



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, November 26, 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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NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
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<b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>	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
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
<b>Hon. John Streicker</b>	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
<b>Hon. Pauline Frost</b>	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
<b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
<b>Hon. Jeanie McLean</b>	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

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<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

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<b>Stacey Hassard</b>	Leader of the Official Opposition Pelly-Nisutlin	<b>Scott Kent</b>	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
<b>Brad Cathers</b>	Lake Laberge	<b>Patti McLeod</b>	Watson Lake
<b>Wade Istchenko</b>	Kluane	<b>Geraldine Van Bibber</b>	Porter Creek North

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

<b>Kate White</b>	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
<b>Liz Hanson</b>	Whitehorse Centre

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, November 26, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I was wondering if we could please welcome to the Legislative Assembly two folks. I think that is Mr. Doug MacLean — it's sometimes difficult to see with the mask — and His Worship Mayor Dan Curtis, who I think is here for the ministerial statement today on the release of Whistle Bend lots — if we could welcome them, please.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of the Northwestel Festival of Trees

**Mr. Gallina:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the annual Northwestel Festival of Trees. For nearly 20 years, the Northwestel Festival of Trees has been raising money for the Yukon Hospital Foundation to make access to equipment, programs, and services more affordable for Yukoners.

In previous years, the festival saw Yukon businesses decorate and display trees in our main administration building for everyone to enjoy and bid on. There was the famous pancake breakfast with Santa, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours BAH Humbug, the gala dinner, and other community events throughout the years.

With COVID-19 restrictions in place and a focus on limiting exposure for an event that is so strongly aimed at the health of Yukoners, this year the Yukon Hospital Foundation and Northwestel have collaborated with Meadow Lakes Golf Club to bring Yukoners a winter wonderland experience.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I get into the details of the special events and how organizers have adapted and created a unique winter wonderland for Yukoners to enjoy this year, I want to take some time to recognize those who have made the events this year so special and those who are with us in spirit, looking down and smiling at how these events have come together.

Paul Flaherty was the former president and CEO of Northwestel. He was with the company for 18 years and long supported the Festival of Trees and the fundraising initiatives that have helped Yukoners for generations. Last year, Paul wasn't with us at the festival to celebrate achievements. He was missed, and he will be again this year.

Mr. Speaker, Travis Adams is another member of this community looking down on us and smiling at what has been created this year. This year, funds raised through sponsorship and individual contributions will support pediatric care at Whitehorse General Hospital through the Travis Adams Memorial Fund. I hold my hands out to the Adams family, who are true community champions, and we continue to see this through the memorial fund that has been set up, but also through the unwavering commitment by Tara Larkin, Travis's sister, to keep his spirit alive and finding ways to bring this community together in times that, to many, seem insurmountable.

Finally, I will recognize with great respect the hard work and dedication by Karen Forward and her team, who always deliver Yukon Hospital Foundation events that engage and inspire our community and raise funds to support the health and well-being of Yukoners.

This year, participants in the Northwestel Festival of Trees will be able to enjoy over 55,000 holiday lights, which have been installed on the grounds of Meadow Lakes Golf Club to provide a unique and magical experience for friends and family. This is an event that requires advance reservations, and I understand that all dates are completely sold out, but I know that organizers are working to add future dates based on the availability of volunteers.

As well, in place of the customary gala events, the festival will instead host a virtual gala on December 12. This event will be broadcast on Northwestel Community TV and online, featuring stories of the past 18 years of the Festival of Trees, entertainers, and other special guests. It's inspiring to see Yukoners come together to ensure that events like this are still able to take place despite the changing and challenging environment we all face.

In closing, I invite Yukoners to join my family in volunteering at the winter wonderland so that additional dates can be added, as well as donating to the Yukon Hospital Foundation in support of pediatric services at the Whitehorse General Hospital. Finally, on Saturday, December 12, take time to visit with friends virtually and look back at past Northwestel Festival of Trees events and Yukon performances. For all of these event details, to donate or to volunteer, find the Yukon Hospital Foundation on Facebook or visit yhf.ca. Let's stay safe, take some time to enjoy these special winter events, and celebrate Yukoners past, Yukoners present, all while caring for the health of those in this territory.

*Applause*

**Mr. Kent:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 2020 Northwestel Festival of Trees.

This event, started in 2003, was initiated to help purchase life-saving medical equipment for the Whitehorse General Hospital. What started with the Close to Our Hearts campaign to purchase heart-monitoring equipment has now seen millions of dollars raised for a CT scanner, an MRI, digital X-rays, simulators, among other important devices to help Yukoners get the best quality health care right here close to home.

The festival concept was developed by former Yukon Hospital Corporation CEO Ron Brown and Vanessa Innes based on a similar event to support the Stanton Territorial Hospital in Yellowknife. They secured anchor sponsors like Northwestel, Golden Hill Ventures, and Alkan Air — major partners that believed in quality health care for Yukoners right from day one.

So many other key sponsors joined throughout the years and remain as foundation supporters to this day. These include Pelly Construction, Marsh Lake Tents & Events, Nuway Crushing, Skookum Asphalt, Save-On-Foods, Northern Vision Development, and Newmont Mining just to name a few. On top of this are the dozens and dozens of tree sponsors who have lent their time and talents to the event over the years.

We should also thank the volunteers who make this incredible event happen. The very first volunteer was former Commissioner and long-time member of this Assembly Doug Phillips, with whom I was honoured to co-chair the first campaign. Hundreds of Yukoners have followed in these footsteps.

Like every other aspect of our lives, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected this year's event. In other years, we would have gathered for the BAH Humbug Cocktail Party tonight in this building, breakfast and cookies with Santa to follow, and next weekend, the festival would have concluded with the sold-out Seniors Soirée and the Grand Ball.

