



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 59

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 5, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 5, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change which has been made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the motion is out of order: Motion No. 87, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, mysterious, you may think — but I would ask the Assembly to help me in welcoming Mr. Gallant, from Vanier Catholic Secondary School, and the grade 10 science class. Due to COVID restrictions in the gallery, I think there was going to be half the class and then half the class, but I think that they probably made the decision to stand right outside that door and to listen to the proceedings today over our radio system.

So, I would ask the Assembly to welcome the grade 10 science class from Vanier Catholic Secondary School today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Movember

Mr. Adel: I rise today on behalf of the Liberal government, the Official Opposition, and the Third Party to pay tribute to Movember.

I rise today, as I have many times before, to pay tribute to the month of November and Movember. Movember is an awareness month dedicated to the mental and physical health of men across the world. It is one of the things that is near and dear to my heart. My father was a survivor of prostate cancer. As the father of three young men, I do everything I can to keep them informed of this silent killer. It is one where people just don't talk about it, and we have to get the cause out there, so that they are aware — one of the largest killers men face each and every day.

Globally, an average of one man every minute of every day passes away from suicide. Suicide is also disproportionately represented by men with 75 percent of suicide victims being male. Traditionally, discussions of men's mental health and physical health have been silent.

Movember aims to change the stigma associated with men and challenges each of us to be more open and accepting of these dangerous diseases and mental disorders. Since 2003, Movember has funded over 1,260 projects around the globe in support of men's health, with the goal of reducing male suicide by 25 percent by 2030. In order for us to reach the goal, it is imperative that each of us openly discuss these issues with the men in our lives. We need to shift from a silent norm to one that is accepting, understanding, and supportive of our initiative to live a long and healthy life.

Movember looks at male health through a lens that focuses on prevention and intervention. The first step always is to talk about it — so, let's talk about it. Let's share the concerns with the men we care for. Let's encourage each of them — young and old — to break the stigma, get regular checkups, and let's all check with them when we notice the signs of depression.

I would encourage anyone who can to participate and donate to this incredibly important cause.

This year, it is virtual, so we won't be losing some luxurious facial hair or any of the other things that we normally do, but we have to do something. We all have men in our lives whom we value, love, respect, and admire. Together we can help shape a future that promotes men's health, removes the stigma of discussion, and supports our men when they need it most.

Applause

In recognition of National Senior Safety Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to pay tribute to National Senior Safety Week on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government. The Yukon is rich with resources: our forests, rivers, wildlife, minerals like gold and silver, and — one of our most precious resources, of course — our people, Yukoners themselves. Among Yukoners, if our kids are gold, our seniors are certainly silver.

When you become a senior, and I speak from growing experience, many things change. There are the obvious physical changes that can happen. Our joints may ache more, for one, and some of us may get the odd grey hair or two. We can also face some very real challenges — how to stay connected with family and friends and how to ensure that our voices remain heard. But becoming a senior can also mean, despite the physical changes and challenges, that we become richer — richer in wisdom, experience, knowledge of our traditions, and connections with our family and friends — all things vitally important to a healthy and vibrant Yukon, which is why I am thrilled that the Canada Safety Council holds a National Senior Safety Week every year, starting tomorrow, November 6, through to November 12. This year, the council's theme is "Old Age is Not a Crime", which is focusing on the all too prevalent issue of elder abuse.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our very own dynamic seniors organizations here in the Yukon: the Yukon Council on Aging, which provides valuable information for seniors — including how to recognize scams directed specifically at the aging population; the Golden Age Society, which provides opportunities for social interaction to reduce

isolation for seniors; Seniors Action Yukon, which gives up-to-date information to all Yukoners on issues and opportunities and advocates for seniors; and — one of my favourites — the ElderActive Recreation Association, which makes sure that Yukoners 55-plus have opportunities to stay active and competitive and to get out there and have fun.

Thank you to all of these groups and the Canada Safety Council for their ongoing work to support seniors, our vital north-of-60, north-of-60 resource.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Senior Safety Week, held from November 6 to 12. Each year, the Canada Safety Council pays special attention to keeping mature Canadians, or seniors, healthy, independent, and safe. To have a week of awareness is wonderful, but the council does continuous work all year to make seniors able to become aware of and address issues as they arise.

We all want to stay in our homes or apartments as long as we can, and there are many avenues to make this happen. In the Yukon this year, we had a wet summer and now an early start to winter. Yard maintenance and snow removal can become daunting. We commend the Yukon Council on Aging as they assist seniors to contact someone to help them with these major tasks in Whitehorse. Once a person decides that they feel they no longer can do these tasks themselves, they can contact someone for a small fee. But many seniors in our Yukon communities also need assistance. We encourage anyone who wants to help to make sure that the town officials or organizations know that you are available to specifically help seniors so they can age in place.

As we get older, many things change and our bodies and minds might not be as nimble as in younger years — social networks diminish; technology and social media are confusing; alcohol and medication safety factors need to be addressed; elder abuse happens; there are scams on the elderly; we require safety features in our home so we can stay longer — and the list goes on. These are all issues that many face, but can be accentuated when you become older.

Yukon organizations such as the Yukon Council on Aging and the Golden Age Society are just two in Whitehorse that ensure that information reaches seniors and these groups are very active.

We tend to put an age to a birthday number — how many years we have lived. So, just on a lighter note, just yesterday, I was young. Today, I'm still young, but I remember when I was about 13 and someone who was 30-ish — gosh, they were almost near death. But now, as time moves on, I feel blessed to have my health, my mobility, and strength. I love my senior discounts and I realize that the attention that we put on age is just not that important.

So, kudos to all seniors who contribute and please don't ignore those beautiful souls who have given so much to society throughout their lives. As Mark Twain said, "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

So, be safe. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. White: Despite my age, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus in recognition of National Senior Safety Week.

Imagine a poster of a wanted person that you would see on the corkboard of the RCMP detachment. Now, imagine that the picture on that poster is of your grandmother or your grandfather. The writing on the side of the image reads: "Solitary confinement is a horrible place to put someone who already feels isolated and helpless. Old age is not a crime."

This year's theme and images are jolting and they get you right in the gut. Loneliness, abuse, and isolation are only some of the complex issues that seniors live with daily. Coupled with being made to feel like they're a burden, an inconvenience, or worse, many seniors won't reach out for the help that they need.

Canada has a lot to learn from countries and cultures where older folks are inherently treated with dignity and respect. The Canada Safety Council is an independent knowledge-based charitable organization dedicated to the cause of safety. They provide national leadership and safety through information, education, and collaboration. The council highlights numerous safety-focused weeks throughout the year, including this week, Senior Safety Week, during the month of November where they've chosen to shine light on the complexity and severity of elder abuse in Canada.

Elder abuse happens far more often than any of us could imagine and it takes many forms. Elder abuse typically falls into one of the following categories: physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, or financial. So, pay attention to the seniors around you. If you notice changes in behaviour, physical appearance, or unexplained injuries, ask gentle questions. If you notice sudden changes in spending habits, again, ask gentle questions. Respect boundaries, but always trust your instincts. There are services and agencies in Yukon that specialize in the protection of older adults who you can call with your concerns and observations.

We all have a responsibility to take care of our seniors and elders because old age is not a crime; it's a gift.

Applause

In recognition of Blue Feather Music Festival

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 20th anniversary of the Blue Feather Music Festival.

For 20 years, the Blue Feather Music Festival has delighted audiences with epic and eclectic performances and stayed true to its vision of helping to support and mentor our youth. The blue feather is a symbol of hope and that is what this festival is all about. In fact, the theme for this year's festival is "Hope Rising". Music is such a powerful and unifying force. Whatever your beliefs and whatever your position is in life, music has a way of bringing people together to inspire one another and to restore hope.

Since its inception, the Blue Feather Music Festival has provided a space for healing, sharing culture, and supporting and inspiring our community through music and arts. Over the

years, Blue Feather has featured an impressive array of big-name musical performers — both national and international — sharing the stage with Yukon’s homegrown talent.

Beyond what you see on the stage, however, the festival also offers opportunities for youth to develop the behind-the-scenes skills that go into staging such an event. In keeping with one of the festival’s founding principles, Yukon’s budding young stage technicians gain empowering hands-on experience in every aspect of the festival. It is a welcoming and inclusive place where those who are passionate about live music come together to learn and share.

This year’s festival — like so many other events — has had to adapt to the new realities brought about by COVID-19. This year will be a blend of in-person and online platforms. In partnership with Shakat Media, the Blue Feather Music Festival has ably switched to an online platform, offering thrilling and diverse lineups of performers. If you manage to obtain a ticket, you are very lucky. It is important that we continue to be innovative and make meaningful connections during the pandemic, so thank you to the organizing team for finding a way to produce the festival this year. Seeing the partnership develop between Blue Feather Society and Shakat Media and indigenous organizations focused on youth adds to this achievement.

In paying tribute today to this amazing event, I want to acknowledge the founders, partners, mentors, organizers, and volunteers, past and present. We have Blue Feather Music society founder Gary Bailie to thank for the festival’s success and longevity. His dedication and tireless effort are evident in the growth and success of this festival and many youth whose lives have been positively influenced over the years.

Blue Feather and everything it has come to represent is inseparable from the passion, energy, and positivity that Gary brings each and every year — so thank you, Gary, and thank you to the amazing production team, many volunteers, and community partners who make this festival happen, especially in this challenging year.

Congratulations on 20 years of enriching the lives of Yukoners. Here is to many more.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Blue Feather Music Festival as they celebrate their 20th anniversary of entertaining Yukoners.

This year, like many annual Yukon events, Blue Feather has a little different look to it. In addition to the main stage performances, Blue Feather has gone viral. While the festival may look a little different this year, it is really encouraging that the musical will be accessible to so many more people and hopefully draw more interest in future years.

Music festivals across the Yukon — of course, that includes Atlin — have endured the test of time. People visit in droves and spend money, and the territory is a genuine travel destination for music lovers of all ages. We are so fortunate to be able to showcase homegrown talent in our festivals, and our

events often attract national and international acts to entertain alongside our own.

This festival has brought talented blues and rock artists north of 60 in early November since the year 2000. I want to give a shout-out and sincere thanks to the organizer and producer, Gary Bailie, for his positive spirit and dedication to this incredible event. Gary has been a tireless organizer of this event over the years, and he needs to be commended for not only putting musical arts on stage, but also — as the minister said earlier — for teaching what goes on behind the scenes at the music festival for our interested youth.

Youth are — and continue to be — a major part of the festival. That is highlighted in Blue Feather’s mission statement. It talks about the effect of music and art on the community and working together so youth can carry the skills they learn into the future. The hands-on experience and the skills by local volunteers working behind the curtain can translate to other endeavours and quite possibly future professions.

If any local youth are interested in how the music festival is put on, I would encourage anyone watching to maybe think about giving some of their time next year. Again, thank you to Gary and to all the Blue Feather organizers, volunteers, and performers.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: This morning, my Facebook page had one of those ubiquitous Facebook memories — this was one I posted four years ago — and it read: “A truly amazing night at Blue Feather festival. Buffy Sainte-Marie sang until after midnight. Gary Bailie, you and your wonderful crew have outdone yourselves. Thank you.”

Today, I repeat those thanks. On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I join in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Blue Feather Music Festival. This year’s festival — like so many other events in 2020 — will take place within the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, there is no doubt that the 20th annual Blue Feather festival will again be a success, and there are many reasons why this is so.

Key among them is the strong community that is at the core of the Blue Feather Music Festival — or as Gary Bailie, founder of the festival put it, common unity.

Up Here magazine described the Blue Feather festival as a story about picking up the pieces after something breaks and keeping memories alive without being imprisoned by the past. It is about acts of kindness becoming successions of kind acts. It is about one good heart, how a community will build around it, and what that community can achieve. It is about selecting deliberately positive themes each year, such as “Hope Rising” or the previous one, “Soul Shine”, to convey the notion of loving the skin that you are in and realizing that everyone has a gift.

Blue Feather finds those gifts by mentoring youth — respecting them and their ideas — and by doing so, Blue Feather Music Festival has developed a talented local crew, able to run all production aspects of a major festival, and has

fostered young musicians — many of whom are festival headliners on this and many other stages across Canada.

Blue Feather doesn't stop at wanting a better world for children. As Gary Bailie has said, "We don't only want a better world for our children we want to kind of create better children for our world. This is a way to give them the tools to do that." Over the course of the first weekend in November, Blue Feather is a great example of how that is done, with a substance-free two-day musical celebration, largely run and organized by young people who are given the opportunity to both learn and demonstrate new skills and abilities.

Gary Bailie was quoted as saying that it is about hope and that, by doing something creative, the hope is that, as the festival moves forward, suicides will end — hopefully. We have to hope.

For 20 years, the Blue Feather Music Festival has given a reason to celebrate hope and we thank them for that.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: For tabling, I have a letter directed to the Minister of Education from the Yukon TID support network.

Speaker: Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports border and CEMA enforcement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of "Recovery: Yukon's economic strategy in 2020" referred to in the Yukon's COVID-19 tourism recovery plan.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Xplornet continued service

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This week, we received great news that Xplornet will continue to provide service to hundreds of Yukoners who rely on its satellite service. In phone calls with Xplornet and Telesat executives over the last few weeks, we were told that the companies were in the final stages of a tough negotiation. On Monday, Telesat president and CEO Dan Goldberg and his team told me that he had not yet received the

signed legal agreement from Xplornet. By yesterday, the deal had been ratified, and Xplornet customers had been informed that the service would continue beyond December 31.

Xplornet has not said how long the service will be extended, but in my calls with the company, we have discussed a two-year extension, and I expect the company to hold to that. Yukoners need time to find, develop, and deploy new services.

The aged Telesat satellite that the Xplornet system bounces its signals off of is scheduled to be decommissioned in 2025. The last few months have been difficult for remote Yukon Xplornet customers who face losing their long-established link to the global communication network in the middle of a Yukon winter and a global pandemic.

Since August, the Premier, the Minister of Economic Development, and I have been discussing the importance of this service with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, Total North, tourism outfits, and residents who depend on this service. As noted, I have been in regular contact with Xplornet President Allison Lenehan and his management team and also Telesat's team led by Goldberg. As well, Yukon MP Larry Bagnell, the federal Rural Economic Development Minister Monsef, and I have worked together on this file with federal Innovation, Science and Industry Minister Bains.

So, it has been a full-court press on this file because we understand how important this connectivity is for Yukoners. Affordable, robust, and dependable Internet is critically important to Yukoners and, because of that, it has been a focus for this government. It is why we are building the redundant fibre line up the Dempster. It is why we financially backstopped Northwestel's application to the CRTC to get Connect Yukon 2.0 broadband to virtually every Yukon home. It is why we have spent so much time rolling out the new online services for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, you don't know what you've got until it's gone. In August, hundreds of Yukoners learned how fragile their satellite service was. Through a lot of hard work and collaboration, we have achieved a reprieve, but relying on decades-old technology is not a winning strategy. In our conversations, Xplornet has stressed that this extension is not a long-term solution. Customers will need to find a new satellite provider or technology.

