will be there for Yukoners. We will be there and we have more gas in the tank because of our fiscal anchoring and because of our ability to get back to surplus a year ahead of schedule.

Mr. Cathers: Just to correct the Premier — I do give credit to the Premier when he actually does answer the questions. I do appreciate that he did provide some answers to questions after he told me earlier that I shouldn't have asked them, but I would point out to the Premier that it's never the wrong time to be accountable to the public or the Legislative Assembly. The question might not be phrased the way you would like to hear it. You might rather receive it in Committee instead of Question Period or vice versa or perhaps during a different time in debate or a different day. Maybe the government had an announcement scheduled on a certain topic and a photo opportunity that they would really rather not preempt by being accountable and answering a question, but ultimately there is never a wrong time to be accountable, and it is never the wrong time to answer the questions and be accountable to this Legislative Assembly. In those areas where the Premier did not have information at his fingertips and provided it later, we do give credit where credit is due.

But it's really quite odd hearing this narrative of the government trying to invent this idea of a megadiesel plant. If they go back to the public record of consultation that occurred, the Premier need look no further than his minister to the right of him to see who went out to public consultation on a proposal to develop either a diesel or LNG 20-megawatt generation facility. I would remind the Premier that their proposal — the Liberal government decided not to admit that they were going to invest in diesel going forward and pretend that rentals were temporary, but instead, just this year alone, we see that — according to the legislative return provided by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on October 13, 2020 — they are renting more than 20 megawatts of diesel already. They are renting 16.2 megawatts installed in Whitehorse and 10.8 megawatts installed in Faro. It's in excess of 20. It's more in the neighbourhood of 26 or 27 megawatts that they are renting instead of owning, and they are choosing diesel instead of LNG.

I want to just jump to the topic of — the Premier said he is not going to speculate about diesel costs, but I would point out that government has information about that. This is not purely speculative. I'm looking at the Public Accounts right in front of me for the fiscal year that ended in March 2020. I would just note that — the Premier may be well aware but some people listening may not be — the Yukon Development Corporation has a fiscal year that actually ends in December, not in March, so the statements that are included in the Public Accounts reflect its fiscal year ending on December 31, 2019. These are

part of the Public Accounts, and they make reference to the fact that the corporation is required by Order-in-Council 1995/90 — I will quote from page 269 of the Public Accounts: “Fuel price adjustment. OIC 1995/90 directs the YUB to permit the Corporation to adjust electricity rates to reflect the fluctuations of the price of diesel fuel. The amount by which actual fuel prices vary from the long-term average prices is deferred and recovered from or refunded to customers in a future period. In 2017 the Corporation updated the long-term average cost to better reflect current market conditions. This change is consistent with the 2017-2018 GRA. Refer to Note 1(b).”

What I’m pointing to is the fact that not only is there a long-term estimate of fuel prices and an expectation of what the government-owned corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation — which is, of course, a subsidiary of Yukon Development Corporation but is a 100-percent government-owned corporation — there is a cost estimate for what they expect to pay for diesel included in that draft 10-year renewable energy plan that I made reference to. As part of their legally mandated filings with the Yukon Utilities Board, their regulator, they are required to update the expected operations cost for not just one scenario going forward, but for several scenarios based on high usage, medium usage or low usage and considering a number of factors, including higher diesel usage during low-water years. That, in fact, is not a new thing; it goes back decades.

The fundamental point is that there is a cost estimate that government has. While the Premier may or may not have it in front of him, the government does have cost estimates on how much renting their diesels is expected to cost in lease costs and how much it’s expected to cost in fuel costs going forward. They do have a cost estimate of how much the additional action items outlined in the government’s plan called *Our Clean Future* will add to that, both in terms of load and in terms of the diesel fuel and rental costs required to meet that additional load directly resulting from their supposed clean future energy plan.