This year, Yukon Hospital Foundation president Karen Forward and her team have put together a winter wonderland walk at Meadow Lakes Golf Club in support of the pediatric unit at Whitehorse General Hospital; 1,500 volunteer hours and 12 miles of lights went into it.

For those who haven't seen it yet, the golf course is magical and is well worth the walk or a drive-by to lift your spirits in these uncertain times when you may need a boost. A special thanks goes out to the Byram family, who owns Meadow Lakes golf course, for making this venue available. Another special thank you to Marsh Lake Tents & Events, Ray Chaykowsky and Helen Smith, for making this a reality.

I know that the walks were sold out early, but the foundation is trying to accommodate more people, so keep an eye on their Facebook page for updates.

You can also sponsor one or more of the 55,000 lights that are available for \$5 each, and don't forget the Home for the Holidays Virtual Gala December 12 at 6:00 p.m. on Northwestel Community TV and Facebook, which will close out the event.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to close my tribute today by recognizing and remembering Travis Adams. At the course, the number 55 is everywhere, and it's no coincidence that 55,000 lights are available. For those who don't know, 55 was the number Travis wore while racing. This past summer, we lost Travis in a tragic accident on the Alaska Highway south of Whitehorse. Travis was a businessman and philanthropist who will leave a legacy in this territory that will never be forgotten. He was also a loving partner, father, brother, and son. When he passed away, the Yukon lost a giant, and so many of us lost a friend.

The Yukon Hospital Foundation was so important to Travis and the Adams family. As mentioned, Nuway Crushing, owned and operated by the Adams family, has long been involved with this festival and so many other charitable events throughout the territory. This year, the Travis Adams pediatric fund has been set up with all proceeds from this event going to this important cause. I can't think of a better way to honour such an incredible guy.

So, please support this year's event however you can, and I know we look forward to gathering again in large numbers when it is safe to do so to help out with this incredible cause.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise in celebration of the giving spirit of Yukoners. This year, like so many other events, the Yukon Hospital Foundation's fundraising events look a little different. So, I thank my colleagues for their thoughts on the history of the Festival of Trees.

I was really lucky to have spent a fair amount of my youth with a lovely human who died in a motor vehicle accident this summer. Travis Adams was a man whose heart was bigger than just about anyone's I know.

Three years ago when I was fundraising for a wheelchair-accessible van for my friend Wayne, Travis and Nuway Crushing were one of the first who stepped up to help. He believed in community and doing his part.

The last time that we spoke this spring, he had called me to ask which organizations in town needed support during the pandemic, because that was the kind of guy that he was — always looking outside himself for where he could help. There have been so many beautiful things done to celebrate his life, but the most luminescent — the one that sparkles the most and with the most wonder — is easily the winter wonderland event that is being hosted at the Meadow Lakes Golf Course.

His friends and family have set up the Travis Adams Memorial Fund, which is so fitting, because it means that his legacy of supporting and giving back to his community will live on. With over 55,000 holiday lights hung outside to provide a pandemic-safe holiday extravaganza, this fundraiser will be supporting a cause close to his heart, and that is pediatric care. If you, like me, had full intentions of getting tickets to visit the winter wonderland at Meadow Lakes Golf Course and were gutted to know that it had sold out, never fear. After initially selling out the event, last night the Yukon Hospital Foundation sent out a call for volunteers to help in one-hour shifts to support the extension of this event. I signed up last night to volunteer. It's easy, and you can sign up too through their Facebook page. Soon you will be able to once again purchase tickets to visit this wondrous holiday celebration and join in the magic of the season.

These thousands of lights will be glowing bright, bringing comfort and joy, just like the man they celebrate.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Radon Action Month**

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Doug MacLean, the president of the Yukon Lung

Association, the president of the Yukon Council on Aging, and a former technical advisor for the Energy Solutions Centre. I acknowledge Mr. MacLean's dedication to Yukoners and his many hours of supporting all Yukoners with your volunteerism, so thank you for that.

I rise to give tribute to Radon Action Month on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Third Party. During November, governments and organizations across Canada urge citizens to test their homes for radon and to take action to protect themselves if their home tests above the Canada guidelines. This month, we honoured National Housing Day — a day to consider housing solutions, including housing adequacy, which is also an objective under the housing action plan for Yukon. As such, I am urging Yukoners to test their homes for radon.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can collect in houses. It is a hazard because it causes lung cancer. It is estimated that non-smokers exposed to high levels of radon over a lifetime have a one-in-20 chance of developing lung cancer. This increases to one in three for a person who smokes and is exposed to high radon levels over a lifetime.

Radon can be present anywhere in Yukon, and we have some of the highest levels of radon in Canada. The only way to know if your home has radon in it is to test for it. This year, supported by the Yukon Lung Association, Yukoners can get a \$10 subsidy for kits bought at Home Hardware. We also provided a limited number of kits to Yukon Housing Corporation offices across the territory, available free of charge. Testing for radon in your home is simple. Small testers sit in your home for at least three months, and then you send the test to a certified lab for analysis.

We urge Yukoners to mitigate, if they can. Get a radon reading in your home if you suspect that you have radon or if it is over the Canada guidelines. To help Yukoners, the Yukon Housing Corporation home repair loans can help eligible homeowners mitigate radon levels in their homes. It is important to reiterate that the only way to know the radon level in your home is to test for it. Radon levels can vary widely from one home to another in the same subdivision or area.

As a government, we take this very seriously because of the impact that radon can have on one's health. We have offered free radon testing and funding toward mitigation costs, if required, to licensed childcare programs. This winter, we will be testing any licensed programs that have recently opened.

All Yukon schools and Yukon Housing Corporation units have been tested for radon, and mitigation has happened if required. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic may have increased the amount of time that Yukoners spend at home, and so we encourage Yukoners to test their homes this winter.