We have conveyed how hard it would be for customers to find and deploy an affordable alternative in the grips of a Yukon winter — if one was available — which, in some cases, was doubtful. Now we have a little time to find, develop, and deploy solutions in the summer and there are promising things on the horizon.

I thank Xplornet and Telesat for working with us and on striking a new arrangement to continue serving remote Yukoners and companies for the immediate future.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to the issue of Xplornet today. This is great news — the extension of Xplornet's service to Yukoners really is great for Yukoners. Many Yukoners rely on this service and the discontinuation of it was a scary prospect for those who rely on it for safety, for education, or for their businesses. I think that

today should not be about politicians taking credit, so before the minister throws out his shoulder patting himself on the back, I want to make sure that today we highlight the people who actually did the work to get this done.

First and foremost, we need to recognize the customers and the Yukoners who are going to be impacted. These individuals saw a problem and they worked very hard to get the attention of the companies, the government, the agencies, and the CRTC — anyone who would listen — to make sure that this issue was a priority.

Hundreds of Yukoners organized letter-writing campaigns and e-mail-writing campaigns, they made phone calls, they grabbed politicians and public servants in parking lots, and they lobbied hard. They were the ones with the most to lose and they worked extremely hard to make sure that their service stayed. The local dealers and retailers for XplorNet here in the Yukon who had advocated on behalf of their customers also deserve a major shout-out — Total North, Dynamic Systems, and Bob Laking in Dawson City — just to name a few, Mr. Speaker. These organizations and individuals worked extremely hard to make sure that their customers, clients, and friends had accurate information about what was happening and what they could do to try to effect change. They got their customers information on who to send the letters and e-mails to, and they were helpful in making sure that their customers had accurate information, even when sometimes certain ministers were publicly sharing incorrect information.

The chamber of commerce, which worked hard to advocate on behalf of local and small businesses in their communities, also deserves a shout-out. Industry associations such as Tech Yukon — which wrote letters on behalf of customers and the territory's innovation tech sector with concerns about this decision — also deserve a huge thanks for their work and advocacy. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and its many members in industry first started raising this issue with the territorial government in July, but found their initial concerns met by deaf ears, so they had to turn to others for advocacy.

When we attended the annual general meeting for KPMA on September 4, this was one of the biggest issues that we heard about from members, and many expressed frustration that the Minister of Economic Development had not responded to concerns related to the issue. Some of them were also surprised to hear the Premier indicate at those meetings that it was the first time he had ever heard of the issue, because they had been raising it with him for weeks.

But at that time, I think we all heard loud and clear that this was not an issue that could be ignored any longer. It was an issue that needed leadership and representatives who could be decisive and take action. It would not have been possible without all the hard work of all of the highly engaged and highly motivated customers, the companies and individuals who serve them, the chambers and industry associations such as Tech Yukon and the KPMA.

So, once again, Mr. Speaker, credit where credit is due — thank you to all of these hard-working Yukoners.

Ms. Hanson: The Yukon New Democratic Party is happy to hear the good news announced today — news that many Yukoners have been waiting months for. For Yukoners who rely on XplorNet, the earlier announcement that they would be without a means of communication at the end of December was devastating news.

Back in the day, many relied on the radiophone; today, many Yukoners living in remote areas of the territory have come to rely on XplorNet to stay connected. Losing this connection would have turned the clock back decades in terms of connectivity. Whether living remotely or trying to run a home business in a remote location or a wilderness tourism experience, having a way to communicate daily and to seek assistance in an emergency — whether a medical emergency or a situation like a wildland fire — is an absolute necessity.

I believe that most Yukoners would agree that it is the job of our government to advocate and negotiate with any corporation providing critical communications that suddenly announces that they are leaving Yukoners high and dry. We heard from an individual on the radio this morning saying that there is a sense of relief but more needs to be done. Yukoners using XplorNet will want the assurance of how long this service will remain available and that alternatives will be in place when the service ceases.

While an immediate crisis is now averted, much remains up in the air for the future. In two or five years, communications will no doubt be even more advanced. It is critical that Yukoners currently reliant on XplorNet satellite services will have access to reliable and affordable communication options.

I am concerned that the minister's statement implies that it's up to these Yukoners to find a solution for the long term. I'm not sure how he expects Yukoners who live in the bush to launch a new satellite, but maybe he can expand on this in his answer.

If this government truly believes in the value of connectivity, they will take a leading role in collaborating with the private sector to guarantee that services remain available. I hope that the minister can expand on what role this government expects to play in finding a long-term solution for XplorNet clients.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. We, of course, agree that, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, there is a full-court press on this issue. Yukoners banded together, as they always do. We did have absolutely extraordinary representation from local companies like Total North Communications and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and from customers across the territory, making the case that this was a very critical service for them. We certainly appreciate the e-mails and all of the advocacy. I have been doing that in reaching back to all of those people and thanking them for their time and effort on this issue.

I think that we can all agree, Mr. Speaker, that connectivity is important for all Yukoners. We are glad to see that remote Yukoners will continue to have satellite service through XplorNet past the end of this calendar year.

The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, on the one hand, as he often wants to do, said, “Let’s take politics out of it”, and then he got political and criticized the Premier and my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, for not being up to speed on the file. That is expressly not true. They are highly capable, decent, and thoughtful individuals who knew about this file that we are advocating with the KPMA long before the members opposite are giving them credit for.

On that, I would like to thank the Leader of the conservative Yukon Party for supporting the Liberal government’s work to ensure that Yukoners are not disconnected after December 31. We appreciated the news release and the public support of our leadership in resolving this issue. We also appreciate their leader’s letter to the federal Liberal government backing up our efforts. Our government’s strategic approach to brokering a solution involves several Yukon departments, the presidents of both companies, Yukoners, local companies, placer miners, the federal ministers Bains and Monsef, and Yukon MP Larry Bagnell. Through this advocacy, we were able to achieve a solution on behalf of all Yukoners. That is great news, Mr. Speaker, and we all agree on that.

Truth told, I am a little surprised by the Yukon Party’s new interest in Internet connectivity. Just on Monday, in a ministerial statement, the Leader of the Official Opposition pushed against the Bids and Tenders digital system in favour of retaining paper bids. If only their new leader had put effort — or any effort, in fact — into delivering a redundant fibre line for the territory when he was a minister, we might have avoided many Internet outages that cost Yukoners millions in lost sales and productivity.

No matter, Mr. Speaker — we got this. With all the necessary NWT permits in place, we have now let contracts to construct this line, and the work is underway. We have expanded our online services to Yukoners. We have an open data repository that never existed before, and we have supported Connect Yukon 2.0, which will benefit all Yukoners in virtually all communities, with faster and more robust broadband connections delivered through Northwestel.

As for XplorNet and Telesat, we recognized the importance of this service right at the beginning, and these companies have heard us and all Yukoners loud and clear. With the time that we bought, we are now exploring new satellite communication options that will serve Yukoners beyond the two-year service expected from XplorNet. There is a lot of interest in the Starlink project from SpaceX, and that is one avenue we are keen to find out the details on in the near future.

Amazon is also launching a satellite service, and we have started talking with our local communications companies to see what, if any, service they might provide, given their formidable expertise serving Yukoners in this field. Yukoners can rest assured that this government will continue to monitor the situation over the next two years, and scout and promote new, and, hopefully, affordable options for Yukoners when this current deal expires.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Teacher recruitment and retention

Mr. Kent: This morning, I received a copy of a letter to the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation from the school council for J.V. Clark School in Mayo. The letter voices concerns to the minister about a number of issues related to teacher recruitment and retention in Mayo, and how it is being negatively impacted by a lack of housing in the policies of Yukon Housing Corporation.

This is the second letter to the minister on this topic from this school council. The first was sent on September 10 to the ministers responsible for housing and Education, and the council has still not received a response. We are well into the school year, so these housing issues for teachers need to be dealt with urgently.

Can the minister tell us why she has still not responded to the September 10 letter from the J.V. Clark School Council?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would be happy to look into the letter. I haven’t received the letter. If there was one sent, I will certainly endeavour to seek information from the department. At the moment, I am not able to respond with respect to the details.

What I can say is that we have looked at housing availability within our communities. In fact, we are having in-depth discussions with the community of Mayo, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the municipality, and we are speaking with all of our municipalities, looking at the wait-list in our communities.

We are also really working hard with the Public Service Commission to look at modernizing our social housing and our staff housing — I guess it would be the number of units that we have and then looking at some alternative arrangements to enhance the supports we have in those communities.

We’re happy to say that we are looking at emerging opportunities within our communities by partnerships and expanding the housing — the Yukon Housing Corporation’s loans program. We’re happy to say that we have put in over 600 units in all Yukon communities and we’ll continue to do that into the future.

If there’s a specific concern, I would be happy to look into that.

Mr. Kent: There are a number of specific concerns that the school council raises and if the minister has lost or misplaced that initial letter, I’m sure that the council will be happy to resend it to her. We’re hoping for an answer. We’re two months after it was initially sent.

The letter that I received today highlights the Yukon’s housing policy requires teachers to have full-time contracts in order to get a Yukon Housing unit. This means that teachers in Mayo with part-time status are often left with the only option of leaving the community. The letter also highlights that there have been instances of part-time teachers living in campers until it is too cold and their only option is to leave town or they have been forced to rent couch space from friends in the community.

So, can the minister tell us what she is doing to address concerns that government policies are negatively impacting the ability for Mayo to recruit and retain teachers so that they can remain in the community for the long term?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can say that we are very proud to have taken significant steps in modernizing our approach to housing for the Yukon government staff in rural Yukon communities.

Our new approach aims to decrease rental housing cost disparities in our communities, incentivize private sector investment in rural housing, and prioritize housing for employees considered critical for community well-being. In late-May 2019, the government policy governing employee housing was revised as part of our modernization effort. The updated policy prioritizes housing to essential positions such as health professionals and teachers, limits tenancies to three years to encourage staff to consider other housing options in the communities, and realigns rental rates to be more reflective of private market rates in each specific community.

With the new policy in only its second year, Mr. Speaker, it is too soon to evaluate its impact. We will continue to implement the policy and collaborate with our partners in communities in the years ahead as we strive to achieve our long-term goal of affordable housing options and private market opportunities in Yukon communities.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that recently I was in touch with the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association. He brought up an issue in Faro. There was a teacher in Faro, and we were able to find housing for that individual very, very quickly. So, we are working with our partners to make sure that our teachers are housed in our communities.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, these government policies are negatively impacting the ability for Mayo to recruit and retain teachers. The J.V. Clark School required five new teacher or EA positions this September; however, they were only able to fill one position by September, and four are still posted. According to the school council, lack of housing is a major barrier to teachers coming to Mayo. Potential applicants for teaching positions are hesitant to apply on jobs in the area because housing is difficult to find.

So, what actions is the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation taking to respond to concerns in Mayo that a lack of housing is negatively impacting their ability to recruit and retain teachers?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, let's put things into context. I am going to start by saying that creating safe and affordable housing for all Yukoners is an absolute priority for this Liberal government, and we are making significant progress toward this goal. We do know that housing is a basic necessity and that all Yukoners have a right to it.

The member opposite has to remember when he was the minister. I remember that, when I got my job here in the Legislative Assembly, the teacher who replaced me at Robert Service School came from Toronto and had to sleep in a tent outside at the Klondike River for a couple of months because the Yukon Party had changed the policy and held up different

housing for different departments, and teachers were left out in the cold.

What we are doing now is that we are changing around the housing model completely. We now have community housing. What a substantial change to the department right now — to go from a model that didn't look at individual communities in individual ways. We changed that to a whole-of-government approach.

Now, the members opposite are screaming off-mic because they don't like it when we compare and when we say that we have changed the policies from the Yukon Party, and we are making huge strides in that. This is an extremely important issue. The member opposite talked about some of the issues in Faro that we have cleared up. The minister has committed to responding to that letter — but it needs to be said here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly that we have moved mountains as far as changing the Yukon housing situation and how we deal with teachers as well.

Question re: Capital project funding lapses

Mr. Cathers: According to the Public Accounts, the Department of Highways and Public Works lapsed \$8 million in capital projects last year. That's \$8 million that could have gone toward local contractors last year and could have put Yukoners to work.

Can the minister tell us why his department lapsed \$8 million in capital projects last year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Of course the members opposite know that there are many, many reasons why a capital project might be lapsed, when we go to put contracts out. What the member opposite is not talking about, though, is the hundreds of millions of dollars in contract that we actually did let last year successfully that we have delivered throughout the territory. We are talking about the north Klondike Highway construction and the Hillcrest construction. I know that my colleague in Community Services has the lot development that his department is getting out — it actually puts to shame some of the work of the previous government. We are working on orders of magnitude — more work on that file than previous governments.

I have absolutely no problem talking about the record of this government, with its five-year capital plan, its changes to procurement, its local contracting — where we have a local company building the French school, as opposed to an Outside company building a 30-percent smaller F.H. Collins Secondary School — I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, about the strides that this government has made in improving procurement for Yukoners. I know that Yukoners care about this matter greatly — about having work, about having local procurement, about having fair, open, and transparent — the one million exceptions to get that work into contractors' hands locally — I could go on all afternoon.

Mr. Cathers: Wow. I asked a simple question; I didn't get an answer. So, I will try another one. According to the Public Accounts, the Department of Community Services lapsed \$19.7 million in capital projects last year. That is

\$19.7 million that could have gone toward local contractors last year, and could have put Yukoners to work.

Can the minister tell us why his department lapsed \$19.7 million in capital projects last year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will get a detailed response for the member opposite, but at the same time in that response, I will outline all of the investments that we have made across the territory — across all communities — by taking their priorities — last year, my understanding is that there was \$75 million in infrastructure across our communities. This is far above and beyond what the previous government was investing — and it is important, especially during COVID-19, because what we are doing is creating economic activity — keeping our local companies working and keeping our projects moving across all of our communities. I am happy to talk about all of those great projects that are happening across the Yukon.

Mr. Cathers: The score is now two simple questions — no answer. The spending I am talking about is last fiscal year, which is before COVID-19.

I'll try again. According to the Public Accounts, the Department of Education lapsed \$2 million in capital projects last year. That's \$2 million that could have gone toward local contractors and toward much-needed education infrastructure improvements last year and putting Yukoners to work.

Can the minister tell us why her department lapsed \$2 million in capital projects last year and which projects those lapses are associated with?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do appreciate the opportunity again to talk about this issue on the floor of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, we are forecasting and tendering projects earlier each and every year and continually improving our approaches so that businesses can take full advantage of Yukon's short, intense building season. Contractors have told us that we need to focus on putting out contracts at the right time rather than just in time. When planning and tendering projects, we are giving contractors the best opportunities to perform the work at the right time.