My question is: What is that? Again, referring back to Public Accounts, as well as my own time as minister responsible for that corporation, we know that government has an estimate for it. The question is just whether they’re willing to provide it or whether they’re not willing to provide it. If the Premier actually doesn’t have that information in front of him, I would be happy to receive a commitment for him to get back to me with that information the next time we’re in general debate.

I’m going to again return to the issue of debt and the Premier’s previous indication that the Liberal government had not taken on more than \$20 million in new long-term debt when we know, in fact, that, according to Public Accounts, that number is closer to \$35 million.

We see as well, on page 275 of the Public Accounts, that Yukon Development Corporation has increased their long-term debt in their year, which ends December 31, 2019. I will quote from two parts of it here: “The change in long-term debt arising from financing activities during the year related to principal repayment of \$3,223,000 and the issuance of additional debt in the amount of \$10,724,000.” Again, we’re still looking for

answers on what that \$10 million in long-term debt that the government took on in 2019 was related to.

Secondly, again quoting from page 275 of the Public Accounts tabled by the Premier — it says: “The fair value of long-term debt at December 31, 2019 is \$231 million (December 31, 2018 - \$221 million).”

Again, just for the clarification of the reader and the listener, this section of the Public Accounts is specific to the Yukon Development Corporation, so the debt number mentioned there is in reference to their long-term debt — not the government’s total amount. So, again, if you are looking for information on what that \$10 million in additional debt was that the government took on — and looking as well for clarification on what the estimated diesel costs and rental costs are of the next decade, as shown in the Liberals’ plans, which include the usage of diesel. Pardon me — the second item is directly related to their implementation of their *Our Clean Future* energy strategy, which, as we see it from comparing the two items — the Yukon Energy plan to use diesel for over a decade, including new diesel, and the government’s plan, which adds a significant additional load in terms of megawatts for supposed green energy commitments that actually look like they are being powered with diesel. We are asking what the estimated costs of that are.

Again, if the Premier just doesn’t have the information in front of him, I will take a commitment from him to get back to me with that information during this Sitting.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the department has some of these numbers on diesel. He did quote from Public Accounts, but, as you see in the quote from the Public Accounts, this is talking about 2019-20. It does talk about the changes in conditions and the forecasts therein, but it doesn’t speculate in the Public Accounts for 2019-20 what diesel is going to cost or what quantities we are going to need. However, the minister does have that number. The minister does have lots of the information that the member opposite wants.

I am not going to endeavour to get back to the member opposite about these diesel questions — the third time that he has asked. He is very dangerously close to being called on a point of order on Standing Order 19(b) — “speaks to matters other than (i) the question under discussion...” — three times now when we responded to him each time.

At the same time, the minister will absolutely have that information for the member opposite when it comes to forecasts or speculations on diesel costs and prices. Actually, the Development Corporation will be appearing this year as well and will absolutely be able to answer a lot of the questions at that time. If the member opposite really does want to have a less-than-general breakdown of these numbers, then he knows where to ask those questions.

I will talk in general about long-term debt, for sure. There has been an increase of \$8.4 million in additional long-term debt reflected in the Yukon government’s consolidated financial statements. That’s a combination of new long-term debt less the annual principal repayments. The member opposite knows this. He does know that new long-term debt was acquired for Yukon Energy to maintain its debt-to-equity

ratio. He knows all about that; he has a little bit of experience in that particular field — also, additional investments to Chu Níikwān for the first LNG engine that was added to the Whitehorse generating facility in 2019.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chair, that 2019 long-term debt in Yukon government consolidated statements does not include the debt between YDC and the Yukon government from previous governments' experience and debt, which is approximately \$38 million.

So again, let's talk about some of the credit facilities used — and we spoke a bit about this already as well — but again, I'm happy to answer the questions generally in debate here now, with more substantive responses in debate with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when he has his opportunity to talk in Committee of the Whole — but also having Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation appearing as witnesses here in the Legislative Assembly — another great opportunity to expand and get into more specifics — two opportunities there.