Thank you to all of our partners — in particular, the Yukon Lung Association, which continues to help promote radon awareness and Radon Action Month.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Radon Action Month.

Over the past number of years, radon gas has been a growing consideration for homeowners, home buyers, and business operators throughout the Yukon. Increased testing since 2006 has shown that levels of radon in some homes in the Yukon are among the highest in Canada.

Radon is a radioactive and invisible gas, typically found in basements and crawl spaces of homes. This gas comes from a natural breakdown of uranium in soil and rocks, which in turn decays and releases tiny particles that seep into homes through foundation cracks, pipes, or other openings around the base of the home. Exposure to radon is a main cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and accounts for 16 percent of lung cancer deaths in Canada each year.

If you take a look at the interactive radon map found on the Yukon government's website, you will see the results of radon testing in homes across the Yukon since 2006. Results show community average radon levels, and it's worth noting that, in subdivisions south of Whitehorse — in particular, Canyon Crescent, Whitehorse Copper, Wolf Creek, and Pine Ridge — show higher levels of radon than other parts of Whitehorse and the Yukon. Other areas, while results are lower, are still higher than the average.

Now is a good time to recognize the importance of testing for radon, and it's best to begin testing in the colder months when the doors are closed and there is little exposure to fresh air. Follow testing instructions and ensure that the test kit is set up in a low spot in your home. As the website notes, the percentage of homes tested to date is low. I encourage homeowners, if they have not done so, to invest in a radon testing kit for their homes and take the steps to mitigate if necessary.

*Applause*

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

## **TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS**

**Mr. Istchenko:** I have a letter for tabling regarding the federal escalator tax from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to the federal Minister of Finance.

**Ms. Hanson:** I have for tabling a Government of Yukon human resources directive in relation to COVID-19 working arrangements during COVID-19.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

## **PETITIONS**

### **Petition No. 4 — response**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to respond to Petition No. 4 regarding experiential programming, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 10, 2020. Eighty-two people signed this petition, which called for the Yukon government to bring what are referred to as the "Wood Street

Centre programs”, as well as all program equipment and the office administrator and principal together under one roof for the commencement of the 2021-22 school year in August 2021.

The first consideration in responding to the pandemic and planning for the 2020-21 school year has been the health and safety of all students and staff. We have worked to ensure that schools remain low-risk learning environments for Yukon students based on the recommendations of Yukon’s chief medical officer of health. In order to be able to safely return students and staff into schools during the pandemic, we have had to adapt programming across secondary schools in Whitehorse, including for the specialized programming like the experiential programs.

Keeping everyone safe required the relocation of the grade 8 students from F.H. Collins Secondary School, Yukon’s largest school, and approximately 80 to 90 students per semester who are enrolled in the experiential programs. We committed to monitoring our school programs and making adjustments to ensure that we continue to meet student learning needs while protecting health and safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with many difficult challenges. The pandemic is in the middle of a second wave around the world. There is not yet an approved vaccination, although there is positive advancement in this regard. In order to keep each other safe, we have been told explicitly by Yukon’s chief medical officer of health to remain vigilant. While these experiential programs are impacted, we are very pleased that they have been able to continue this school year despite the challenges that we are facing. We have been and remain committed to monitoring the current situation and to making changes as needed to ensure that the needs of these and all students are met and that our schools remain low-risk learning environments open to students.

As many will know, school districts in jurisdictions across Canada have not been as fortunate as we have been to date here in the Yukon. Here in the territory, we are fortunate to have the majority of our students attending full-time, face-to-face classes. As recently as yesterday, other jurisdictions in Canada have sent all students in grades 7 to 12 home to do full-time online learning. It remains our priority across this pandemic to have as many students attending full-time classes as is safely possible.

We have all had to adjust. I am grateful for how our students, staff, administrators, and many Yukoners have responded. What I can say is that we remain committed to ensuring the success of these important experiential programs. We will work together with the school administration, staff, and students of these programs to ensure that they continue to thrive.

The future of the pandemic is uncertain, and we must ensure that the health and safety of our students and staff is at the forefront of every decision that we make.

When we start to look ahead to the 2021-22 school year, we will continue to base our decisions on the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Please know that we recognize the value of the immersive experiential learning

opportunities that these programs offer our Yukon students and that we are committed to their growth.

**Speaker:** Are there any petitions to be presented?  
Are there any bills to be introduced?  
Notices of motions.

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports *Putting People First*, the comprehensive health review, and the recommendations contained within.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to take immediate action and resolve long-standing boil water advisories that continue to impact our First Nation communities across Canada.

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

THAT this House supports the decision to mandate mask usage in public spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

THAT this House supports the 10-year renewable energy plan.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Land development

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This morning, the mayor of Whitehorse, my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and I announced the start of a lottery that includes 249 lots for new homes. Growing families are wanting larger homes, seniors and empty-nesters are looking to downsize to townhouses or single-storey homes, and other Yukoners are in the market for the first time.

That is why it is so important that we have a good variety of lots. The land lottery will include 133 single-family lots, 91 townhouse lots, one duplex, and 11 multi-family lots across Whistle Bend, as well as seven previously released single-family lots. With this release, construction of lots in phases 3, 4, and 5 is now complete.

The lottery will also include five country residential lots in Hidden Valley. I’m also very excited that the first eight commercial lots around the future town square are being tendered. These lots will provide the foundation for creating Whistle Bend’s commercial, social, and recreational hub.

Mindful of COVID-19 restrictions, Mr. Speaker, a lottery application centre at the Sternwheeler Hotel and Conference Centre — formerly the Westmark — will be open on December 16 and 17, and again from January 4 through

January 8, for people to submit their applications. As well, we will livestream the draw and tender-opening events.