For the 2020 season, Mr. Speaker, we put out 57 seasonally dependent tenders worth approximately \$111 million by the end of March. An additional 28 projects worth approximately \$54 million were tendered by the end of May. I'm talking about this this afternoon because, rather than focus on \$2 million in contracts that didn't go out for whatever reason — and we can get the member opposite the answer to that question — I think it behooves us, in a time of this global pandemic and a time of economic uncertainty across the globe and certainly within this country — we should actually be celebrating the work that this government is doing to make sure that Yukoners are employed and that the facilities and the infrastructure that they rely on going forward are put in place, and we're doing that work.

Question re: Canada-Yukon housing benefit program

Ms. White: Recent reports in the media highlight the out-of-control increases in rental rates across Yukon. Yukoners are told that the average rent for a two-bedroom unit in

Whitehorse is \$1,227 a month, but anyone who has looked for a place to rent recently knows that this is way off and that prices are much higher. Increased electrical rates, high Internet rates, and heating costs make it even harder for people to make ends meet. Now, imagine trying to cover these basic costs while working for a \$13.71 minimum wage or anything under a living wage for Yukon.

Yesterday, the government announced the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. While this program is badly needed by many, it doesn't address the cause of the problem.

Can the minister tell Yukoners how many households this program is expected to assist over the next calendar year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: In the last couple of days, we've made some significant announcements with Canada, and that is to look at the continuation of supporting Yukon families that are compromised in a way that they are perhaps not able to make their rent payments. We look at marginalized families. We had a rent subsidy program as a result of COVID, we attempted to put into place the resources needed, and the Canada housing benefit program is a replacement of that. We have signed off on an agreement. We have a funding initiative for \$9.1 million over eight years.

The objective there, Mr. Speaker, is really to provide resources to assist Yukoners recovering from the effects of COVID-19; however, we also look at the federal funding to support affordability and availability of housing for Yukoners and align that with the housing action plan and the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, taking into account recommendations from the *Putting People First* report. We are taking into consideration the housing needs. We have our housing support staff at the Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services who are working hand in hand to address the needs of Yukoners.

Ms. White: I appreciate the minister's talking points. My question was about the number of households that the program is expected to assist.

Last month, there were 361 households on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list: 144 seniors, 295 households in Whitehorse, and 66 households in the communities. The minister can list all the projects or all the programs she wants, but the numbers show that the government has not made a dent in this wait-list. We have been in a housing crunch for years. This government and their predecessors announced a handful of projects, but they have failed to actually make a difference for people who are waiting for affordable housing.

With its 800 units already occupied, when does the minister expect the Yukon Housing Corporation to clear the wait-list of the almost 400 individuals?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The objective of the Yukon Housing Corporation is really to work with our partners in our communities. The effort in terms of the funding envelope that is available, the loans programs, the housing initiative fund, and the municipal matching grant is really to look at supporting the communities. That is what it's about. It is about working together.

I can acknowledge that we have made a significant dent in our communities. We have a growing population, we have a

booming economy, and we appreciate and recognize that. At the same time, it's not solely the Government of Yukon's responsibility. We are working with our partners in our communities, and we have made significant gains in terms of addressing the wait-lists.

Sure, I am acknowledging that we have a growing wait-list, but we have a number of units coming on. We just signed an agreement with the private sector that will address another 86 units in the market. We have our 47-unit facility coming onstream. We have two facilities in Dawson City. We're now in the process of having in-depth discussions with the municipality of Watson Lake and with the chief and council to address the pressures there.

We are working toward addressing these challenges that we're seeing across the Yukon.

Ms. White: I'm sure the 361 households on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list are relieved by the minister's answers and her timelines. The CMHC suggests that no more than 30 percent of a person's income should go toward their housing, and many Yukoners are paying well over 50 percent of their income for shelter.

The new rent subsidy program funded by Ottawa will help some, but with no limit on how much a landlord can increase rent, it's only a temporary solution. With essential workers seeing a one-time pandemic pay raise disappear and many Yukoners still unable to return to work, having safe and affordable housing is critical.

Does the minister agree that more needs to be done to reduce the wait-list for housing and assist those workers whose wages are still not even close to a living wage in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can acknowledge that more is being done. We are doing a lot. We are working with our partners in our communities. We have looked at always keeping our sights on the wait-lists, looking at it community by community, trying to address the challenges that we're seeing are most prevalent in some of our communities, and acknowledging that the Housing Corporation has worked with our communities.

I want to assure Yukoners that the new units that are coming onstream will address that, but we also know that the continuation of our partnerships with the municipalities and our private sector partners will address some of the shortages that we're seeing in our communities now.

We have also recently, in the Legislative Assembly, spoke about lots within our communities that are perhaps some of the challenges that we're seeing. We're working very closely with Community Services to address those challenges in some of the communities — like Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, for example, or Mayo — where we need to find an alternative. We are working very quickly to address those issues in our communities. Community by community, we will resolve the long-overdue challenges and problems in these communities which have been neglected.

Question re: Diabetes treatment

Ms. White: Over two years ago, the Yukon T1D support network asked the Department of Education to address the support needs of students who have type 1 diabetes. The support network provided the department with a brochure

outlining basic health recommendations for educators. A letter accompanying the brochure pointed out that the Canadian Paediatric Society gave the Yukon a poor grade in its management of type 1 diabetes in schools.

The T1D support network offered assistance to the department to improve the policies and support that would benefit students and the department.

Can the minister tell us why the Department of Education would turn down the assistance of the T1D support network, an organization promoting best practices when supporting students with type 1 diabetes?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to address the question.

I think the assumption in the question is that anything has been turned down and that wouldn't be correct. We will continue to work for the health and safety of our students and our staff. But in particular, students in relation to this question — the students are a key priority in the Department of Education — as a matter of fact, there has been a significant shift in the way in which the department does its work throughout both the central administration office as well as in schools in that, on every issue that we address, we turn our minds to what is in the best interest of those students.

It is a significant shift in the culture of the Department of Education. It is something that this government in our one-government approach is extremely committed to. The assumption should not be that anything has been turned down; work continues on this situation. We will resolve it going forward when we are able to come to the conclusion of what is in the best interests of the students. It is a critically important issue about health and safety and how students are managing health issues while they're in school. It is a significant responsibility of course for teachers and administrators as well and something that must be addressed.

Ms. White: The current Department of Education policy lumps all severe or life-threatening medical conditions together with no information on any specific conditions, treatment, or warning signs. The document outlines responsibilities of administration, educators, and parents — and little else.

When reviewing policies from other provinces, it's clear that providing educators with information on type 1 and type 2 diabetes symptoms and treatment is the gold standard.

Can the minister explain why a policy given a failing grade by the Canadian Paediatric Society and meant to protect students with severe conditions has not been updated?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to supports for children and families experiencing challenges with diabetes — we know that we have seen significant challenges across the Yukon, and we are pleased to announce most recently that we are now covering constant glucose monitoring. In that process, we have made significant policy changes to reflect the needs of the students and the parents. We have listened to the parents, and they have direct input into the drafting of this process. We have a two-year pilot project that funded those who participated, and we have made a commitment to Yukoners that we will continue to support the families with the constant glucose monitoring and to support the choices that Yukoners elect to make, and that

is using the services that are there and determining the most important supports that are available.

I certainly want to ensure that all students are healthy, that they are safe, and that they are directly linked to the supports that they need in time, and that means that we need to work with the families. Of course, the Department of Education is working very closely with Health and Social Services. We have met with the families, and we will continue to do so in terms of addressing their core needs.

Ms. White: The Minister of Health and Social Services has stated that government is — and I quote: “... proud to lead the country in supporting individuals with type 1 diabetes.” But this is only true when it comes to continuous glucose monitoring and thanks to the tireless advocacy support by the type 1 diabetes support network.

When it comes to supporting students in schools with type 1 diabetes, Yukon still gets a failing grade. When parents send their kids with medical conditions to school, they want to be assured that teachers and administrators have the best information to support students with type 1 diabetes or any other condition. The T1D support network has offered to help to create a policy that will give students a safe and supportive educational experience. Will the minister commit to working with the T1D support network in creating new policies that meet the needs of students and their families living with type 1 diabetes?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The health and safety of students in our schools is our top priority with respect to the Department of Education — and, frankly, a top priority in our one-government approach going forward. I am extremely proud of the changes that have been made and the shift at the Department of Education to focus on students and to focus on their well-being, their health, and their safety.

We will of course commit to working with the T1D network for the purposes of revising policy and updating policy. I can assure you that I understand that work to be ongoing and that the relationship is important. We must learn to the benefit of our students and we must ensure their health and safety — and frankly, that teachers are supported in their responsibilities in the classrooms — administrators as well.

These are important issues. They are important issues for parents who are sending their students to school — their children to school — who need assistance with health issues, and it is incredibly important that we support our teachers and their responsibilities in this area as well.

I look forward to the work that will come in the future, but certainly recognize the work that has been ongoing with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education to date.

Question re: Aviation investment strategy

Ms. Van Bibber: Between November 2019 and February 2020, the government consulted on Yukon’s aviation investment strategy. The “what we heard” document was released in August 2020. In that document, the minister said that over 200 members of the aviation community provided feedback to help inform the report. One of the key

recommendations was — and I quote: “A focus on land development and leasing opportunities and changes to the existing application and approval process.”

Can the minister update this House on what changes his government is making to land development and leasing opportunities and existing application processes for our aviation community?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can tell the member opposite — first of all, I thank her for her question. Second of all, I want to just highlight to the member opposite that aviation in the territory is an absolutely critical industry. It has certainly been a focus of this government to make sure that it has the supports it needs and the infrastructure that it needs to service the territory, because it does bring people and goods throughout our great territory and to its individual communities.

I could talk about — what we are talking about is leased land. We are currently developing a land management plan for future leased land development at the Yukon airports and aerodromes. It has been an issue that has plagued the airport for — I would say decades. Sorting it out has not been easy, but this work is being undertaken in phases and the longer term strategy will be informed by Yukon’s Flight Path, as the member opposite just mentioned today.

The initial offering of new lots will be made available at Whitehorse and Mayo later this year and work continues to allow for additional subdivisions and leases on a priority basis. In the meantime, urgent business requirements are being accommodated with short-term licences where possible.

When I came into this role — and I will be happy to talk about this in the next question.

Ms. Van Bibber: The report also states that industry would like to see improved governance and policies within the Yukon government to better support aviation users and businesses.

Can the minister update this House on what work will be undertaken regarding this specific ask by members of the aviation industry?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say that we continue to work with stakeholders on a case-by-case basis to support business at our airports and aerodromes, and tenants whose leases expire are continuing on a month-to-month basis with the same terms and conditions as their expired leases.

Making sure that there’s land available at our airport is certainly a very important issue for me and for the people at the Aviation branch and within Highways and Public Works. They have worked for years trying to sort this issue out. The problem is that there has not been a lot of planning up at the airport for decades — perhaps even as far back as when the federal government ran the airport. The whole thing has been a really difficult file to untangle. We are working very, very hard on this file, Mr. Speaker, because we realize how important it is to have land at the airports. We will continue that work with stakeholders over the coming months and years.

Ms. Van Bibber: As part of the consultation, the government asked whether or not the government should start collecting airport improvement fees and taxes, passenger facility fees, landing fees, terminal fees, and aircraft parking

fees. It seems odd to consult on bringing in new fees and taxes at the airport unless it's something that the Liberal government is considering.

Is the government considering and bringing in any of these new taxes to the airport? If not, why do they continue to ask the same questions?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We're in the midst of a global pandemic. We are currently — yes, we are absolutely continuing with *Yukon's Flight Path*. Our government has made significant investments in aviation over the past few years, including upgrades to equipment and facilities. *Yukon's Flight Path*, our investment strategy being developed, will be a living and breathing framework to help guide investments in Yukon's aviation system over the next 10 years.

This multi-year investment strategy will make sure that we are meeting Yukon's current and future aviation system needs, including safety, efficiency, stakeholder needs, and operational requirements.

We are going to continue with this. Of course, we are going to look at and gather as much information about how we finance, work, and pay for the airport as we possibly can. I have been on the floor of this House stating that I will not impose an airport improvement fee at the airport. I haven't changed from that position. We are in the midst of a global pandemic. In fact, this government has actually forgiven all lease payments on our airports — all fees in total — so there are no fees being gathered or levied on people who have land or who operate at the airport right now. We have done that to support our aviation industry. We have committed to giving that same support through next year, so I think that's really where this lies — no fees at the airport right now.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 10: Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020) — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you to all the members of the Legislature. Bill No. 10 provides access to paid and unpaid leave for victims of domestic or sexualized violence working in territorially regulated industries and professions. This leave provides employees the time to get the support they choose if they, their children, or people for whom they are close friends or caregivers experience domestic or sexualized violence.

The paid and unpaid leave will provide an important and necessary support when dealing with domestic or sexualized violence. It will significantly lower barriers for employees by minimizing financial hardships and providing victims the time to access medical, legal, and other supports as they need. This leave aligns with work being done to support missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirited Yukoners, as well as the work of the Yukon's sexualized assault response team that aim to improve services and, like this leave, reduce barriers for victims.

Mr. Speaker, I thank fellow members for considering Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*. I look forward to final submissions today on this bill.

Ms. Van Bibber: The *Employment Standards Act* changes to include paid or unpaid leave for victims of domestic or sexualized violence is something that we agree with. We, too, thank the drafters and legislators for making these appropriate changes to this act. The time frame is now to ensure that this act is introduced to the employers and employees alike in a reasonable time, and put into action the next steps.

We also appreciate the sensitivity and privacy issues on these changes. We look forward to the positive outcomes that will ensure that persons who are suffering due to violence will be able to get better care and support for the trauma that they are enduring and not have to worry about employment.

Again, thanks to all who made this possible. We look forward to supporting the changes.

Ms. White: In speaking to Bill No. 10, I just want to highlight that, when the conversation was happening in Committee of the Whole, the minister said that it was a priority that you were able to take your values and put them toward legislation so that they could do what was right. We, of course, support the changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and recognize that it is about doing the right thing for people and making sure that we are supporting them when they need it the most.

With that, those are my comments for the day.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand in support of Bill No. 10 today, *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*. I would like to thank all of the folks in our departments who worked really hard to bring this forward and, of course, to my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, for his work and in-depth preparedness for this bill. It means a lot to have all of our legislators come together to do this work collaboratively.

It is part of our mandate as a government to improve programs and supports for victims of domestic and sexualized violence at every level so that they can feel supported, honoured, and believed.

We know that services must support the healing of victims and we are committed to improving these responses wherever possible. This is just one way.

As we all know, Yukon has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in Canada — three times higher than the

national average and three times higher yet again if you're an indigenous woman. Just like the Minister of Community Services stated in his remarks today, the bill provides victims of sexualized violence with options. We aim to break down barriers for victims and create space in which they can pursue supports they may need without financial burden or threat of job loss limiting them.