When we talk about the credit facilities used — the \$23.8 million referenced in the credit facilities line of Yukon government's consolidated financial statements reflects the use of Yukon Energy's line of credit. The member opposite knows that as well. The line of credit was authorized by Yukon government and was used for projects until Yukon Energy could secure long-term debt.

I went through some of the examples earlier today in answering the member opposite's questions ad nauseum here about projects that were funded through the line of credit. We went through those lists — Mayo-McQuesten transmission line under the previous government, the asset management software purchase and implementation, the replacement of the head gate and the upgrade for Whitehorse hydro unit 2, and the Aishihik water licence renewal as well.

So, there are current credit facilities used by Yukon Energy — as of today, \$31 million — as already answered to the member opposite when it comes to long-term debt — the question that he is asking. The authorized limit is \$36 million.

Those are the numbers that I do have here in general debate. However, the member opposite's questions — again, if he really does want the responses — he said there's a long history — I forget how he said it — how the Premier will get up and say that the minister will answer the question, and then the minister doesn't answer the question. Well, the minister will answer those questions. He has told me during the break that he can't wait to answer those questions, actually.

So, again, we'll see in Hansard and we'll review. By the time we get to our final day of a 45-day session, we'll see. We'll see if the questions get answered or not — as far as how we speculate on diesel purchases moving forward, but also clarifying the record of what our future means as the Yukon Liberal government as far as diesels and purchases therein compared to the previous government.

Mr. Cathers: Again, I do want to note that when the Premier does provide an answer to something, I'll give him credit for that. I may question the answer. I may point out — as I did earlier in debate — that the answer — such as in the case

of government responding to the issue of farmers losing commercial garbage service — I acknowledged that they actually did take action, but the action simply wasn't effective enough to provide a solution. I also acknowledged in some cases where he did provide answers that previously he refused to provide — which he made up for today, and I appreciate that information.

However, I do have to point out that the Premier seems to have a new version of the Standing Orders in his mind that doesn't line up with our Standing Orders. There has never been a rule in this Assembly that, if a minister refuses to answer a question three times, a member can't ask the question again. That's not in the Standing Orders. I have asked several questions repeatedly because I haven't got an answer and the Premier has not provided the information.

Before moving on to another topic, I'm just going to point out that when it comes to the issue of the expected diesel fuel costs of implementing the government's new *Our Clean Future* plan and their expected diesel costs of meeting the rest of the load through rental of diesel and purchase of diesel fuel, the Premier did admit that the government has the information, but he said again that he's not going to provide that information himself. That's unfortunate. I hope that he will reconsider it, but I'm going to move on to another topic.

I'm just going to touch on — we were discussing this briefly, and then the Premier and I got talking about another matter, so I'm going to return to the topic of water licences — particularly for placer miners. The reason why I'm returning to this is it is a subject of great concern for Yukoners, including a number of his constituents — but also others.

The Premier acknowledged yesterday — and I'm referring to page 1692 of the Blues — he acknowledged that there were 16 licences before the board. He said that six were submitted in mid- to late summer and have not been processed yet. Then he referred to 11 that had been before the board for longer and noted that some of those were on pause — and I quote: "... due to wetlands issues and matters currently explored with this hearing in the public interest..."

Again, I'm going to ask the question: How many applications are delayed because of the wetlands issues? How many years have they been waiting — or how many months, if the Premier prefers that term?

I'm also going to quote from a press release issued by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce regarding the issue of the Yukon Water Board and comments that were made at the hearing recently. I would remind the Premier that, previously in debate when we've discussed the matter of the Water Board holding a public interest hearing regarding the wetlands and placer mining, the Premier has supported them doing that. I'm going to read from the press release issued by the Yukon Chamber of Mines on October 29, 2020. I assume that the Premier has a copy of it, but if not, I would be happy to send him over one. I will table this when I'm done reading from it as well so that it's on the record.