Because of the large number of lots, we will be drawing multi-family and townhouse lots and opening tenders for the commercial lots on January 12. We will be drawing applications on all of the other lots, including the Whistle Bend single-family and duplex lots and the five Hidden Valley country residential lots, on January 13.

Mr. Speaker, the population of Whitehorse is growing steadily. Today, with over 33,000 people living in the city and more coming, the demand for homes continues to increase. Much has changed since 2012 when the first 113 lots in phase 1 were offered and it took awhile for them to be sold. Counting today's lots, over 800 lots have now been developed in Whistle Bend. Mr. Speaker, today nearly 2,000 people call Whistle Bend home.

In the next year or so, the lots being offered in this latest lottery will bring even more families to Whistle Bend as new homes are built. Soon we will be hearing about people living on new streets such as Gypsy Queen Lane and Reliance Street. We know that Yukoners have been anticipating the release of more lots in Whistle Bend as well as country residential lots. With Whitehorse growing so quickly, releasing this variety of lots will help meet current demand and begin to build an inventory for future development.

From start to finish, each phase is about a three-year process. The City of Whitehorse plans and designs the neighbourhood with input provided through public consultations. They then pass it to our Land Development branch that oversees project planning, engineering, assessments, regulatory compliance, and project management. They tender contracts to the private sector, which does the construction above and below ground. We thank the local consultants, construction companies, contractors, utility companies, the City of Whitehorse, and their teams of people who have created the Whistle Bend subdivision so that Whistle Benders could transform it into the thriving active community that it has become.

A special shout-out to the Whistle Bend Residents Association that contributes their neighbourhood perspective to the ongoing process.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to building healthy, vibrant communities and the partnership with the City of Whitehorse is a win-win for Yukoners.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'm pleased to rise today to respond to this ministerial statement.

Now, we're always pleased to see more land become available in Yukon as we know that there's an incredible shortage of lots here in Whitehorse, but also throughout just about every single Yukon community. The lot shortage has hampered our economic growth to date. It has limited the options available to those wanting to move to the Yukon or current Yukoners who would like to advance throughout the housing continuum.

We would appreciate it if the minister could use his response to update Yukoners living outside of Whitehorse on

when they can expect further lot development as well, but we are indeed pleased to see some lots coming forward.

It's great to see more lots coming out, particularly in Whistle Bend. As we all know, that is a growing and diverse community in Whitehorse, and so many young families are choosing Whistle Bend as a place to raise their families. We also know that it's more than just young families, though. It has also become a popular place for families of all ages and generations to make their home. It has become an important hub of economic activity.

As the construction of new houses continues at a rapid pace, which provides jobs and economic opportunities for those in the construction trades and service and supply industries — and during the economic crisis brought about by COVID-19 — the construction industry has surged on and is one of the few private industries that is really thriving.

It's clear that Whistle Bend has been one of the important centres of activity for the construction industry. Unfortunately, as we know, the citizens living in Whistle Bend are dramatically under-represented here in this Legislature. This, of course, is a result of the Liberal government's decision to strike down the advice of an independent Electoral District Boundaries Commission, which their own handpicked representative on that commission referred to as "gerrymandering". As the community continues to grow, this problem will become worse, but the political fortunes of the Liberal Party were more important than fair representation for the citizens of Whistle Bend.

We're also pleased to see the release of a few country residential lots here. There is a huge demand for country residential lots in Whitehorse. While Whistle Bend offers a particular type of lot, we know that it doesn't meet the needs of all Yukoners. There are many Yukoners who would like to see the development of many more types of lots, including more country residential.

I would also like to ask the government for an update on their plans to allow for private land development. When in opposition, the Premier talked about it a lot, and the Liberals promised this in the last election and have consistently brought it up as something that they're working on, yet here we are, entering their final year, and they have nothing to show for all that talk. This appears to be another example of an area where the Liberals make big commitments and do a lot of talking, but deliver very little of actual substance as they appear to be frozen by chronic indecision.

Their inability to deliver on their promises is something that Yukoners have become used to; in fact, it's what the Liberals are best known for. So, if the minister could use some time in his response to update us on this unfulfilled commitment, we would appreciate that as well.

I would like to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by offering our thanks to the officials in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and those in the Department of Community Services for their work in bringing these lots forward.

**Ms. White:** The news that has been highlighted by the minister is indeed good news for folks wishing to build in the

capital and good news for the City of Whitehorse. We have been calling on successive governments to release more lots for a long time, so it won't come as a surprise that we welcome this news. We certainly hope that the government is putting this much effort in releasing more lots in the many communities that are also dealing with housing shortages and don't have enough lots available.

We also have to remember that there is no silver bullet when it comes to tackling our housing crisis. While this measure will help some people, it is important to keep in mind those folks who don't have the financial means to buy a lot and build a new house. What is YG doing to support them?

What about the reality of those living in mobile home parks — folks who, under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* that the minister is responsible for, are considered renters? Mr. Speaker, being told that you have to move your trailer from a park is much different from being told that you need to move apartments. When your rent rises steeply, your choices are very limited. Why hasn't the minister directed his department to close the gaps that affect these folks?

Let's think about folks who live in long-stay hotels, often without kitchen facilities and no security of tenure, because they don't have rights under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. They have no housing security and no place to go with problems that they may be facing that are housing-related.

With the recent announcement of the Canada housing benefit, I asked about mobile-homeowners. Even if they own their homes, they still pay monthly rent. So far, we know of one application that has been denied for this very purpose. We believe that they should have access to this rent support. Do the Liberals agree? When will this issue be addressed?

How does today's statement help the hundreds of folks on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list? The Liberal government isn't suggesting the trickle-down housing plan that was so often cited by the Yukon Party — are they? That plan is flawed through and through. Without building more public housing, people will keep waiting for years before having access to the housing that they need.