During Committee of the Whole, I was really intrigued by the questions that came forward. I really want to thank the members opposite for posing the questions that they did because our role is going to be significant from the Women's Directorate as we move into implementation of this bill and the consultation with our stakeholders. I think that the debate that happened here during Committee of the Whole was really helpful and it will help to inform that process.

I think that's a great day when we can achieve that throughout the process that we have before us as legislators. I'm not always convinced that some of the debate that happens during Committee of the Whole is helpful to Yukoners but, in this case, I really believe that it was.

So, I want to also just talk a little bit about my other work that is going to tie into this. I'm so proud to be working with my colleagues on the Yukon Advisory Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to build a strategy to prevent violence against women, girls, and two-spirited Yukoners as well as to provide even more supports for victims. I'm really looking forward to sharing the strategy with members of this House soon. This work that we have done on Bill No. 10 will help in advancing that work.

In closing, I would like to give my thanks to my fellow members again for their thoughtful conversation around this bill. I'm looking forward to the bill passing today and to continuing the critical work to support victims of gender-based violence.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate on third reading of Bill No. 10.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank all the members of this Legislature who spoke on the bill. I would just like to say that it is very important that we work with victims and those agencies that support victims and find the way in which to implement this change — this new support — for leave provisions for those who are suffering domestic violence, sexualized assault, or those who are supporting those who are suffering domestic violence or sexualized assault. It's important, as well, that we support our employers because I think this is going to help them too. It's working with those two groups — collaborating with them. I want to acknowledge that the Member for Whitehorse Centre, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and the Member for Porter Creek North all talked about the importance of bringing this new leave provision to life and getting it moving.

I thank everybody for their comments and their support. I again say here on the floor that the next step — there are no regulations that are required in order to enable this. What is

required is working with support groups and employers to make sure that the way that this rolls out will be supportive and not revictimizing those people who have suffered this type of trauma.

We will work diligently. I thank everybody today and during the previous debate for their comments and thoughts on this bill.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion for third reading of Bill No. 10?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 10 has passed this House.

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 11, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This government is pleased to bring forward the *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015* for second reading.

I would like to take a moment to provide some background information to support these amendments. Concerns were identified by individual First Nation governments with the registration of settlement land at the Land Titles Office under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. A land titles registry working group

consisting of Department of Justice staff and interested First Nation governments was struck and developed a set of recommendations to resolve the concerns expressed by some First Nation governments.

The recommendations set out by this working group require these changes to the Yukon *Land Titles Act, 2015* and subsequently will require changes to the Settlement Lands Regulation under that act. I don't understand the regulation to be terribly complicated, and it will be a minor regulation to give force and effect if Bill No. 11 passes this House.

The proposed amendments can be divided into the following main components and will serve to expand the definitions of "subsidiary certificate of title" and "development agreement" as two particular terms and recognize the authority of Yukon First Nation governments with respect to development agreements, plans of subdivision, and approvals of air space plans.

The amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* are a testament to the Government of Yukon's commitment to working with Yukon First Nation governments, to reconciliation, and to working together to resolve issues and to provide clarity for First Nation governments so they will have the tools that they need to support their communities and see them thrive.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to move forward with these amendments. We are working together with Yukon First Nation governments to increase opportunities for land and economic development in the Yukon Territory.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise today in support of this amendment to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. I would like to note and again acknowledge the work of everyone helping with the land titles amendment act project. It was a significant amount of work involving Department of Justice staff, private sector stakeholders, and, of course, the First Nations. Particularly, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation was involved due to their interest in working to allow the registry of their settlement land in the land titles system.

As a result of that work, the *Land Titles Act* was amended in 2015. I was also happy to have the opportunity to work with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Chief Doris Bill to bring forward those amendments; however, I acknowledge that, as the minister mentioned, there were additional issues that were identified after that legislation was tabled. I am pleased to see them be adjusted through this fairly short amendment to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* that is providing the clarity that is necessary to help facilitate First Nations, if they choose to do so, in registering land in the land titles registry system.

I would also just like to take the opportunity to congratulate Kwanlin Dün First Nation on the completion and passage of their lands act. That directly represents a significant milestone for them and has the potential to create great opportunity for the citizens of that First Nation, as well as economic opportunity for the First Nation itself.

I would note that, while each First Nation of course will make its own choices about the manner in which it proceeds, if it chooses to, I do believe that the basic structure and the basic

model provides a real, potential opportunity for other First Nations to borrow from and to utilize in their areas to provide opportunities for their citizens and businesses and for the economic benefit for the First Nation as a whole.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my remarks and, again, just thank all of the people who were involved with the development of the *Land Titles Act* modernization in 2015, as well as those who have continued to work on identifying adjustments to implement it, such as was brought forward by the minister here, and ensure that it fulfills its intent, which includes facilitating the ability for First Nations to register some settlement land in the land titles registry if they choose to do so.

With that, I will conclude my remarks.

Ms. Hanson: In rising to speak to Bill No. 11, I am pleased to see these proposed amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* coming before us. I think that, in addition to it being a sign of work being done by the Yukon government and the officials of the government, it is a real testament to the patience of Yukon First Nation governments that we are finally here, 15 years after the Kwanlin Dün agreement was signed and came into effect — many, many years after the first four and the subsequent First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, we know that, over the years, there have been many efforts by First Nations to find ways to get the kind of certainty that's required for them as governments to be able to realize the economic opportunities of some of the lands that they have retained as First Nation settlement land in their final agreements without jeopardizing any of the rights that might be attached to those various categories of land — whether it's category A or B settlement land.

The discussions that have led to these amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* were not straightforward or simple; they are complex matters. I'm aware — and I'm sure that others in this Assembly are aware — of the efforts of so many on all sides. I do commend the work that has been done. We will have a number of questions as we go through the details of the proposed amendments, but I just want to give a shout-out to Kwanlin Dün for being the trailblazer on this one. Having done that with their lands act and as they begin to implement that, it will give confidence to other Yukon First Nations that in fact there are opportunities and possibilities to be accrued to their First Nation should they choose to look at adhering to this kind of an approach, which Kwanlin Dün has led the way on.

We look forward to getting into discussion of the details of the amendments. Of course, we'll be asking the question as we always do with respect to the timing of the necessary regulatory changes that will be required to support these legislative changes.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on second reading of Bill No. 11?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the comments and indicated support from the members opposite. I think they are exactly correct. These are trailblazing opportunities. Kwanlin Dün First Nation has led the way and will be appreciative of these clarifications in Bill No. 11. As well, of course, they have already made changes to their self-government agreement for the purpose of the issues and land titles that they choose to do in the land titles registry — but certainly they will be appreciative of this clarification as well so that there won't be any misunderstandings. This will further debate, and ultimately, I hope, support for Bill No. 11 will provide tools to other First Nations who choose to proceed with economic development in this manner — and, as the member opposite has said, without any loss of their rights with respect to category A or category B settlement lands.

I look forward to us further discussing this matter and any questions that might be coming.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on second reading of Bill No. 11?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*.

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. 11: *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*

Deputy Chair: The matter before Committee is general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just going to invite the officials from the Department of Justice to take a seat just to my right. I would like to ask my colleagues to help me welcome Sheri Hogeboom and Abdul Hafeez, who have worked on Bill No. 11, the matter before the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. I appreciate their attendance and look forward to their assistance as the afternoon proceeds.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Government of Yukon is pleased to bring forward Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*. As I have noted earlier today, the proposed amendments in Bill No. 11 will expand the definitions of “subsidiary certificate of title” and “development agreement”, and it will recognize the authority of Yukon First Nation governments with respect to development agreements, plans of subdivision, and approvals of air space plans.

On the whole, the proposed amendments will provide Yukon First Nation governments greater certainty when registering their settlement land. The specific amendments begin with changes to definitions within the act. The definition of “development agreement” has been amended to include an agreement made under a Yukon First Nation government’s law between a Yukon First Nation government and a person and an agreement made for the planning, zoning, and development of settlement land.

Further, within the existing definition of “plan of subdivision”, we have updated the wording to recognize the authority of Yukon First Nations to approve a plan of subdivision under Yukon First Nation law.

Next, the definition of “subsidiary certificate of title” has been replaced to recognize that a certificate of title may be issued for land that is less than fee simple and for category A or category B settlement land where the interest is less than the eligible First Nation’s entire interest.

Finally, an amendment has been added to include a plan of survey for an air space parcel, approved by a Yukon First Nation government under its law.

Through engagement with interested Yukon First Nation governments, we have discussed some concerns with the system of registration under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and they have sought greater certainty. In response, we have prioritized the amendments identified by Yukon First Nation governments when considering registration of settlement land. Our goal is to mitigate these concerns in a manner that respects Yukon First Nation jurisdictions and maintains the integrity of the land titles system.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to continue to work with First Nation governments to increase opportunities for land development in the Yukon Territory.

I look forward to further discussions on these brief but important legislative amendments in Bill No. 11.

Mr. Cathers: I have no questions regarding the amendments; they are fairly straightforward. My only questions have been answered previously by officials. With that, I will turn the floor over to the member from the Third Party for any questions that she may have.

Ms. Hanson: I just have one or two questions of the minister. As we discussed at second reading, these legislative amendments have been the subject of conversation and negotiation between government and First Nation governments for a number of years. I think it would be helpful in the press release — as she just made the statement now, there was a land titles registry working group, which, over the years, has consisted of various Department of Justice officials and representatives from a number of First Nations. The minister indicated that this working group, together, developed a set of recommendations to address concerns raised by First Nation governments regarding registration of settlement land at the Land Titles Office. In the interest of having a better understanding of why this exercise is not something that happened overnight — it took many years — I think that it would be helpful to have a sense of the concerns raised by First Nation governments with respect to the hesitancy or fears about what registration in the Yukon land titles system might mean and how those have been overcome or if there are additional measures to be brought forward in the future with respect to addressing any of those concerns or if they're all captured in the amendments that we see here today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question. It was certainly a question when our office began working on this. Let's do this in a more general way and then more specifically.

The key concern that was raised by Yukon First Nation governments is their ability to prevent loss of settlement land in a manner contrary to the Yukon First Nation's constitution or the law. They needed to be able to protect their rights to those lands while participating in the land titles process.

In particular, the way that this was resolved, for the most part, is in Bill No. 11 — clarification of certain definitions and those definitions now clearly making reference to First Nation settlement lands and being clear that the development of land was possible and appropriate and would be recognized without — I think it was the member opposite earlier who said this — jeopardizing title. I think that's absolutely true.

The definitions brought forward here, and the discussions that have taken place with that working group, are a satisfactory step in that process and are supportive — I don't want to speak for the First Nations that were involved in this process, but information that we have is that they are supportive — and that the vast majority of their concerns are dealt with through Bill No. 11; a few are not.

There was one proposal during the consultations, or the meetings — and the work and recommendations going forward, to come to Bill No. 11 — that there would be the removal of a new addition, which is section 59.01. One of the First Nations, in particular, was not prepared to have that discussion, but asked if we could shelve it and have it later. That's section 59.01 in the *Land Titles Act, 2015*.

The other was a conversation about section 102 of the act and a conversation about the land titles tariff of fees regulation. The First Nation governments and the working group together determined that the first step in this process would be to bring Bill No. 11 to the Legislative Assembly and get those changes, which reserve the right and clear up the definitions, and that these details in both sections — 102 and the land tariff regulation — would be something that they were prepared to speak about at a future time.

Clearly, Bill No. 11 is not the definitive answer. It's a step in a long process, but it is a significant and important one, because the changes of the definitions will allow the protection of First Nation government land rights, for sure.

I can note that, while we're not interested in having this drag out any longer, the working group continues to have their conversations and that we are proceeding at the pace that the First Nation governments are prepared for and are interested in. I can indicate that these changes will solidify the changes that were made early in our mandate to allow for the registration of settlement lands.

As noted earlier, Kwanlin Dün First Nation has done so already. They have changed their self-government agreement to do so. The next stage in this process will be for other First Nations that choose to take the same steps — have tripartite conversations between Yukon government, the Canadian government, and the First Nation government — to proceed with the amendments to the self-government agreements so that they can register land.

I hope that answers the question.

Ms. Hanson: Is there a requirement for consequential amendments to federal and/or territorial self-government legislation as a result of the changes made by a First Nation to their self-government agreement in this case?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: No, there aren't. The last step in the process for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation was for the Government of Canada, Government of Yukon, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation government to agree to the changes to their self-government agreement. The rest has been done in the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and the additional clarification of the definitions will be done in Bill No. 11. There's no further step beyond that.

Ms. Hanson: I'm just rolling it through my head.

Could the minister just clarify what section of the self-government agreement has been changed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will provide the member opposite and all of the House with this information — if it's incorrect — or I will confirm that it's correct. We think that it's section 13. My question was whether it was section 13 in the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement* because it's the only one that has been done or if it is section 13 in every one. We think it's section 13 in every one, but we will confirm just to be sure. I don't have one with me, and I don't have the Kwanlin Dün agreement that was changed. It seems correct to me but we'll confirm.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister. It's my recollection — having spent too many years on this particular file — that it is section 13 that enumerates the heads of power for the First Nation. My question I guess was really: Are we adding or are we just modifying a head of power that the First Nation has? There are three broad categories under section 13.

It's in terms of jurisdiction that they have on their settlement land and their citizens on settlement land. Is that what we're talking about here — that component — or is it an addition or modification of it?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. We are going by memory, so if there needs to be something corrected, I will. It is a modification. It has to do, Mr. Deputy Chair, with the idea that — so there would be no conflict. Once land was registered, in the *Land Titles Act 2015*, it restricts some of the First Nation's ability to change or do something with that land that would be inconsistent with it having been registered. Those, I believe, are the modifications that were done to section 13. It was quite specific and targeted. Again, that's from memory. I'm happy to clarify if it needs to be corrected or to add more information.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. It is hard to roll back the memory bank on some of these things.

Just with respect to the minister's comments with respect to tariffs and fees and that not being necessary to be dealt with now, does she have any sense of when it is anticipated that this matter would be dealt with?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is a change that would be made to the fees regulation under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. The committee hasn't set a next meeting yet, but they had decided that they wanted Bill No. 11 to proceed and then they would turn their minds to that work, and that will proceed. It is around the concept of having First Nation governments recognized in that part of the regulation. Perhaps they might impose fees on activities under that regulation, and they just haven't proceeded with that concept yet. It will be a regulation change that will be discussed by the next part of the working group.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. In the meantime, while that is being sort of worked out, can this act be enacted prior to the tariffs and fees — like, just go ahead with it and then sort out the tariffs and fees later?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Bill No. 11 will come into force and effect upon assent — so it will be immediately upon assent — and have its effect on the changes — make changes to the *Land*

Titles Act, 2015. The fee regulation can be quite separate and will not be responsible for holding any of that process up.