"For immediate release — October 29, 2020 —

"Yukon Chamber of Mines Disappointed by Yukon Water Board Chair Comments

“Whitehorse, YT — On Tuesday, October 27th, the Yukon Water Board began its public hearing into ‘Placer Mining in Wetlands’. The purpose of the hearing ‘is to gather information to further develop the Board’s Wetland Information Guidelines and to hear views about placer mining activities occurring in wetlands’.

“Unfortunately, during the afternoon’s proceedings on the first day, publicly broadcast live across all its streaming platforms (YouTube, Vimeo, Zoom), the Chair could be heard speaking with the board about how to strategize asking questions of particular presenters — specifically naming Yukon Chamber of Mines representative — and referring to him as ‘flying off the handle’ under questioning yet to be undertaken. The consultant had not yet presented on behalf of the Chamber, yet he was singled out by name and referred to in this derogatory fashion.

“‘Yukon’s mining industry has over numerous occasions, called into question the impartiality and efficiency of this administrative tribunal. Yesterday’s broadcast of the hearing has further illuminated the challenge of obtaining a fair hearing, that gives all participants *truly* equal footing.’ said Chamber of Mines President Ed Peart. ‘The perceived bias which was demonstrated by the board on Tuesday was disappointing to say the least. We appreciate the apology from the Board Chair and seek clarification of how the Yukon Water Board will repair this serious breach of trust.’

“The Yukon Chamber of Mines is participating in the hearing along with other affected stakeholders such as the Klondike Placer Miners Association, Yukon First Nation Governments, Conservation organizations, and others. The hearing ran from Tuesday, October 27th – Thursday, October 29th and was streamed live across multiple platforms.”

I would ask the Premier to comment on this matter considering that the board is one that he is the minister responsible for — along with the Yukon *Waters Act* — and the chair was appointed by this government, and this press release from the Yukon Chamber of Mines is directly questioning the fairness and impartiality of the board and this process — again, noting that the Premier has himself endorsed this process and the Water Board taking this action.

So, I will table a copy of this and would ask the Premier to comment on the press release — his views on it and on what the government will do to restore the confidence of the mining sector after these comments by the Yukon Water Board chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don’t have a further breakdown as far as the 11 — we did say that currently there are 11 licences before the board. We made that statement the other day. Water Board applications come in on a daily basis, so we will check to see if that number is still accurate.

We did say that six were submitted in mid- to late summer and they have not been issued yet, but there are another 11 that have been remaining before the board for longer — and these longer timelines, as mentioned before, are usually due to proponents’ non-responses to information requests — of course, we know how that process goes — but there are others that are on pause due to wetland issues. Of course, we do know that there is a public hearing going on.

I would imagine — but I don’t want to speculate — that these would all be projects in the Indian River area. Again, I will see if we can provide any more information on that from the department, but I don’t have an update for the member opposite today.

When it comes to the chair of the Water Board, I was made aware of the comments. I understand that he did apologize for those comments when the Water Board hearing resumed the following day. I know that this was absolutely the right decision. I understand that he also welcomed comments and concerns from attendees and, at that time, none were raised, so that is an interesting point as well.

I am going to ask what the members opposite would have me do. Is the member opposite asking me for a resignation here? Are the members opposite asking me to do something as far as what is under the purview of being the Premier? I am not sure exactly where the members opposite are going here, but I will say that I have absolute confidence in the chair. I believe that he is doing a fantastic job holding a position that must always balance competing interests. I can’t think of anyone who would do a better job, to tell you the honest truth, Mr. Deputy Chair.

I am going to go back to a couple of days or weeks ago when we were at the Victoria Gold annual event with Banyan Gold as well — Every Student, Every Day. I will give credit to the member opposite for his involvement — the Member for Copperbelt South, who really was instrumental in starting with this program. I will give credit where credit is due there.