Although we appreciate the announcement of new lots in Whistle Bend and Hidden Valley, there is still an awful lot of work to be done across the territory for people who struggle with housing on a daily basis.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to thank both members opposite for their support for this lot release. I would be happy to come back with a legislative return or maybe even another ministerial statement about all the work that's happening across all of our communities with respect to land development. I think it's an excellent point.

I know that we have been partnering with many First Nations in land development. We have had one ministerial statement on that already. In Haines Junction, we have had a lot of work that is happening with our municipalities, so there is a lot of work across all of our communities. I am happy to bring that information back.

With respect to private land development, we put out a call for an expression of interest recently on the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and

Rogers Street block that will focus on private land development. I understand that there has been quite a bit of interest in it. I would be happy to bring back a ministerial statement on that as well, or maybe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — one of us, anyway, would be happy to update this House on that activity.

I agree with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the issue of housing is a spectrum and that we need to be working on all fronts. That is why the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation has been doing so much work on building more affordable and accessible homes, and we continue to do the work to look at the Canada housing benefit with respect to mobile homes.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that what we have noted in the past is that, when there is a slowdown in lot development, that is when some of the problems hit — for example, in 2008. For example, if you don't keep lot development moving, what happens is that lot prices go up significantly and it hurts the whole spectrum of housing. So, what I will note is that, over the past three years, we have now released 500 lots.

When I look backwards in time, in the final three years of the previous government, they released 150 lots. When I look at how much we are investing now — \$25 million this year and just over \$19 million last year — that compares to \$14.5 million over the final three years of the previous government. We are tripling our investment in lot development because it is needed, and we are very happy to have this. I believe that it is the largest release that has ever happened, but I just call it "lots of lots".

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

**Mr. Hassard:** So, yesterday in the BC Health minister's daily briefing, the BC government indicated that British Columbia would begin receiving a COVID vaccine as early as January. Mr. Speaker, that is only five weeks away.

So, can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if Yukoners will have access to the COVID-19 vaccine in January as well?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** This will be part of our big conversation this afternoon with all premiers, the Prime Minister of Canada, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada. Again, all jurisdictions are going to have a conversation about equal distribution, and we will make sure that Yukoners know exactly — when we get the details of this distribution plan, we will make that readily available to Yukoners.

What's important to know is that the Department of Health and Social Services has already identified logistical issues and is making sure that we are prepared for the inevitability. Again, most premiers are pushing for a national strategy when it comes to distribution. Again, what we are pushing for as well is making sure that our essential workers — the people who are on the front lines providing services to Yukoners — are at the front of the line with people who have compromised immune systems and our elderly populations.



Another benefit of living in the north is that — it has been pretty much unanimous across Canada — rural and remote communities also need to be identified in those lists as well. It's great to hear announcements happening right across Canada and right across the world about the pandemic. We will keep an even keel on our announcements here in Yukon and make sure that we provide the most up-to-date information for Yukoners as that becomes available.

Again, we are having a conversation this afternoon with all premiers and with the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Hassard:** Now, the Premier said that he had details yesterday, so we were hoping for something more today.

With respect to the COVID-19 vaccine, the Government of Canada's website states — and I quote: "Provinces and territories are responsible for buying the vaccines that they use in their programs."

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us how many doses of the vaccine the Yukon will be purchasing?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I can say is that, as we continue to manage this pandemic, our ability to access supports from a collaboration of governments — including intergovernmental collaboration just internally with our departments but also with First Nation governments, municipalities, and also the federal government — is key, and also support from Ottawa is absolutely essential, thus the crux of the reason for meeting this afternoon.

This applies to the vaccine as well, Mr. Speaker — as the members opposite talk randomly off-mic. Yukoners need to know that the delivery of the vaccine, again, is the final piece of what we need before we can fully release restrictions. We have been having excellent conversations about what recovery will look like once the vaccine starts getting into distribution. I will absolutely get the most up-to-date information for Yukoners as it become available, but what Yukoners need to know right now — past the spin — is that this government is working tirelessly to make sure that the vaccines are going to be distributed in Yukon and right across this country equally — making sure that we identify the individuals who need it the most to make sure that we reduce that curve as a nation — and we will do that in partnership with British Columbia and in partnership with all other jurisdictions in Canada.

**Mr. Hassard:** I would remind the Premier that BC announced this yesterday, so we would really hope that the Yukon would be on top of this. Dr. Supriya Sharma from Health Canada told national media this week that it is ultimately up to the provinces and territories to make the decision on purchasing the vaccine and how and when to distribute it. Dr. Howard Njoo from the Public Health Agency of Canada stated the same thing again this morning. It is the territorial government's responsibility, so can the minister tell us when Yukoners will have access to the vaccine?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We certainly take health responsibilities as a priority. That is not something that will diminish in any way. Perhaps that is the direction that the Official Opposition wants us to go. We are looking to ensure that Yukoners are well-supported through this pandemic and we have since day one.

The federal government has established weekly meetings with federal and provincial ministers across the country. We meet on a weekly basis to have discussions around the potential for vaccines, around the distribution, and around equal distribution. We know that we have a major pandemic and excessive COVID cases in Nunavut. We know that the north is hardest hit in terms of isolation. There are quite a number of concerns. We certainly want to remain committed and vigilant in terms of what we do when we receive the vaccines and respond to the needs and concerns of Yukoners.

Once the criteria for Yukon — in terms of distribution — are finalized under the direction of the chief medical officer of health — with the pressures that we are seeing right now, we want to ensure that we have supports most readily available for our essential workers, our young people, and our elderly folks and to ensure that Yukon's most vulnerable receive the supports as they become available.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 exposure notifications in school**

**Mr. Kent:** The government stated that, in the event that someone tests positive for COVID-19 in one of our schools, they will not notify everyone who attends that school, including the staff.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us what the rationale was for this decision?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I would like to remind the member opposite about is that we are, as indicated, working very closely with the chief medical officer of health.