I should also, while I am on my feet, indicate that the Settlement Lands Regulation will not be required in order for this bill to come into force and effect upon assent, but the timetable to have that completed is January 2021 — so, quite quickly so that this situation can be remedied and First Nations can proceed with their economic choices and land work on behalf of their citizens.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that and I thank her for that clarification, because the March 9 press release said that the amendments to the Settlement Lands Regulation will be required to support the legislative changes. It is good to see that there is some nimbleness here and that it will occur in the next couple of months.

I just have one more general question. It is more of a curiosity one because I don't know how this works. The minister talked about the amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* expanding the definition of "subsidiary certificate of title" and recognizing the authority of First Nation governments with respect to development agreements, plans of subdivision, and approvals of air space plans. Can the minister explain what an air space plan is, in plain language?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am smiling because I had this exact question. Even though I was hearkening back to some very long-ago concepts of land and property rights from the legal education that I had many moons ago, I remembered some of it, but not all of it, so thank you for the question.

"Air space plan" means a plan of survey that creates an air space parcel. It has to do with properties that are higher than — a concept might be a high-rise apartment building where there are concepts of air space being used. Air space plans make it possible to subdivide land vertically and to create a title to a volume of air above or below a property. Air space plans are particularly important in the development of high-rise buildings, as I noted, because they create separate lots within a development. A First Nation or any developer might well have separate lots or separate ownership pieces being able to exist one on top of another.

An air space parcel is defined as "a volume of space, rather than a flat plane". Air space parcels are basically separate properties that are stacked on top of each other or perhaps beside each other, depending on the circumstances. I think that this is the best way to explain it.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. If I look at it in the context of downtown Whitehorse or any other city, what I would think about would be condominiums, which are, vertically, mostly apartments.

I just want to confirm that, when we are talking about approval of air space plans, that doesn't have anything to do with zoning or anything like that. I guess that is my question. It is not a zoning issue; it's an ownership issue — that statement is a question.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's about the registration of properties, so not zoning. Section 81 might be a good reference in the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. It makes reference to registering parcels of air space land. It comes under that title, actually, and

it's about being able to register a particular piece of property that might be one on top of another in an air space plan survey and the ability to do that in the land titles system, which is about ownership and registration of that ownership and any provisions as a result of doing that.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Ms. Hanson: I seek the approval of the Legislative Assembly to ask a question backward. I thought it was clause 3, but it's in clause 2(c).

Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to revisit clause 2.

Unanimous consent re revisiting clause 2

Deputy Chair: Ms. Hanson has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to revisit clause 2.

Do we have unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Clause 2 — revisited

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate that. I do want to ask a question to clarify. So, subsection (c) talks about how the "definition of 'subsidiary certificate of title' is replaced with the following" — and this is to clarify that definition means a certificate of title issued for an interest in land that is less than fee simple. Then it talks about category A and category B.

So, category A — section 5.4.1.1(a) is pretty clear when we talk about — and that has to do with the rights and obligations and the equivalent to fee simple except for mines and minerals. I was curious about the next one — which is category B — which has the same sort of introductory language.

This section reserves — basically, my bottom-line question — does this reserve the right to deal with — because this is the section, I think, that talks about "specified substance" — and that's gravel and gravel pits. Maybe I'm wrong about that, but that's where — I went back and checked the final agreement. So, a "specified substance" can be carving stone, flint, limestone, marble, gypsum, shale, clay, slate, gravel, sand, construction stone, ochre, marl, and peat. I guess what I'm asking is: What is the impact of the clarification of — basically, is it allowing for an interest to be created in a gravel pit that would be registered as a titled gravel pit? That's kind of a crass way of stating it, but that's what I'm asking.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm going to talk just a little bit about what this section does, which is really changing the definition or modifying the definition of "subsidiary certificate of title". Under the current *Land Titles Act, 2015*, a registrar is authorized to create or transfer a subsidiary interest in settlement land without a Yukon First Nation's consent, despite

the Yukon First Nation law imposing restrictions. So, this will enable the Settlement Lands Regulation to repair that problem.

This definition will be from the legislation and ultimately the Settlement Lands Regulation will repair the concept of not requiring the First Nation's consent, first of all, to register or create a transfer of the subsidiary interest in a title.

The current definition of "subsidiary certificate of title" is not clear in the current legislation. Let me say it this way: It is not clear in the current legislation that it covers leasehold interests in category A or category B settlement land. It raises an issue as to the ability of the Land Titles Office to issue subsidiary certificates of title to category A or B settlement land that has been brought under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. So, the *Land Titles Act, 2015* amendment — this amendment will clarify that. So, it's really about being distinct from fee simple and allowing leaseholds of category A and category B settlement land.

So, I don't think it's necessarily related to the specified substance that has been noted by the member opposite. What I think she's referring to is the self-government agreement — so I don't think it's necessarily related to that. It's about creating the ability for a full set of tools for the First Nation to deal with lands that they want to register in the Land Titles Office, including those with leasehold situations.

Ms. Hanson: The reason I raised it was because section 5.4.1.2 talks about category B settlement land — I'm reading my scribbles here — the rights, et cetera — "... reserving therefrom the Mines and Minerals and the Right to Work the Mines and Minerals but including the Specified Substances Right..." — and the "Specified Substances Right" means the right of a First Nation to take and use, without payment of any royalty, a specified substance — and specified substances are the ones I was saying earlier, including gravel, marl, and peat. So, it is not in their self-government agreement — it's in their final agreement provision — and that is why I'm just curious as to — you know, it's settlement land and that stuff.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I apologize. I did earlier say "self-government agreement". I think that the reference by the member opposite was *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and she is quite correct. The new definition of "subsidiary certificate of title" has been amended in Bill No. 11 to specifically make reference to section 5.4.1.1, which describes category A settlement land in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and to incorporate section 5.4.1.2, which describes the rights to category B settlement land within the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

So, for complete clarity, the conversations, agreements, and recommendations that came forward from the working group — including First Nation governments that were interested in this particular working group — and for their future planning was to expressly incorporate those two things into the definition so that there would be no question that this is the case.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on clause 2?

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On the Title
Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that you report Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Chair report Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now 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? Mr. Cathers, you have 12 minutes and 52 seconds remaining.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise today again in debating this supplementary budget. I want to just follow through — of course, I asked a number of questions at the end of the day yesterday that I am hopeful the Premier will have answers to. I would also like to add to them by touching on an issue that is top of mind for a lot of Yukoners right now, which relates to the forces of nature, Mr. Deputy Chair.

We saw the situation here in the Yukon this week where we had a significant snowstorm, and the previous week — both occurring on a Monday, I would note — we had a strong windstorm that knocked out power and damaged people's property in my riding as well as in other areas within Yukon. Recognizing that, of course, government can't control nature or prevent a heavy snowfall or a strong windstorm from occurring, there are, in the wake of those events, people left trying to carry on with their lives, deal with both the inconvenience that it causes at the time, as well as take the steps necessary to pull things back together afterwards, so to speak. After those situations, it is fair to say that you can look back and see things that worked very well and things that didn't.

What I want to touch on is what the government is doing — or perhaps what it should be doing — in terms of learning from situations like that, working together within government with the key departments, as well as with other partners including municipalities, First Nations, and the private sector to respond and ensure that they are prepared to address those situations.

Government often talks about things like emergency plans. This, I would characterize as not just “emergency plans”, but also the ability of the system to respond well to events that — for lack of a better term — I would characterize as “sub-emergency events”. They are not a situation that could really be classified as an “emergency situation”, but they are serious and they can have serious effects. For example, in the situation of the snowstorm — as the Premier will be aware — we heard many concerns from Yukoners about the lack of communication from the Department of Education regarding school busing, including the fact that parents were notified — in some cases by e-mail — after the close of the school day where the buses would be running and that they would not be running down some side roads.

As well, my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, noted the fact that, at the beginning of the day, announcements regarding buses were going out — I believe that he indicated around 9:30 in the morning by e-mail.

What I am asking the Premier about in this context is not intended to focus just on what went wrong in terms of communication during the snowstorm, but to ask what government plans to do about it within the Yukon government structure, as well as with its partners, to ensure that there are steps taken to address where there were some serious problems.

For example, one concern that I have heard regarding schools relates to the snow at the time and the delays with which it was cleared out of the parking lot, as well as the increased congestion with vehicles during the storm. A number of people were concerned about what would have happened if there had been a fire at a school during a situation like that — which is, perhaps, not highly likely, but those types of things can happen, especially if there is an accident of some nature during a storm. The concern that was expressed to me was related to two things: both the ability of emergency vehicles to get to a school during the snow, before it was cleared away, and the ability of them to get other vehicles through at the time, as well as the ability of students to actually get out of the school through the exit doors. I have seen photos — even today — of exit doors at the school that are still congested with snow. Particularly for young children, that could pose a serious situation if there were to be a fire afterward.

We also heard that issue that was raised by citizens on social media — as well as in the Legislative Assembly by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, and by the Leader of the Third Party — relating to the situation at Greenwood Manor, in particular. I heard directly from someone who had a family member affected by that. I understand — hearing from folks who work for Emergency Medical Services — that it's not the first time that there have been problems at Greenwood Manor, in particular, with EMS trying to respond to an emergency after a snowfall and having the impact of the snowfall causing problems with that.

We do recognize that some parts of that may relate to other agencies outside of government, to private contractors, et cetera, but I would ask the Premier if he could speak to what the government is doing in response to that, including whether he is confident that steps are being taken to prevent there being

the types of problems with access of emergency vehicles to government-operated senior homes after a snowfall, as well as steps taken to prevent the somewhat risky situation at schools — which I referred to — from occurring in the future.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll respond to the member opposite, but before I do, I'll start by disagreeing with him as far as a slow response or not doing enough. It was interesting to hear this morning on the radio Mr. Graham from the city when he was asked if he has ever seen a snowstorm like this. Of course, he is in charge of keeping the roads safe for the municipality, and I thought it was a great interview. His response was "not in his career".

This is one of those anomaly-type of situations — which is funny, because when we said that in the Legislative Assembly the other day, the opposition laughed at us — that we couldn't prepare for something like this — whereas the folks who are manning the plows and the graders and providing this amazing essential service would concur that this was an anomaly — early in the year, the amount of snow and the amount of time.

I will disagree with the opposition. I think that, in these circumstances, the government, and also other governments, have done a great job, to tell you the truth, of responding to that very quick snow situation. Now, did everything get done immediately? No. We even just saw with the roads downtown — priority 1 roads — that it took a long time. We were driving in one lane as opposed to two.

Great advice again from Mr. Graham — folks, have a little a patience, slow down, and remember that there are people crossing sidewalks, so be very vigilant. I saw most Yukoners adhering to that. In our normal rush-hour traffic in the middle of the summer, we get a little aggressive in our driving, wondering why it's so important to get from A to B so quickly. If we just take our time, we may be 30 seconds later. I saw Yukoners, over the last few days, really being good to one another. You know, it's going to take a little bit longer to get to work. There's going to be one lane where there is normally two, and there are going to be delays, and there are going to be cancellations and these types of things.

I believe that the response to an unprecedented snow occurrence in Yukon, with the amount of snow that got dumped — there are always lessons learned. That's what I love about the public service in general. They always do learn from experience, whether it's the municipal crew, like I mentioned, or the Highways and Public Works folks or the emergency measures folks as well.

Project Nanook — preparing us for emergencies and doing individual types of simulations, whether it be for flood or how we mitigate a wildfire near communities and those types of things — the amount of work that the Minister of Community Services and his team have done in preparing us for fires and making sure that we get enough of the fuel away from the major centres, starting with a great project here in Whitehorse — this is the type of work where previously we didn't see that happening, and now what we're seeing is a response to these types of situations.

I'll add to that, if we take a look at our response to COVID in general — that emergency situation. So, whether it's floods,

fires, a snow apocalypse — as we saw this week — or even COVID, our response is applaudable for the public servants and the departments, the directors in the departments, and the managers. I don't know what the opposition sees, but what I see is a government that responds.

There is always something to work on, for sure. It is not great when you hear about delays in some snow removal for some folks who may have some mobility challenges. Our hearts definitely go out to them, but it's not from a lack of attempt. You see people working extremely hard to remove snow, but I guess that — I won't make that comment. What I will say is that, in emergency situations like that, on this side of the House, we see a public servant who springs into action and does the best that they can to get people moving again.

When it came to our response to COVID, that's another example. I would like to speak about that for a bit. What I have noticed is that, whether it's on the federal basis — in our conversations with the federal government — or on the territorial and provincial basis with the Premiers and the other ministers — and the weekly, sometimes daily, conversations therein — or the conversations government to government with the Yukon government, First Nation governments, and municipalities locally in this region, we have learned a lot in the past eight months.

We are going to be better as a society and as a community from what we've learned in working so tightly together with each other. It was a busy summer for the chiefs and for the councillors. It was a busy summer for the Association of Yukon Communities. It was a busy summer for municipal governments, mayors, and councillors. It is always a pleasure and an honour to be able to go into communities and speak with these leaders in the best of times, but I really saw the Yukon spirit of people saying, "You know, it's a different time of year, things are not going to be perfect, but we are going to work together and try our best to be better." What we are seeing are a lot of recommendations from governments, municipal and First Nation governments, stakeholders, and the Business Advisory Council. People are adding to the narrative in a positive way. That is always good to see.

When it came to the COVID response, our key partners in health promotion with First Nation governments and municipalities really helped us in preventing the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities. Our government was completely committed to that work. We set up community outreach teams to assist and to work directly with the First Nation governments to provide information, answer questions, and ensure a coordinated response to the pandemic.

It is very similar with the work of the Community Services department with the municipalities, but engagement and collaboration were extremely important, and we have learned so much over the last eight months as to how to be better as a society and as a community because of these ongoing communications.

If you relied in the past on, let's say, an annual meeting of the Finance ministers, for example — you get a lot done annually with those meetings, but now, when you have those meetings every week with your counterparts and your

colleagues right across the nation, we will be better as a nation because of those conversations. If you take a look at the conversations that we have had since March with the community outreach teams — the coordination there with Yukon and transboundary First Nations and other government staff — we will be better as a government and as a community because we all came together and shared in solutions and suggestions together.

We also set up a working group with the chief medical officer of health for coordination and to track information requests and ensure that the accurate and current information was flowing and getting to the communities as we partnered together.

We did a lot. Our government did a lot to meet the challenges of COVID. I will go over again to emergency measures or snow removal as well, but when it came to COVID, the member opposite asked: “What are you doing to be better?” Well, during COVID, we introduced a cancellation event support program to reimburse businesses that were losing money for cancelled events, in real time. Again, cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games — and within weeks, we had this fund up and running even though the opposition would say that there was a countdown of a couple hundred days and we still hadn’t done anything for these businesses — simply not the case.

We brought in paid sick leave so that employees could take time off when they were required to take time without losing their income — so employers could support their employees. It is something that we did immediately, regardless of what the opposition would have you believe.