At the same time, I was given credit from John McConnell, the president and CAO of Victoria Gold. He basically said that he wanted to thank the Premier and that, if it wasn’t for my efforts, they would be bankrupt right now. I am going to share that credit. He went on to talk about getting us through the regulatory process and working with his team. I am going to share that credit with the chair of the Water Board. I will ask the industry if they have faith in the chair of the Water Board based on the fact that they got permitted for the largest gold mine in Yukon history in a time where, if it didn’t work out the way it worked out and with the timelines that were extremely tough to accomplish — the work that the chair, the secretariat, and the board did — talk about blowing by any concept of government employees working 9:00 to 5:00. These folks worked around the clock to make sure that they fulfilled their obligation and their responsibility to water and the concerns therein, but also understanding how to work with a proponent and how to work with an extremely important part of Yukon — the mining industry.

Watching the technical table and watching how this quasi-judicial board — with the responsibility through the secretariat to this government — moved through extremely tight timelines, I don’t know where we would be if we didn’t have the current chair of the Water Board in the chair during that process. Again, during this process, he apologized and asked if there were any comments or concerns from attendees. None were raised at that time. The Yukon Party is bringing it up now. I’m asking the member opposite: What do they want me to do? What are they implying when it comes to the chair of the Water Board?

Because it's my opinion — based upon the results when it comes to the memorandum of understanding established, with the protocols, the reporting protocols, the job titles, and the responsibilities — that it takes two to tango, and we have a chair who doesn't hide behind quasi-judicial status and he understands the responsibility of the secretariat when it comes to public servants working for the Water Board but also under the purview of our departments.

It is extremely important to be able to break down some of the barriers that existed under the previous government that don't exist anymore. I believe that the chair has done a fantastic job and he continues to have the confidence of this government.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the Premier providing a bit of insight into his views on the matter. I would note, though, that the Premier, in suggesting that, if the chair or another member of the board — I believe he was indicating the chair — asked people at a Water Board public hearing if they had any comments, issues, or concerns — I think that was what the Premier said — it was an opportunity to express them. I do have to point out to the Premier, in case he doesn't actually get this point, that for placer miners — when their future and the future of their family is potentially in the hands of the Water Board, including the chair — how many people feel comfortable, confident, and safe so that they can raise personal concerns directly in that venue?

I want to be clear. Even if the intent and the view of the chair and the board in its entirety is that they would never take punitive action in response to a concern being expressed directly by a placer miner in that venue — if the Premier were to put himself in the shoes of a placer miner standing or sitting there, facing someone who potentially holds their future and their family's future in their hands, how comfortable is that business owner going to be in saying, "Yeah, I do have a concern. Yeah, I do have an issue and I'm not satisfied with the response that was given."

So, the fact that the invitation was made for comments, issues, or concerns — even if it was made with 100-percent sincerity — does not mean that this is how citizens whose lives are potentially in the hands of that body would take it, because there can be the fear or worry that, if they speak up against someone in a position of power — what the potential repercussions could be. The same holds true when we hear that people don't speak concerns directly to the Premier or ministers about other areas.

I'll close off on this point here. We wanted the minister responsible to comment. He did provide some comments. If he has additional comments, we will certainly take those as well. I think it's just important for the public record — for all of those who have expressed concern and for every Yukoner to have the Premier on record stating his views on this matter and how it was handled, because ultimately he is the minister responsible. Yukoners whose livelihoods are potentially affected by the outcome of the hearing are concerned about what the outcome will be, both from the board and from government afterwards.

So, I'm going to move on to another area that we've yet to receive information on from the government.

As the Premier will be aware, I tabled on behalf of the Official Opposition a motion for the production of papers asking for a list for the following information from the Yukon government: a list showing a breakdown by department of the number of full-time government employees who are not residents of the Yukon; a list showing a breakdown by department of the number of full-time government employees who only live in the Yukon part time; a list of the management and senior management positions currently held who are not residents of the Yukon or who only live here part time; a list of all management and senior management positions currently held by people who are not technically classified as employees and an explanation of the nature of that alternate arrangement; a list of all management and senior management positions currently held by people who are not residents of the Yukon or who only live here part time who are not technically classified as employees; and a list showing the total number of days the deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, and directors have spent working for the government while residing outside of Yukon between 2017 and now.