This government has been working very hard to keep Yukoners safe. The schools are no different. We work very closely with the chief medical officer of health, considering all aspects around health care, health responsibilities, and determining how information is shared.

Since March, our government has been working extremely hard with our chief medical officer to keep Yukoners safe, to keep our Yukon children safe. The Yukon Party spent its time trying to discredit the chief medical officer of health through letters to the editor. They've gone to putting in place false information. We want to assure Yukoners that we, on this side of the House — through the measures that we have in place, that Yukoners are assured that we will provide essential services and supports to all Yukoners as we're informed of situations that arise in any circumstance. They should be assured that, on this side of the House, we will ensure that all our students are well-supported.

**Mr. Kent:** So, we understand that this is a recommendation of the chief medical officer of health, but we also would have hoped that either the minister or someone in her Cabinet, would have asked the chief medical officer of health why that decision was made.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services or perhaps the Minister of Education tell us if the government consulted with school councils or the Yukon Teachers' Association before making the decision to not notify the entire community if there is a positive case found in one of our schools? If they did, when was that consultation done?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Certainly, we consult always with the chief medical officer of health. The Yukon Communicable Disease Centre will contact anyone at risk and protection of the confidentiality of students and staff is a critical priority for us here. With respect to notifications — public exposures are issued only when the Yukon Communicable Disease Centre is not able to fully identify all individuals who have been exposed to a positive case.

The centre has done excellent work through contact tracing throughout the pandemic and we remain in a strong position to keep Yukoners informed and safe and that is no different in our schools. We will work with the Department of Education — and we have been — to ensure that the students are well-supported and kept safe throughout the pandemic.

**Mr. Kent:** So, as I mentioned, we understand that this was a recommendation of the chief medical officer of health and, as I mentioned yesterday during Question Period, a number of other jurisdictions throughout our country make public the schools that have positive cases or where there is possible exposure.

So, again, I will ask this question: Did no one — including the minister in the Liberal Cabinet — ask the chief medical officer of health why this recommendation was made to not notify the entire school community when there is a case?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that what we need to remember here — and certainly, I know that Yukoners remember it — is that these types of decisions are based on the health and safety of students. They are not policy decisions. They are always measured against what is in the best interests of keeping our students safe.

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at a school, we will at all times follow the advice and the direction of the chief medical officer of health and the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit. We must remember — as has happened here in the territory — it is quite similar to a small community. It is a risk assessment. If there is a risk to the community, then communication will be made to the broadest possible group. If it is not a risk to the community, then individuals will be contact-traced, and the individuals will be informed.

The chief medical officer of health and the YCDC will determine how to conduct the contact tracing and communicate about any cases in a school community, and it will recommend the specific actions to be taken to respond to that situation.

#### **Question re: Canada-Yukon housing benefit**

**Ms. White:** Last week, I asked the minister about many Yukon tenants who were left behind by the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. Mobile-homeowners, who rent the land their home sits on, have been excluded from the program, even though the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* applies to them. The reality of each mobile-homeowner varies quite a bit. Some might have significant loans to pay toward ownership of their home and others may own their homes outright, but all of them have paid rent fees that can be over \$500 a month to pay. Yet these tenants — because that is what they are under Yukon's laws — can't get support from this government.

Why have mobile-homeowners been systemically excluded from the Canada-Yukon housing benefit?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The Yukon Housing Corporation is very pleased with this recent launch. The new Canada-Yukon housing benefit is in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It is a federal program.

The program will contribute to the COVID-19 recovery process by moving Yukoners out of housing need and providing housing subsidies directly to individuals in market rental housing.

The Canada housing benefit is a funding initiative to cover us over the next eight years under the national housing strategy. So, the CMHC/Yukon Housing Corporation's bilateral agreement and subsidy program will help Yukoners to recover from the effects of COVID-19 and that's the emphasis as it has been laid out.

We work collaboratively with CMHC to provide affordability supports to private market rental housing with this new program. Currently, pad rental for mobile homes is not covered by the CMHC housing benefit, as they represent a combination of homeowners and rental agreements. Mobile homes that are rented out as private market rentals are eligible. So next fall, after the first year of the program, we will certainly look at assessing. I look forward to further questions.

**Ms. White:** Sadly, that's just another example of this government leaving mobile-homeowners out in the cold.

So, people who stay in hotels — either over the winter months or year-round — don't qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. Those who receive social assistance often don't get enough to pay their hotel room costs and have to dig into their food budget to cover part of their rent. Those who don't receive social assistance and live in hotels have to pay up to \$1,600 a month and they still don't even have access to a kitchen. The one thing that they both have in common is that they can't access the Canada-Yukon housing benefit.

So, why has the minister excluded some of the most precariously housed tenants from this program?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** So, the question around modular homes and mobile homes — I have responded to support for housing for Yukoners. The objective of this federal program is to provide supports to the individuals who are finding challenges. Now, I certainly want to say that, if a landlord or a tenant has a specific question or concern regarding mobile homes or rental units, we encourage them to contact the residential tenancies office and contact Yukon Housing. We will work with the tenant if there are staff members.

Mr. Speaker, I noted earlier in the Legislative Assembly that we will continue to work with all members of our society who are challenged and we will continue to support them to the best of our ability. Certainly, I want to encourage individuals who are challenged to come forward and work with us.