We developed a business relief package that is better than most other jurisdictions in Canada — I would say all jurisdictions in Canada, including specific supports to the tourism sector through the tourism accommodation support — again, contrary to what the opposition would have you believe.

We changed regulations so that seniors could continue to drive, even if their driver’s licence needed renewal. Again, this is an example of what we are doing in real time to address emergency situations.

We adjusted regulations to make it possible for societies to continue to do their good work — to continue to meet virtually and those types of things.

We subsidized childcare costs so that early learning childcare providers could stay open and support essential workers. I could riff off of that to universal daycare, using some of our pilot projects and looking in other jurisdictions in Canada about best practices. How we, through the pandemic, recognizing that the pandemic adversely affected women more than men, especially single parents, as far as trying to get into the workforce or getting supports for their children while being in the workforce, or while continuing their education — this is an extremely important thing for us and is another example of, in an emergency situation, what we are doing to pivot, to change, and to be better as a government.

We offered wage top-ups so that employers could pay their employees more during this time. We introduced the eviction protection and rent subsidy so that tenants and landlords were protected. These are examples of COVID-19 responses. The

member opposite knows very well, as far as emergency supports, that the department does an amazing job with simulated emergencies. They are always developing and training, increasing the training of our skilled professionals who are there to help individuals.

When it comes to the Department of Highways and Public Works and their ability to deal with extreme weather conditions, they use the tools that they have available. It’s not as if people weren’t working at the time; it is an example of an amazing amount of snow dumped down in a concentrated area in a very short period of time. We look outside now, and the sun is shining, and it’s a beautiful, sunny day — my favourite temperature, minus 18. I think we have gotten to a place now where most people have been shovelled out, and people are safe again. If the member opposite has some constituents who he knows still need assistance right now, we’re more than willing to work with him to figure out what we can do to provide the supports that folks need in these extreme times.

I will go back. The member opposite did ask a few other questions yesterday before we were about to leave the Legislative Assembly in Committee of the Whole. I’m going to use some time here to answer some of those questions. They were kind of rapid-fire at the end of the day, but we’ll continue the debate.

There was a question about a commitment to check if there is money in *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for expanded cell services. The member opposite asked what the government’s plan was for expanded cellphone coverage. In the context of the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* that we have here, which is what we’re debating today — I’ll answer in that capacity, knowing very well that the ministers responsible will have an opportunity, if we get past general debate, to answer more in-depth about their departments, not only just the budgetary numbers. This is the important piece, and I hope the opposition is amenable to it — it is about providing more detail past the dollar values. We, in Finance here, can talk about numbers, but those members relish the opportunity to debate our direction in things like fibre technology and our record in that capacity.

As far as the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* — or maybe even a little bit more information on that — I can say in general that, from the five-year capital plan’s perspective, that plan shows \$43 million for IT infrastructure in 2020-21 — that year alone. Now, with decreases from the Dempster project in *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* and also increases to school IT, to Meditech, IHealth increases, there is a total of \$29.98 million remaining in this funding envelope this fiscal year.

We explained this a few times on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, both in Question Period but also in general debate. We do have a breakdown further to that. Again, you have the reduction of Dempster fibre, which was the \$19.5 million that we have mentioned a few times. The addition in that fund for this year — as the government, in a pandemic and an emergency situation, proving its ability to be adaptive and flexible — they took the money for school-based IT — SBIT — and added \$800,000 there. Of course, you can speak with the ministers responsible for the breakdown of what this

money is for. There is another \$750,000 for Meditech in the hospital, and also \$4.932 million in 1Health. The Minister of Health and Social Services would relish the opportunity to talk about this amazing expanse in our health care for Yukoners.

What we are looking at right there is \$30 million in the capital envelope for IT and for infrastructure. As you know, Mr. Deputy Chair, the government is always looking for ways to connect communities together and those that are outside of the territory as well. We are not involved in the provision necessarily of cell coverage throughout the Yukon; however, we do work closely with the CRTC and with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. Bell Mobility, for example, as a part of the ruling by the CRTC, does have plans to increase its coverage along the Alaska Highway between Whitehorse and Haines Junction this year, which is great news.

It's just a good opportunity for us to talk about, in our window and in our purview, what we are responsible for and the good work that this government is doing. Again, the ministers responsible will be happy to break down and talk more about what they are doing as far as technologies, communication, and infrastructure.

The member opposite was also asking questions about the impact of the federal tax changes on property owners in Yukon. I want to thank the member opposite for raising this important issue. As you know, Mr. Deputy Chair, the federal *Income Tax Act* is a very complicated piece of legislation. The issue of changes to taxation of passive income is not a new issue, as the members opposite know. Rent income is one form of passive income that was part of these changes. This is entirely a federal matter, for the record. It is not a territorial provision; these are federal acts.

That said, when the federal government proposed these changes in 2017, I did reach out to then-Minister Morneau, the federal Minister of Finance, advocating for the interest of Yukoners. I will always do that. When there are some changes, I will make sure that I voice the concerns of Yukoners. As part of these changes, the first \$50,000 of passive income in a year for a small business — an amount that is exceeded by only three percent of corporations — is still taxed at a rate that is similar to before those changes, so that is good. For annual passive income between \$50,000 and \$150,000, a corporation pays taxes at a rate between the small business tax rate and the general corporation rate. Once the corporation exceeds the \$150,000 in investment income that year, that income is taxed at a general corporate tax rate.

I think that I am going to run out of time here before I get to the rest of this, but suffice it to say that the Yukon small business tax rate is zero. We put it to zero this year. That is for Yukon small businesses. The general corporation rate is 12 percent, and the corresponding federal rates are nine percent and 15 percent.

So, again, this is the Yukon Liberal Party government reducing taxes and working with the federal government as well to advocate on behalf of Yukoners when it comes to taxes.

I can continue down the road of that specific question that the member opposite asked when it came to the impact of the

federal tax changes to some property owners when I get a chance to get to my feet in the next answer to the member opposite's questions.

Mr. Cathers: I would just like to note that it is unfortunate that the Premier chose to characterize my questions about the response to the windstorm and the snow as somehow being critical of staff, which was not the case. What the Premier unfortunately seems to miss with that is that it is really a question about the surge capacity of the system. Government tends to — in an area such as snowplowing, for example, the Department of Highways and Public Works typically would get their snowplowing crew in place based on what normally occurs. That is typically what they would be expected to receive through the budgeting process.

The problem becomes, in a situation such as what we saw — if the government doesn't have in place a structure that provides the potential for surge capacity, either within the system or through the use of private contractors, we can end up with situations such as at Greenwood Manor or at the schools, which I referenced, where there is a situation that is potentially unsafe for the residents and the students respectively. It is not a criticism of staff who are working as fast as they can to deal with an event that is beyond their ability to be everywhere at once. The question really is about the system surge capacity and what can be learned, especially as it relates to the two specific situations that I brought up, which fortunately don't seem to have resulted in a problem that caused injury or loss of life, but potentially — such as in the situation at Greenwood Manor where we understand that an ambulance arrived, got stuck in the snow, and a second ambulance had to come, and then a resident had to be transported between the two on a stretcher — again, according to what we have been told by Yukoners affected by it.

In that type of situation — anytime an ambulance is stuck somewhere, that creates a potentially very serious problem, and anytime a second ambulance has to be dispatched, it does create a situation where, if there's another call, that ambulance can't respond.

What I'm saying is not intended to be, in any way, shape, or form, critical of any of the staff of government or municipalities or private companies who responded to the snowstorm the best they could and worked as quickly as they could; it's a question about the system and whether something additional needs to be in place to address those types of events.

While I do agree with the Premier and the statements he referenced from an official of the city about the abnormality of a snowstorm of that particular amount, it's not the first time we have had snowstorms that have caused problems — including, as I mentioned, that we were told by staff of EMS that the problem at Greenwood Manor has occurred a number of times previously.

I'm sure I'm not going to get much more additional information from the Premier today, but I do hope that he and his Cabinet will take this point to heart, along with staff of departments, and give consideration to the question about what I would characterize as a large situation but a sub-emergency situation. What needs to be done in the future to prevent there

being situations of schools that would not be able to have a fire truck get to the building if there were a fire, students who wouldn't be able to get out some of the exit doors because of the snow being in place, still blocking those entrances, and the government's own seniors facilities — where we understand there have been, on more than one occasion, problems with ambulances not being able to access the building?

Moving on to the next topic, I do want to just thank all of the staff of government and corporations that responded to that, as well as private sector contractors — both to the snowstorm and the windstorm. I would like to particularly note, with regard to the windstorm, that crews of ATCO and Yukon Energy Corporation really did an outstanding job of responding quickly to a very large number of situations involving trees on power lines or snapped power poles and also thank the staff of Highways and Public Works — as well as helpful neighbours — who did work to clear multiple roads throughout the territory.

Again, as I close my comments on that issue, I would just note that the real question is about the surge capacity of the system and how it deals with those events, if they occur, in a manner that is effective and responsible.

Moving on to another area — it's unfortunate that, in the area of cell service, the Premier's response basically seemed to be washing his hands of the issue. It was only through the efforts of the Yukon Party, when in government — as well as department staff in working with the private sector — that cell service got expanded beyond the Whitehorse area. Without government being part of the solution, it's simply not, in the short term, going to be economically attractive for companies to make that investment.

It really comes down to the question of whether the Liberals believe — as we believed and do believe — that there is a time for making those investments in services such as improved cell service, making investments in expanding 911 territory-wide, as we did back in our last term in government — completed in 2016 — and making those investments such as the 811 Yukon HealthLine when there was a time when some in government questioned its effectiveness. But it has proven to be a vital tool here and across the country in responding to the pandemic. So, it is a question of whether the Liberal government believes that investing and improving communications has long-term benefits that may or may not immediately be seen but are ultimately good for the Yukon and its citizens. Unfortunately, it seems that this is not even on the priority list for them.

The Premier made some mention — if he could expand a bit more on what they're doing on universal daycare, I would be interested in hearing what he has to say about that. It is an area where we have yet to receive clarity on what the government is planning on doing. It ties back to another area — that being the comprehensive health review. We have seen the photo op, but there is a lack of clarity about what government is planning on doing. We have heard, of course — particularly in the area of the comprehensive health review — about serious concerns expressed by major stakeholders within the health system — about the government not working with them in

making its decision to implement recommendations and announcing that without even telling them that they were going to do that first.

The Premier knows that I'm particularly referring to the Yukon Medical Association. It is concerning when we see — just as we have throughout the pandemic — the approach of this government really taking an attitude that is dismissive of the need to work with health care providers, to consult with people who are affected by — in the case of the pandemic — ministerial orders, and to recognize that the Liberals don't have all the answers. There are Yukoners who are being affected by these decisions, including — in the case of the comprehensive health review — that government has accepted proposed major changes to our health care system and the fact that they skipped some steps in the process by not working with people whom they should have — it is concerning, to say the least.

I would also like to touch on — as the Premier knows, we have discussed, on a number of occasions, the government's pattern of inadequate funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I am pleased that the Premier did finally provide us with numbers earlier showing that the increase to the core budget of the Hospital Corporation has been a mere 10 percent over a period of five years.

I would also note that the rate of growth in health care costs across the country has, according to reports done analyzing the systems across Canada, claimed around an average of an eight-percent increase since 1972, if memory serves correctly. So, not suggesting government should be aiming for that eight-percent level, but two percent in growth within the hospital system doesn't even keep up with the increases in payroll cost and the increases in other costs there.

We appreciate that the government has finally now recognized the need to increase funding. The Premier acknowledged — made mention of the significant increase in the current fiscal year that was an attempt to make up for their years of neglect of the system.

I want to turn to another area where the government has been neglecting the needs of our hospital — and it's an issue that was touched on earlier in Question Period, but we still are waiting for answers on — and that's the secure medical unit.

We know, when the emergency room expansion was completed, that it was deliberately done with the shelled-in space allowing for the future detailed design of that space, which was contemplated to be a new secure medical unit. The existing secure medical unit — as the Premier may or may not know — was a renovation to an existing ward of the hospital that resulted from requests that were raised with me, as then-Minister of Health and Social Services, from the Hospital Corporation as well as from physicians. We took action to renovate that section of the hospital, but it was never designed for that end use. It was making the best of the facilities that we had through renovations.

That led to the emergency room development project, and excellent work was done by the Hospital Corporation contractors in doing that on time and on budget, as well as replacing the ambulance station no. 1 with the current facility that exists and provides as well an improved dispatch station.

We know that this Liberal government, upon being aware of the secure medical unit plan, made a commitment through a ministerial statement over a year and a half ago that they were going to proceed with the project. There was a notional allocation in the budget. Then we could practically hear the sound of crickets from the government in terms of progress on this file.

There were indications recently by the minister that made it sound like this project had been pushed off at least a year. The question for the Premier at this point is: Is the government still committed to the secure medical unit project? If so, why has it been delayed? When does the government foresee actually getting on with the job and getting that project done?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to the secure medical unit, the Minister of Health and Social Services ad nauseum has committed — tripled down, doubled down — to this and has answered that question from the member opposite quite a few times now. If the member opposite doesn't like the answer, it doesn't mean that the minister didn't answer the question; she did.

I will go back. There was a lot in that. We went from surge capacity all the way through to health and everywhere in between.

I am going to continue on my answer with the tax question that the member opposite did start with yesterday. I got as far as talking about the breakdown of passive income between different earnings — \$50,000 and under, \$50,000 to \$150,000 as a corporation — and then once a corporation exceeds the \$150,000 in passive investment in income in that year, I reiterated and reminded the member opposite that we, in this current budget, reduced the small business tax rate to zero for Yukon small businesses — reducing Yukoners' taxes here in the Yukon. The general tax rate — we reduced that, as well, down to 12 percent. If you take a look at corresponding federal rates, you are looking at nine percent for small and 15 percent for corporate.

This is a great incentive for small businesses and corporations to grow roots here in the Yukon. Passive income earned outside of corporations, as the member opposite knows, is taxed at an individual's personal tax rate — to answer his question. In Yukon, an individual with an income that exceeds half a million dollars a year pays a combined federal-territorial margin tax rate of 48 percent on the portion of income in excess of half a million dollars. This is close to the rate that the member opposite quoted in Committee on November 4. However, Yukon continues to support Canada's efforts to ensure that Canadians pay their fair share of taxes, whether it is personal or corporate, in a transparent and equitable manner.

As I have said, we have raised Yukoners' concerns about the impacts to Yukoners regarding the changes to the federal tax regime with the federal minister, and we will continue to have that regular discussion. We have also, on our behalf here in Yukon, reduced those small business taxes to zero and corporate taxes to 12 percent in Yukon.

From there, I will go back to today. The member opposite keeps on talking about surge capacity; he said this is about surge capacity. I am going to disagree with him.