Again, I note that, in asking for that information, the primary reason why we are asking for it is that we have heard those concerns repeatedly from government employees as well as others about an increasing trend toward particularly senior management staff either residing outside of the territory or spending a substantial portion of their time working remotely from somewhere down south. We are asking for that information. There is, of course, an effect operationally on government if people — particularly managers — are not present in the territory. There is an operational impact from that. As well, it is a case of more dollars flowing south rather than staying here in the territory supporting the local economy. So, we are asking the Premier and his colleagues to provide that information and to be accountable to Yukoners about what has occurred in those areas so that we understand the extent of those situations.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We do know that the substantive part of the question asked by the member opposite right now is the same question in the form of a motion that was presented to the Legislative Assembly — I believe it was yesterday. We do have department officials working on a response to that. I don't have anything new to add today, but we are aware of the motion and we are aware of the request from the member opposite.

Again, because the member opposite did go back to speaking about the chair and he spoke about what you would do as a placer miner — again, he chose his words pretty carefully — but I'm wondering where he is going with this. Does the member opposite feel that the placer community has an opinion? Has he been told by the placer community or KMPA of an opinion on the current chair? I have not heard an opinion therein. I am asking the member opposite what he is asking me to do.

Is he saying that the Yukon Party no longer has confidence in the chair? Is he saying that he is asking me — I don't know — is he asking me if the chair should be fired over these comments? I'm not really sure where the member opposite is going with this, but I do want him to clarify today in the

Legislative Assembly. I want to know. I answered his question. I said that I have full confidence in the chair. I want to know from the member opposite where he is on that.

Again, when it comes to the second part of the question — we are aware of the motion and we are working on the information for the member opposite. Again, it's very interesting for the member opposite to speak on behalf of the placer miners. I don't know if he's doing that or not. He used his words very, very particularly. But I do want to ask him: Where is he going with this? What is he asking me to do when it comes to the chair? I reiterate again the confidence that I have in the chair, the secretariat, and the board.

Mr. Cathers: I think I was quite clear about what I was asking with the questions and potential concerns that I was making reference to. It is something that — again, the most important thing in this matter was to hear the Premier, as the minister responsible, indicate his views on this matter pertaining to the Yukon Water Board. I would remind the Premier that, although he may wish to turn this into a partisan or combative discussion, ultimately, these are real questions relating to people's lives. It's very important, when someone is dealing with matters that affect their livelihood, that government and its boards — just as with a judicial process, there is a value in not just the intention of a person being appropriate, but for the public to be able to have confidence in that as well.

I have made clear our views of the importance of the Premier putting a statement on record regarding it, and we will certainly forward that concern on to all who have contacted us. If the Premier wants to know about individual placer miners or the KPMA as a whole and their views, I would encourage him to reach out to them and contact them to see if they wish to share their views — whatever those views may be — with him.

But I can tell you that among those views will be people who are concerned about the ongoing delays in the licensing process — not just related to the Water Board but also related to other areas directly under Energy, Mines and Resources, including the fact — as I have raised here in the past — the issues that have been brought to me by prospectors regarding the fact that government has not always followed the standards set out through orders-in-council regarding other requirements for placer miners to do reclamation work.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will recall a specific miner on whose behalf I raised concerns previously. I have also heard other concerns from Yukoners, but since not all of them have given permission to have their names placed on the record, I will not do so. However, I would note that those issues and those concerns are not confined to just one person, and they also relate to other areas within the government's permitting process — not just within the Water Board area.

I would note, as well — just as a reminder to the Premier — that when it comes to the area of the costs of their climate change and green energy plan, in fact, one of the reasons that we ask questions about it is that the *Interim Fiscal and Economic Update* that the Premier provided includes costs outlined for that — as well as land development, social development, education and health, community and First

Nation infrastructure, real property and asset management, transportation infrastructure, information technology, and forecasted operating expenses as well. All of those matters are contained at some level — although at a very high level of information — within the government's *Interim Fiscal and Economic Update*. So, it is surprising and disappointing that when we ask questions about it, we don't really get an answer — and, worse, I would note that the Premier had indicated that he didn't want to provide that information to me.