If there are opportunities within the existing parameters of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's criteria, we will do just that. We do have some other measures and other funding envelopes available to us through the Housing Corporation, so we will make efforts to support Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** So, now that's two classes of tenants that the Yukon Liberal government won't support — mobile-homeowners and those in long-stay hotels. Many of these hotels offer low-quality housing and tenants don't even have access to a kitchen to prepare meals. Tenants have no protection under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and they don't qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit because — according to the minister — that is the federal government. Yet this government is paying tens of thousands of dollars each and every month — hundreds of thousands of dollars every year — to these hotel owners to house social assistance clients in sub-par conditions. This has been going on for years. The government has refused to demand any standards of quality from the hotel owners.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government keep paying hundreds of thousands of dollars every year for sub-par housing without affording any protection to the tenants of long-stay hotels?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I note that the Member for Whitehorse Centre had indicated that this was a good question. Part of the question indicated that this has been long in existence — years, in fact.

We are fixing it. We have put over 600 units on the market. We have mobilized our resources. We have changed how we support Yukoners. We just made an announcement just recently to support Yukoners. I am very pleased with that.

We have some communities — like Watson Lake — that have never been supported. In fact, we have people who have been displaced there for years. We are now in the community working with the First Nations, the municipality, the Housing Corporation, and Health and Social Services to address those very issues — the systemic barriers that have been there for years — and we will continue to do that in good faith with our partners to address where we see the most critical need. That is what we will do. We just announced 50 units with the Challenge Disability Resource Group. We will continue to do our best effort to meet the needs of Yukoners.

I am very proud of the work of the Yukon Housing Corporation and of our partners in the communities.

### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic — public servants working from home**

**Ms. Hanson:** Last month, this Assembly was told that 15 percent of Yukon government public servants were working from home and that they would continue to work from home for the time being. The minister stated — and I quote: “The shift to many employees working from home is an important step to support increased physical distancing and to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

Of course, back in October, there were fewer cases of COVID in the Yukon and certainly fewer active cases than right now. Despite this fact, we've seen no push from the government encouraging Yukon public servants who are able to do so to work from home.

Why isn't this government promoting working from home to all employees able to do so, given the higher cases of COVID-19 in Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite for the question. I can assure the member opposite that the shift to working from home is an important measure to support physical distancing and to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

As the member opposite noted, when the pandemic first hit our territory in March, we immediately took action and had almost 50 percent of the Yukon public service working from home. Since then — and in line with the phases of the Yukon's broader reopening plan — the Yukon government employees have been gradually returning to the workplace based on operational requirements and to make sure that the health and safety requirements are met. The Public Service Commission supports a consistent approach to gradually return to the workplace.

Right now, we've seen another outbreak in the territory. We have a lot more cases. We also, though, have a lot more measures in place to make sure that our employees within the civil service are working safely. We've taken concrete steps to make sure that our public servants are safe in the workplace now. We're monitoring the situation on a daily basis. As events happen in the territory, we have to be flexible and responsible to the needs and the safety and health of our employees and we will certainly do that.

**Ms. Hanson:** It's good to see the minister recycle his same quote from October. Again, in October, he stated that government employees working from home were doing so effectively. We've heard the same and we agree. By and large, working from home has proven to be a success, both in the Yukon and globally. Folks are embracing their newfound work life balance, their lack of commute, and their increased productivity. These are all factors that are contained in the Yukon government's working-from-home directive.

Given the success of working from home, what is this minister doing to encourage more employees to work from home? What is he doing to enable them to do so in the future?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I want to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for acknowledging the great work that we are doing to make sure that our employees can be flexible and work from home when the need arises.

This pandemic is a roller coaster for everybody. It hit our territory in March; we responded very quickly to safeguard — to lessen the interactions of people within our civil service by getting people home. Within a week or two weeks, we got all the server requirements needed to support 5,000 employees working on a central service. It was an incredible effort on the part of Highways and Public Works staff to make sure that staff had the tools to work from home.

We also deployed Skype for business across the government, which is a great tool for employers, supervisors, and employees to maintain their connections during this pandemic. We also started to take a look at our workplaces and made sure that they were bolstered and supported so that they slowed the spread of COVID-19 through our workplaces. Those measures are still in place. We are monitoring on a daily and weekly basis the situation as far as the pandemic goes, and if it requires us to take further action and get more of our

employees to work from home, those supports are in place to do so very quickly.

**Ms. Hanson:** I do encourage the minister — he is reluctant to read his own government department directives; I would encourage him to read this one. The government directive that was issued in June talked about working-from-home provisions. This directive mandates the creation of a long-term work-from-home policy. The COVID-19 pandemic has lasted longer than many expected. It has worsened in the last little while. It is still unclear how much longer this new normal will last. Given this uncertainty, it would be best to prepare for all possibilities.

As mentioned, the government has issued a comprehensive directive on working from home. It spells out the benefits to both the employers and the employees.

Can the minister confirm that all deputy ministers have, as required under that directive, communicated the contents of the working-from-home directive widely within their departments, and can the minister provide this House with an update, as required by that directive, on the number of public servants currently working from home and the pending applications to do so?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can assure the member opposite — this is an important issue, Mr. Speaker, and it is one near and dear to my heart. When the pandemic hit, we worked very, very quickly to get the supports and the tools that the civil service needed to work from home. We did it very, very quickly and very successfully, because not only did we get half of our workforce home to safety during the opening phases of this pandemic, but we also managed to get some nation-leading programs into the hands of Yukoners to support them during this pandemic.

We did that with brand new technology, brand new supervisor/worker relationships — people distributed throughout the whole territory. The story of this civil service in Yukon dealing with this pandemic and serving the people of the territory is an extraordinary one, Mr. Speaker — one that every single civil servant and citizen of this territory should celebrate and talk about. It was extraordinary, and we are going to support that going forward. We are going to make sure that our employees are safe through this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite — because I think that there's an opportunity here — that, with the work-from-home provisions that we pioneered through this pandemic, it will put the government in good stead for work-from-home provisions into the future.