I won't go to other jurisdictions, but snow events that have only been experienced once in a snow-removal expert's career hopefully will not happen again for years — maybe even decades — as that kind of unique situation. If it does, this government has proven to be able to be adaptive and responsive to those situations. We proved it with the increases in forest fires by making sure that we have fuel smart programs and fuel safe programs through the Department of Health and Social Services. We have been extremely adaptive in project Nanook and other projects where we simulate experiences. The reason why we pick floods, forest fires, or these types of things — is because these are the emergency situations that we know are in our front headlights.

A snow event like we had the other day — you heard it this morning — a very dedicated public servant saying, "I've never seen something like this before in my career."

So, surge capacity? I don't know if this is an example of what we should be talking about on surge capacity. I think that what we have proven is, when it comes to COVID — nobody expected that COVID would be coming this year — that our ability to respond to emergency situations that are ongoing, like a pandemic, or ones that are increasing, like forest fires, or ones that we know are obvious, as far as our supply chain management, like floods — this government has proven, despite what the member opposite says, to be responsive, flexible, and intelligent, and the training is increasing for our emergency responders all the time. I want to thank them. I want to thank the public servants who make me extremely proud to be the Premier of this government when it comes to emergency responses.

If we're talking about a snow event like this one-time event — and the member opposite is talking about surge capacity inside of a one-time event — is he advocating for us to hire more FTEs than normal, than necessary, to respond to this?

We have proven to be extremely adaptive, and we'll continue to be adaptive as we deal with emergency situations that are continuing or obvious. Again, I hope that we do not see dumps of snow like this in the future on a regular basis, but if we do, the government has proven to be able to be resilient enough and responsive enough to adapt their processes and procedures to make sure that we keep Yukoners safe.

The member opposite talked about the secure medical unit. We did say that the minister has responded to that a few times, saying that the planning is done. He is asking when the planning is going to be done — the planning is done. They are now working on a model of care with partners. The member asked that question a few times of the minister, and she responded with that. The funds are included in the capital plan for 2021-22, and that question has been responded to for the member opposite as he asks it again.

He did also ask about — speaking about our investment in telecommunications — he said that I didn't answer the question. I did answer the question, actually. I talked exactly about all the different telecommunications technologies that we are investing millions of dollars in. As we wait for our ability to spend money on the Dempster redundancy fibre optic project, which is more millions of dollars of investment that

will move forward next year — we wish it moved forward this year, but in the pandemic year, it was a little more problematic than we thought it would be — but the money is there. We will make sure that this continues on next year.

We heard the opposition talk about different routes of redundancy in the past — we just didn't see them getting it done. But it is interesting that, as he was speaking about these things, he said that we were very dismissive about how we consulted with Yukoners when it comes to projects. I just completely disagree with the member opposite on this, especially when it takes into consideration that he was talking about health and a lack of consultation. The independent review consulted for over a year. That one independent process alone worked with governments — First Nation governments, municipal governments, and stakeholders — for over a year to develop one of the most amazing reviews in Yukon history, in my opinion. It is going to revolutionize the health care system here in Yukon. We are going to be a model and an example for the rest of Canada. The member opposite says that we are dismissive on health care and consulting with Yukoners. My goodness gracious — that was a lot of consulting.

Our Clean Future is another excellent example of consultation with Yukoners where we took the time to get it right. The whole time, as we were developing *Our Clean Future*, we were being asked when it was going to be announced. Then when we announced it, it was, “Well, you didn't do enough consulting; we think that you are dismissive on consulting.” This is an interesting tack from the member opposite. Again, it's interesting — let's just say that it's interesting.

When it comes to engagement and our approach to engagement in general, I believe that the Yukon government is very committed to better and more meaningful public engagement because we believe that the perspectives of individual citizens can absolutely inform the best possible direction for Yukoners. I will take our consultation efforts against the opposition's — when they were in government — any day. When I talk to the folks in the communities and in the regions that are responsible — whether it is through Executive Council Office or other parts of our government — I keep on saying that this is engagement on steroids. The issue we are having as a government is actually engagement fatigue at some points.

We've had record amounts of engagement in our surveys — public engagement when working on initiatives that are extremely important to Yukoners like the tourism development strategy, and the climate change, energy, and green economy strategy — talking to Yukon parks, and LGBTQ2S+ inclusion. That's just to name a few. Aging in place — another great example where the member opposite says we're dismissive in consultations, yet there is extraordinary amounts of consultation with stakeholders.

When making decisions that impact Yukoners and the future of the territory, we want to make sure that we take the public's view into consideration and we want to hear from a wide range of voices.

I would say that the appetite to participate in broad public engagement increases when restrictions lessen. But in all likelihood, we have been seeing personal engagement return to levels that are more normal now that we're starting to live with COVID and now that we're starting to fall into the winter and into regular processes here.

We are working to expand the range of our digital engagement tools that are available to Yukoners who prefer to engage online — and we've been told that most people prefer to do it that way — that isn't to say that it's the only way, but that is definitely a preference of Yukoners. This provides online alternatives to surveys and it absolutely fosters more constructive dialogue between communities and government.

The member opposite has been on record saying that it's a bad way of engaging because people can vote on surveys a multitude of times and somehow that Yukoners are gaming the system. I disagree with the member opposite; I believe that the public engagement that we have set up through our new processes — through yukon.ca and through engageyukon.ca — I think it's an amazing and sophisticated system. The change to the website — which again, the members opposite would say is no good — if we didn't change our website before COVID, we would have been in serious trouble in providing up-to-date communication to our partner governments and to stakeholders.

Where did we go from here? I believe that there was a question about the hospital, as far as total funding. The member opposite talked about total funding again for the hospital. We've been over this a few times, Mr. Deputy Chair. Here we are in the supplementary budget talking about the relief for Yukoners through COVID — but the member opposite wants to talk about the main budget, and that's fine.

The total budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation for 2020-21 is \$81.3 million for its core operations and other requirements — and this is nearly a nine percent — 8.6 percent — increase over the last year's mains, 2019-20 mains. That increase is to core funding. It's an increase to orthopaedics, to 1Health, to Meditech, and also to one-time funding initiatives and pension solvency. Between the 2015-16 fiscal year to 2020-21, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's O&M has increased almost 29 percent. This increase was — and we have gone over this; the member opposite keeps on bringing it up, so I will keep on answering — a 10-percent increase in core funding, averaging two percent over each year of the last five years; a 14-percent increase for new programs added to base — for things like MRI, or for emergency department expansion, First Nation health, lab testing; a three-percent increase for one-time funding for more obstetricians, for ultrasound in communities, pension solvency — as I mentioned — but that's another place — overall; and also two-percent funding to the base funding for ongoing costs to chemotherapy — extremely important.

This is absolutely good news for Yukoners. We are advancing services here in the territory — where, in the past, you would have had to fly out for these procedures and for these visits, we can do them here at home. We're working very

closely with the Hospital Corporation to ensure that the proposed budget meets their core funding needs.

It was increased by 30 percent from the previous government to now, and yet the member opposite is crying that we're not giving them enough money — 30 percent more than they did.

For the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, we are providing the Hospital Corporation — again, if we are going to get back to what we're here today to debate — in *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2020-21, we are providing the Hospital Corporation with \$6,012,424 in additional COVID-19 funding to support COVID-19 preparedness, making changes to the emergency department, lost revenues, increased staffing, and also the purchase of additional supplies — extremely important investments.

We believe that the increase to spending is a balance between making sure that Yukoners not only maintain the programs and services that they have come to know, appreciate, and deserve, but also increasing those. The minister and her team are extremely thrilled about how we can expand type 1 diabetes provisions, how we can expand orthopaedics, how we can expand chemotherapy, and how we can expand all of these individual, important services to Yukoners but also, at the same time, make sure that we live within our means and be able to, pre-pandemic, come at a surplus budget — a modest surplus of \$4 million or so. That, to me, is fiscal balance. The member opposite sometimes will say that we are not spending enough and then other times he will say that we are spending way too much money. Again, it is hard to tell which angle he is coming from at which particular time.

When it comes to the supplementary estimates, what we are not hearing are a lot of conversations about the money in this budget for the supplementary estimates here in general debate. I feel like I need to get us back onto that track a bit.

You want to talk about fiscal prudence. The pandemic has resulted in significant increases in spending, and that is concerning not only to me but to Yukoners and Canadians as well. It also has a decrease in user fees and tax revenues for the government, which concerns me if we are in a long-term position with COVID because we need to have the revenues. We need to be able to afford the programs and services that we have in place, and we do know that this impact is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, and that is concerning. That does keep the deputy minister, me, and others up at night. But at the same time, we put ourselves in a financial situation to be able to cope. I have read from Standard and Poor's, and I have read from other agencies about comparisons of our jurisdiction to others. We are in a good place; we are not out of the woods yet. This is going to go on for the foreseeable future.

This spending today that we are supposed to be talking about on the supplementary budget is to ensure that Yukoners remain safe, that they remain healthy, that the local businesses stay afloat and recover — thrive, hopefully, once things get back to normal again — and that our economy remains stronger over the long term. I do look forward to the day when there is a vaccine, when Canada has herd immunity, the nation and the world start travelling again, commerce increases again, and

supply chain managements become stronger, because the conversations that we are having at a federal base, with our counterparts there, and the conversations that we are having locally — we will be better as a community and we will be better as a nation because of the people and the leaders in this country who have come together to work together — from coast to coast to coast — to make sure that we have the programs and services in place now, as we are in triage, and then into relief and then recovery. Then, when we get to a vaccine, we will be thriving again.

Mr. Cathers: Well, I can understand why the Premier doesn't want to talk about the Hospital Corporation and the government's record of neglect on that, but the fact that he dismissed my concerns about it as crying about the hospital — I'm not crying, but Yukoners who have been affected by this are. The problems that we have seen recently blowing up into the media at the Hospital Corporation are directly due to the Finance minister's and the Minister of Health and Social Services' record of neglect for the core funding for the hospital.

The Premier can throw in expansions to programs associated with the ER all he wants. He can talk about increasing chemotherapy. We agree with those things, but those things do not do a darn thing for the needs of the core budget of the hospital. That he is so dismissive of it is certainly something that the doctors, nurses, and other health care workers there will be happy to hear — the Premier expressing his true opinion of the work that goes on there. For the record, we support the work that they do and believe that it is important for government to treat it more seriously than they have.

I would also point out that the Premier did not provide an answer on the secure medical unit. We would like to hear timelines — because we have heard platitudes, we have heard announcements, and we have heard conflicting information from the minister, but we want timelines. The fact that also, in an earlier response, the Premier, when listing some of the amounts in the budget, cited an amount for Meditech replacement and IHealth and didn't seem to realize that they actually are the same project, it just shows the neglect that he has shown toward the needs of our hospital system.

I have to point out, as I did earlier in Question Period, that if you look at the audited Public Accounts for the 2019 fiscal year, the growth of general government as a whole — the growth of their expenses — of \$81.5 million is more than the entire budget for the Hospital Corporation. So, they have been growing in every other area but neglecting one of the most important areas.

Again, when we talk about the comprehensive health review, the Premier unfortunately is touting its virtues. Unfortunately, while we do appreciate the work that was done by the panel and the work that was done on the system, it was evident, even from the testimony of the witnesses from the panel when they appeared in this Assembly, that they were expecting the government to do additional work on this.

I will quote one of the witnesses when he said to the Legislative Assembly on October 19, on page 1467: "If you don't get one part of it right or a couple parts of it right — even if you get, for example, hospital care right, if you don't have

primary care right, it's going to fall apart and it will be an extremely expensive system, aside from it not being patient-centred."

Then what did government do? We know what happened this summer. The Minister of Health and Social Services, without having consulted with the Yukon Medical Association, made an announcement that they were accepting all the recommendations from the health review. We heard the acting president at the time of the Yukon Medical Association expressing their real concern with what government had done in that situation. It's very disturbing to me that the Premier doesn't really seem to recognize the importance of working with our physicians, as well as with other members of the Yukon's health care community, in figuring out what the right steps are to take and getting it right — as a member of the panel noted, the importance of getting it right — and that is something that government, in this case, has not done.

We are left with the question of why the government made the decision to implement the recommendations from the comprehensive health care review without taking the necessary step of working closely with the Yukon Medical Association, which provides a huge amount of the health care and primary care here in the Yukon. Why did they make the announcement and have to get called out by the Yukon Medical Association for their lack of consultation instead of working with them first?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just to let the member opposite know, Meditech dollars are for the existing system. 1Health — those dollars are for the new and improved expanded system — just to clarify for the member opposite.

He also said that we need timelines when it comes to the secure medical unit. We gave him timelines. Funding is included in the capital plan for 2020-21. Now, the minister responsible will be able to have a continued dialogue when it comes to the secure medical unit and when it comes to what we are doing to make sure that this moves forward. I do appreciate that the members opposite want to see this happen, and I agree. We do as well. That's why we're funding it.

The member opposite keeps on going back to his speaking notes about, "You're not doing enough for the Hospital Corporation." But we keep on saying that we've increased by 30 percent since his government left office — 30 percent. We also talked about the increase this year alone to the tune of 8.6 percent, year over year — an 8.6 percent increase — but the member opposite will continue with his speaking note of saying, "You're not giving enough money over to the corporation."

What we do is, based upon evidence-based decision-making, work with all of the development corporations and all of our departments. Our budgetary process is sound. We provide the money that we need to not only maintain the programs and services that we have but also expand them. We've been moving mountains and expanding the services that Yukoners have come to know and love, but also we've expanded.

One of the biggest expansions that I'm the most proud of — from the Health and Social Services department working

with the Hospital Corporation — is a move from the Yukon Party's acute care model to our collaborative care.

We need to go no further than the Peachey report, a very scathing review from the Office of the Auditor General, that recommended, if you're going to build hospitals in the rural communities, you really should have programming for those hospitals. From that, the previous government commissioned the Peachey report, which said that you need to move to collaborative care. It's something that I, when in opposition, and the NDP in opposition were saying for a long time to the Yukon Party, to deaf ears.

What you're seeing here under the Yukon Liberal Party government is a movement to collaborative care. What you're seeing is not only in the work with the Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services but also — with the minister's unique ability to add into that, housing — revolutionizing how we do the Yukon Housing Corporation — the Yukon housing association — moving it to community care, to community housing, which allows it to be more flexible to allow it to take into consideration the unique needs of communities as opposed to a one-size-fits-all independent from Health and Social Services approach of the previous government.

The minister is the one to speak to, when she is here in Committee of the Whole, about what that 30-percent increase over our mandate has been about when it comes to core funding. Is everything perfect? No. We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go.

There is so much more to do. In this supplementary budget is, for example, an additional \$3.75 million to support daycares as part of COVID-19 response, but also the additional \$2.4 million as a part of early learning and childcare funding, with our agreement with Canada, and commitments to having universal daycare moving forward. This is the type of spending that we are doing on a collaborative care model of health, education — the professionals in the daycares. This is exciting work.

The member opposite won't get off his speaking notes of "You need to give more money." Okay, we'll continue to provide the programs and services, expand the programs and services, and expand the models of care, as the minister and the team have been doing since we formed office.