I am just going to move on to a couple of other areas. One relates to the recruitment and retention of health care professionals. That includes — recently, we are aware of the issue impacting Watson Lake — that saw a situation of physicians and nurses potentially leaving the community over the issue of the Housing Corporation's one-pet policy.

I would point out that, again, we recognize that these issues can cut across different departments or corporations, but ultimately, particularly in a pandemic, it's very important that government — especially government that has talked repeatedly about having a one-government approach to dealing with issues — come up with a solution. It's not enough to say that you are working on a response or to say that you are doing your best. When problems are affecting people's lives and when those problems are potentially resulting in a rural community losing physicians and nurses as a result of a government policy, it's not enough to say that you are working on a response. Government needs to figure out what the right solution is to the problem.

It's important for government — and I would suggest to the Premier and his colleagues that they would be well off if they change their views from being that simply responding to a question or responding to an issue is in any way the same as solving it. The reason why they haven't fixed the problem or how they are working on it is, in real-world terms, not very relevant. What people want to know in Watson Lake, as well as in our other rural communities that may be affected by this, is what government is actually going to do to address these issues, specifically as it relates to rural recruitment and retention.

I'm going to start off with Watson Lake, in particular, and the issue of the one-pet policy. Government has had this issue now for a while. It is one where, recognizing the time sensitivity where people can make decisions since they may be in a situation where they can't keep their pet and have a home at the same time, the government needs to either act quickly to fix the problem or, by the time they get around to eventually thinking of maybe addressing it, it's going to be too late for the solution to address the real-world problem that exists in that community.

Particularly with Watson Lake, what has the government done regarding the issue of the physicians and the nurses who are being affected by Yukon Housing Corporation's policy? Have they come up with a solution? What is it?

Next, I would ask the Premier as well — since we're waiting for one piece of information that we don't have yet but directly relates to the staff and health care professionals in rural communities. We know that government rolled out with great fanfare 11 mental health positions related to the wellness hubs

in communities, which was, as we know, a replacement to some extent of what was previously provided by Many Rivers — not in fact a new service in some areas. We know that they had 11 positions associated with it. At one point, they admitted that they had only filled seven of those positions. At the current time, how many of those positions are staffed, and how many of those positions are vacant?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the member opposite is just trying to buy time here or something, because the question about staffing in Watson Lake has been asked of the minister a couple of times in the Legislative Assembly. She has responded to that question.

Again, the question that he just asked again has already been asked and already answered. It is interesting that he says that answering the questions isn't necessarily solving the problems.

So, let's talk about how this government is dealing with issues. I'll just reiterate a bit on the question that he had about mental health supports and Many Rivers: one NGO replaced by two NGOs; two mental health nurses under the Yukon Party replaced by 22 mental health professionals in four different mental health hubs — so that has been answered ad nauseum in the Legislative Assembly as well. The member opposite knows that, but he is just buying time, I guess, to continue in general debate.

It's a very strange thing to say that answering questions is not solving problems. Well, answering questions — okay, I guess we're answering questions now, but we're not solving problems. Before, we weren't answering the questions, and now we're answering the question but we're not solving problems.

Let's talk about when it comes to mining — because the member opposite started these questions with a question on mining. We could talk about new mining production, supporting middle-term gains; we could talk about how, for the first time since 2013, Yukon could have three producing mines in 2020 moving forward — looking at Alexco and looking at what's happening with Minto, which is great, but Victoria Gold's expectations for the Eagle Gold project and also looking at what's happening with Alexco. These are extremely important things — extremely important production potentials here.

It is really important that we continue to take a look at how we do solve problems. We solve problems by balancing the economy and the environment together, Mr. Deputy Chair. That was our platform in the last election and we made good on those commitments. There are, for sure, strong mineral prices to add into that. Looking through the pandemic, they just got stronger. That definitely adds potential fuel to the mining outlook.

Much of the global economy is suffering due to COVID-19. Gold prices have never been higher. The price of gold reached an all-time high in June of just under \$1,900 per troy ounce. That was then surpassed to \$2,000 per troy ounce in August. Since that time, gold settled somewhat and is trading at a different level — but, again, the work that we've done to make sure that Victoria Gold is up and running — it is the

largest gold mine in Yukon history — making sure that they safely return people to work on a new schedule when it comes to alternate self-isolation plans — this is how we solve problems. It is by working with the First Nations, by working with the mining community, by communicating through the pandemic — that is how we find solutions — and by making sure that placer miners can get safely back to camp in a time when there was a lot of pressure to shut things down. We kept on speaking to all those concerns.

We asked people to make sure that their concerns were based on medical advice and science, and we got to a place where we could get placer miners as they were returning from everywhere from — you know, I have great friends in the placer community who are born-and-raised Yukoners — third generation — who winter in places like Texas. They come back into the community and they are welcomed, obviously, with open arms in that community. Again, it's watching the placer community working with the government and working on their own to make sure that individuals got back into the placer field. We had people like the Favron family reaching out to placer miners who they didn't even necessarily know to help and support them — getting groceries and supplies. They were just going above and beyond.

The work that we do to make sure that, as an essential service, we had placer and we had Victoria Gold up and running, continuing to move through these very trying times — that is how we solve problems. It is by working with other governments. It is by working all summer — since March and all the way through the pandemic, every day — to make sure that we were in a strong position economically not only just as a government, but doing all the supports that we possibly could.

It is the same with the outfitting community. That's how we solve problems — by working with the outfitting community. They were decimated this year because there are border controls. A lot of their customers come from the States. We worked with them to do what we could in the current situation to get folks out to their camps as much as possible. So, that's how we solve problems, Mr. Deputy Chair.

We could continue to take a look at the sector and the gold prices. We could take a look at Pembridge. We could take a look at Alexco and what we are doing to have conversations with the chairs of the Water Board and YESAB — in a room together a few times now — which was unheard of under the Yukon Party, I would assume. I don't know if they have anything to add as far as any of those meetings that they had; I'm not sure if they ever happened. But that's how we solve problems — by communicating, especially when it comes to our regulatory responsibilities.

The member opposite also spoke about fiscal and economic impacts when it comes to COVID. The impact of the pandemic across Canada can be measured by comparing pre-COVID and post-COVID fiscal and economic forecasts. So, let's take a look at how we compare to other jurisdictions. Since actions were first taken by government back in February or March to slow the spread of the virus, all provinces and territories have seen steep declines in growth forecasts and expanded government deficits.

If we take a look at the interim fiscal and economic updates for October 2020, on page 7, we see a chart about real GDP forecasts. Again, this is a good way of ending the day here — the member opposite started with fiscal anchors and GDP considerations and how the sky is falling. If we take a look at the chart on page 7 of this forecast — the impact of COVID-19 on provinces' and territories' real GDP — it definitely ranges. It ranges from minus 5.4 percentage points in Yukon to almost minus 14 percentage points in Alberta. Taking a look at the comparisons of the changes in the 2020-21 budget balance per capita and taking a look at the changes in 2020 real GDP growth forecast percentages — the Yukon is absolutely in an enviable position when it comes to not only our forecast moving forward but how we have managed to get as much industry as we possibly could during COVID times back to work and into work in the fields. Also, as we take a look at tangible capital assets getting out the door on a year-to-year basis from the mains to the Public Accounts, this government is solving problems by doing what they say they're going to do up front.

Now, there was a time with the Yukon Party where they would have much fanfare in the mains about all the capital projects that they were going to do. I will take the comparison of our mains to our actuals — to our Public Accounts — any day when it comes to our ability to solve problems and to do what we said we were going to do when it comes to capital assets.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver 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: I will now call the House to order.

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. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, 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 stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.