I'm not even going to get into foster care, aging in place, and all of these other amazing initiatives that we're seeing now, which we never saw before with the previous government. The previous government had a plan of a 300-bed facility for our aging population where everybody from all of the communities would come to Whitehorse. That was their plan — one plan, one size fits all.

We have taken the design of a 150-bed facility here in Whitehorse, which is an amazing facility for the need here in Whitehorse and the surrounding community.

We want to make sure that our elders in the rural communities age in place because the elders in our communities are the lifeblood of our communities. They are so important. I think about elders in my community of Dawson City. I think about people like Percy Henry. I can't imagine us

being without him and others in our community. We want to keep folks like that — elders like Ed Roberts — in the communities because they are so important. They are so important for our children — the relationship that they have with our children when we have aging-in-place programming through a collaborative health care model. That connection is so amazing. I wish it had been there in the past as much. You look at a guy like Bertie Rear before he passed away. What an amazing individual he was. His grandkids learned so much from that man. When he passed away, it was devastating to our community of Dawson City and devastating to the kids who were his grandkids.

We need to make sure that our models of care reflect the communities and keep people in the communities as long as possible. It is an extremely important part of what we are doing here in our government, and I am extremely proud of that.

Now, the member opposite did talk about the Meditech system being used at the hospital. We are updating an out-of-date technology used by the previous government and expanding it to other locations where Yukoners can access health care. That is extremely important to our communities and is extremely important to the technical model of the health care field. For example, community nurses, community nursing centres, physicians' offices, and long-term care facilities — IHealth is that system's approach, and it needs to start with the Meditech upgrade. I can't be any clearer than that for the member opposite. He can make it sound like we don't know what we are talking about over here, but that is exactly the difference between the two. We are updating an old system with a new system; it is quite straightforward.

One of the things, again, when we talk about our health care model — and this has been a question from the opposition as well — as we take a look at what we are doing with housing as it relates to health — the Housing Corporation — we were very excited to announce again the new Canadian Yukon housing benefit in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This, to me, is part of our health care system; it really is. Keeping people healthy — safe and healthy — in their communities is an extremely important part of a collaborative health care model. This program contributes to the COVID-19 recovery process, moves Yukoners out of housing needs, providing housing subsidies directly to individuals in that rental market housing — that is extremely important work. We are very proud of it. That Yukon and Canadian housing benefit is a fund initiative of \$9.1 million over the next eight years, which is going to help with the national housing strategy.

The Yukon representative on these national boards and organizations — through the great work of the previous Deputy Minister Pamela Hine and the current work that Mary Cameron and the team are doing over at housing — it is extraordinary how large Yukon's voice is at this table. It is extremely important for these types of funding — rental subsidy programs — \$584,000 available this fiscal year, with some financial relief of COVID-19, but there's more there as well. The federal funds that are received will support the affordability and availability for housing for Yukoners. It is something that we

definitely need to do more work on, but this is an example of us moving that needle. It takes into consideration as well the *Putting People First* report — again, the independent review, going out and speaking and consulting with all stakeholders in developing its review.

With the review, as the member opposite knows, the independent panel said, "You can't pick and choose. You are either accepting this plan or you are not accepting this plan." After years of us going out and engaging with the medical community on this review, it was extremely important for us as a government to say, "Yes, we are accepting the recommendations and we are going to start moving forward." Is the consultation done? No, it is not done; it will continue. This isn't going to happen overnight. It is continuing. It is moving now. The department never stopped. It never stayed still during that independent review. It did so much to change, to move, and to augment during that time, and now we are going to continue with the complete complement of the medical community to make sure that we keep on moving forward and implementing the recommendations of the plan. I am extremely excited about it.

I think that when we look at some of the housing issues, the initiatives, and the partnerships that we are doing right now — whether it's Canada-Yukon housing benefit or the Yukon Housing Corporation COVID-19 rent-assist — another really important part of the whole continuum when it comes to being healthy in all of our communities — it's extremely important work and it's extremely important to bring these things up today.

Now, the member opposite talks about consultation. We talked about consultation. I'm not dismissive at all. The consultation will continue. We've accepted the recommendations of the plan. We did hear from the NDP that they as well would have accepted the recommendations of the plan. I believe that the Leader of the NDP said, when the plan came out, "If they don't accept all the recommendations, we certainly will." I haven't heard from the Yukon Party yet though. I'm not sure if they would accept the recommendations of the independent panel or not. They've been very quiet about that.

They will criticize us about engagement, where the independent panel spent a lot of time — definitely over a year. I'm not sure on the floor right now — I don't have the number in front of me about how long the plan was out for consultation and review, but it was extraordinary. The member opposite makes it sound like, moving forward, we're not going to consult. Well, if we've proven anything, we do, as a government, consult. I went over that review today. I talked about our engagement. I talked about our plan. I talked about how we've revolutionized and changed the system of engagement here in Yukon and we're going to continue to do that. Yet the member opposite would say, "You didn't consult. You don't give enough money to the Hospital Corporation." We talked about the increases of money to the Hospital Corporation and we talked about the change in direction from acute care to collaborative care — but I guess there's nothing I can say on the floor of the Legislative Assembly to convince

the member opposite that we're moving the needle quite considerably here when it comes to health care.

Mr. Cathers: I would point out that the Premier said at one point that I criticized growth of government. I remind the Premier that I've never criticized the growth of the budget for the Hospital Corporation.

The Premier, by his own admission, admitted that when you're actually talking about the core budget — not new services and not new programs — that the budget for the Hospital Corporation has only gone up 10 percent — by his own admission — over a period of five years.

He talked about the average rate while conveniently ignoring the fact that his own minister told this House in 2017-18 that they were only giving the hospital a one-percent increase. There were several years under the Liberals where we've seen the hospital getting less than the rate of inflation for the increase to the core budget and lower than the increase to what the staff received through their agreements with the union. If the minister wants to talk total numbers, let's talk about total numbers. I'm looking at the Public Accounts here from the 2016-17 fiscal year which show the actual transfer to the Hospital Corporation in the overlap year between the two governments of \$94,113,000.

If you look at the previous year, under the Yukon Party government, we see that the actual transfer to the Hospital Corporation was \$92,041,500. Both of these are — for the reference of Hansard — in schedule 9 of the Public Accounts, and our staff can provide the exact page number — that was cut off on what I have here.

Then, if we look at what we see in the last fiscal year, ending 2020, that has dropped to \$81 million and change. So, it hasn't grown — like the Premier pretends — if we're talking the total amount given to the Hospital Corporation. It's showing a drop in excess of \$10 million. That is why I will continue to raise this issue with the Premier until this government gets the importance of ensuring that our hospitals are properly resourced.

In areas such as the secure medical unit, we have heard that timelines have changed. We saw money in last year's budget that seems to be sliding forward. We see no concrete timelines, and we hear only platitudes and lip service. When we're talking about consultation — I'm going to move now to the comments of the president of the Yukon Medical Association. This relates both to the comprehensive health review and to the spending that this government has, in this budget, related to moving forward with its plans to implement it.

In August of 2020 — I'm going to quote from a *Whitehorse Star* story that Hansard will find online, dated August 18: "The Yukon's doctors are 'surprised and disappointed' by a government promise to overhaul the territory's health system without proper consultation, according to the Yukon Medical Association (YMA).

"Last Thursday..." — then it says the name of the health minister, which I can't in this Assembly — "... committed to implementing all of the recommendations laid out in an independent review of the Yukon's health and social services.

"The doctors of Yukon are very concerned about the announcement to accept all 76 recommendations contained in the report without properly consulting first with the YMA,' Dr. Ryan Warshawski, the acting YMA president, said in a statement his morning.

"The 207-page Putting People First report, released last May, provides a road map for improving health and social services in the Yukon.

"The recommendations include a plan for establishing a network of polyclinics and changing doctors' payment structures.

"The report envisions that the Yukon's current system of private doctor's clinics will be replaced with the polyclinic network, managed by the territorial government."

I am just going to take an aside from that. The government has proposed replacing private doctors' clinics in Whitehorse, and in some cases in other communities, with polyclinics, which is going to have significant cost implications both in this year, if the government is moving forward with it, and in future years. The Yukon Medical Association says that the government didn't even talk to them about it before accepting the recommendation.

So, back to the August 18 article — and I quote: "'Many of these recommendations will have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Yukoners, not just doctors, and we have not yet had a chance to discuss the implications of the report with the government,' Warshawski said.

"The YMA says a joint committee between its organization and the government to review the recommendations was recently established. That committee met a few days before last Thursday's announcement.

"The government's plan to publicly accept all the recommendations wasn't communicated at that meeting, the press release said.

"The YMA is currently compiling perspectives on the report from the Yukon's doctors.

"We have been consulting with our members and preparing a detailed critique of the expert panel report and its recommendations as it relates to health care which we had planned to share with the government as a basis for future discussions..."

I just want to step aside again from the article here and say that, as it relates to the government here accepting the comprehensive health review, moving forward with the budget and with this supplementary budget with a plan, apparently, to implement the review or an intention to do that — and we find that it is absolutely appalling that government would not consult with the Yukon Medical Association. As the Premier will recall, we heard from the panel members the acknowledgement that the panel itself had met with the YMA and — just quoting from Hansard on October 19 — that some of the panel members also met with a group: "... around 10 to 12 YMA members, including the Yukon chief medical officer of health, in an evening session — again, very early in the first round of our panel consultations — where we had a broad general discussion."

The implications of the comprehensive health review have major implications on the government as a whole, not just the Department of Health and Social Services. It has impacts throughout society and throughout the government, which is one of the reasons that I am raising it now with the Premier, because this government has set this out as one of its apparently signature things that it is announcing to Yukoners through their recent puff piece going out in the mail that they are doing.

Meanwhile, they have missed an absolutely vital step in the process in not fully understanding the implications that this has on our existing structure of medical clinics. Again, if you're making those changes, it is absolutely vital that everyone involved in our health care system be engaged properly before government locks in its decisions, because otherwise, it could be characterized as a "ready-fire-aim" approach where government really doesn't know the implications of what it's doing, but it's committed to doing it anyway. It doesn't really know how it's going to affect Yukon health care professionals, but they've committed to doing it anyway. They don't seem to know about the costs.

I want to ask the Premier if, when he rises next, he can elaborate on the costs of implementing the 76 recommendations as well as explain why it had to come to the stage where the Yukon Medical Association issued a press release expressing disappointment with the government's decision, noting — and I will quote from a CHON-FM article: "The YMA notes that it has a longstanding positive relationship with the Yukon government but that this can only be maintained if there is trust and open communications between both sides." That is from an online story on Tuesday, August 18, 2020.

The acting president also noted that the doctors in Yukon "... are very concerned about the announcement to accept all 76 recommendations contained in the report without properly consulting first with the Yukon Medical Association." That is a quote from the acting Yukon Medical Association president, Dr. Ryan Warshawski, who is now the president but was acting at the time.

This is a commitment from the government that relates directly to the budget but goes far beyond the budget in making a profound commitment to transform our health care system — but not talking to our health care professionals properly before making that decision. Perhaps the Premier would like to update me on the total number of physicians in the territory. I don't have that exact number at my fingertips, but I know that, in the past, it has been in excess of 60 physicians practising — sometimes above the 70 level. To consult with 10 or 12 of them early in the process is very insulting to Yukon physicians, and it speaks volumes about this Liberal government's attitude toward Yukon physicians and toward other health care providers as well.

They pay lip service on one hand — where the Premier talks about just how much they value them — but when it comes down to deciding to make a transformational change, they are not even consulted before government commits to implementing the 76 recommendations.

It's ironic that, in the report itself on page 2, it speaks to the fact that — and I quote: "There is too little coordination and

understanding of the needs of communities and the roles of various players in the system..."

To deal with that, what's the Premier's solution? To not talk to the doctors before committing to implement the report, leaving the doctors having to resort to the media to express their profound concern with government taking that action.

Perhaps the Premier can explain why they made that decision and acted in the way they did without even talking to Yukon physicians properly first.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Let's start with the member opposite's "fun with numbers". We've been around this show before. We've explained how we're keeping our conversation to O&M versus capital to show the increases. There's a reason for that. We've talked about capital budgets being cyclical. I used the word in the Legislative Assembly before — "lumpy" — because, in capital budgets from time to time — not necessarily on a linear progression per year — you will see significant increases in capital budgets in one year versus another, as the member opposite is doing, but as an overall trend, there is a whole different statistical picture there that the member opposite doesn't want you to see.

One of those boom periods — and we've explained this again, but the member opposite is going back and saying, "Look what I just discovered", but we just had this conversation one of the last times we were up here — in the Yukon Hospital Corporation's budget was 2015 to 2017. What was that about? That was when the MRI and the ER capital project was allocated between \$17 million and \$23 million per year for very specific initiatives — great initiatives, but very specific.

Again, to compare year by year, as the member opposite is doing, doesn't really show the full picture, and he knows that. Including this in a year-over-year comparison — it's going to be misleading in one direction or another because it's not showing a full picture.

The O&M budget — and I keep on going back to this. This is important — the operation and maintenance. This is the funding that we're talking about for the corporation. That is what increases.

That is one thing where it's not going to be lumpy. This is a trend — and our trend — we increased it by 30 percent between 2015-16 and the most recent budget. You cannot deny that number.

Again, when the member opposite is trying to say, "Well, look over here, though — if you compare one year versus one other year — aha! I have seen something that proves my narrative."

Well, okay, yes — I explained that a few times now to the member opposite as to why that is. However, it still is not enough for the member opposite. If you look at actual spending over the same period and if you use the supplementary estimates for this year, the increase over the same period is 29.7 percent. That's important for Yukoners to understand — that on a year-to-year basis, overall, we are increasing the funding — and that number is not lumpy. That number is a good projection, and we believe that the numbers matter over here in the Yukon Liberal Party.

Interesting enough as well — I know we don't have very much time here. I'll continue on here to say that Bruce McLennan, the independent expert on the panel, did say — the member opposite doesn't want you to know this — that we did have meetings. We had meetings with the former head of the Yukon Medical Association, Katharine Smart — yet the member opposite will say that we didn't. Well, I don't know what he's saying about Bruce McLennan, but Bruce McLennan states that, yes, they did — and there were meetings with groups of physicians, and the Yukon Medical Association did have an opportunity to come to that presentation. It was on the Alaskan Southcentral Foundation — which is similar to the model proposed — so a conversation about that. No physicians were able to attend, but the offer was out there for a model that was a preliminary to this bigger piece — but again, an opportunity.

The member opposite would make you believe that, moving forward, there would be no conversations with the Yukon Medical Association. Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, that is simply not the case. The Hospital Corporation — the independent panel — has done an extraordinary job, through this amazing review, to work with partners — and they will continue to do so. The work doesn't stop; the consultation doesn't stop; the important work doesn't stop.

I will continue on another day, because I believe we are out of time.

Mr. Deputy Chair, 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. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has also 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.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.