#### **Question re: Canada Border Services Agency investigation**

**Mr. Cathers:** On March 12, 2019, the RCMP and Canada Border Services Agency showed up at the offices of the Department of Economic Development with a warrant for files and electronics.

This morning, the Canada Border Services Agency announced the conclusion of that investigation and that a Canada-wide arrest warrant has been issued for a former Government of Yukon employee.

Can the Minister of Economic Development provide an update on this?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, given that this is now before the courts, there is actually little I can say. We understand that the former Yukon government employee has been charged with offences under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and the *Criminal Code*.

We can confirm that the individual is no longer an employee of the Government of Yukon. According to the news release from the Canada Border Services Agency, the charges are for alleged violations committed between July 2013 and September 2016. This, of course, is before my time within this department. I would urge the Member for Lake Laberge to reach out to his colleagues. It was likely the House Leader who would have been there or potentially the new leader of the party; I'm not sure what they know. If they do, they probably should ensure that Yukoners are made aware of that. Other than that — really, no other comments.

Again, this is something that occurred between 2013 and 2016.

#### **Question re: Moose management**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Over the winter, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board has been considering a package of changes to Yukon's hunting regulations that were proposed by the Liberal government.

Three of the 14 regulation changes relate to new ways to limit moose hunting. They are quite controversial, so the board recommended an additional period of public consultation. The board submitted its final recommendations on those three proposals to the Minister of Environment in June 2020. Under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, the minister has a fixed amount of time to respond to these recommendations, and that time has elapsed.

Why has the minister not responded to these recommendations yet?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The member opposite is likely aware, as they have been asking quite a few questions around COVID-19 and the pressures that we are seeing — I think that the industry and Yukoners, of course, are also fully submersed in COVID and COVID measures. We certainly want to recognize that the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Yukon RRCs, and all Yukoners have participated in the consultation efforts around moose management, moose sustainability, and fish and wildlife act reviews. That process is derived from the chapter 16 agreement.

I am really pleased to see that the member opposite is referring to the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the parameters there, which sets the tone and direction that we go in. It is important that our management approach respects that process. It certainly affects the direction that we go in. In the parameters of the agreement, it defines that we must respond certainly within the time frame, as the member opposite has noted. The Fish and Wildlife Management Board has agreed to an extension, given that we are in the middle of a pandemic. The extra time was required to do the good work that is necessary.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The three controversial changes that this minister and the Liberals have proposed represent a significant departure from the current wildlife management system that the Yukon has used for decades. In the words of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, these changes are — and I quote: “... quite substantial and deviated far from the management regimes that have been in place to date.”

The proposals are also opposed by Yukon hunters. In an interview this year, the Yukon Fish and Game Association said — and I quote: “We have some real concerns on how the recommendations were constructed, how they’ve been presented to us and what the implications are for licenced hunters in Yukon going forward.”

Rather than forcing these changes through, will the minister commit to allowing for more consultation on these controversial changes to Yukon’s wildlife management regime?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The consultation for the fish and wildlife management amendments have concluded. The extension was granted, as recommended by the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, for the moose management requirements, so that has concluded. We have worked collaboratively with the management board on the proposals to change hunting, trapping, and fishing regulations. The public review period for the proposed legislative changes was held and has since concluded.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It’s clear from what the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Yukon Fish and Game Association have said that the controversial changes that this minister and the Liberals are proposing to limit moose hunting in the Yukon represents a massive change, Mr. Speaker.

One aspect of these broad changes that we, particularly, are very worried about — and it’s worrisome to Yukon hunters — is that they significantly increase the power to the minister. Under the proposal, the minister could have the authority to implement significant changes to the way moose hunting is regulated. Under the Liberals’ — this minister’s — proposal, the minister could implement antler configuration rules or limit ORV use in certain areas, all with just a stroke of a pen and all without consultation.

Can the minister tell us why she thinks bypassing the current Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board regulation change process and granting herself these sweeping new powers will improve wildlife management in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would say to Yukoners that the objective of moose management, the objective of fish and wildlife management, and the intent of the review process is to look at the sustainability of pressure areas. The obligation that we have as a government — I’m confident that the member opposite is fully aware, as a former Minister of Environment, that decisions have to be made when we’re seeing drastic declines in a specific area. That work is done in collaboration with our partners.

Our partners in this instance is the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — I want to just acknowledge that the efforts in terms of the First Nation harvest and the sustainability levels in particular areas have been considered through the

regional RRCs in specific areas, and the approaches that we are taking in terms of harvest management are to remain within the sustainable limit, and that is done with the evidence and the signs that have been collected historically. I’m pleased to let Yukoners know that their input is being considered. Right now, the decision has not yet been made. We are still in the final stages of discussions with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

I’m happy to respond in the future, once that is concluded.

**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. 12: *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)* — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would first like to take a moment to thank the Members of the Assembly for their contributions to the debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*. Before the Assembly votes today, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the amendments and the context behind this bill.

As mentioned in my earlier remarks, the tabled amendments are critical to modernizing Yukon’s legislation and to align Yukon with best practices nationally and internationally. The *Wills Act* has not been amended since it was first passed in 1954, when Yukon life and families were much different.

During engagement conducted in November 2019 and December 2019, feedback was received on what the amendments should achieve. The amendments to the *Wills Act* have been designed to reflect what we heard from respondents. With these amendments, the Government of Yukon is moving forward on our promise to Yukoners to provide modernized legislation that reflects the current needs of society. Updating the act with the proposed amendments will ensure that Yukon’s legislation is in line with current legal and social norms and remains consistent with family property and estate laws here in the territory.

As Members of the Assembly will recall, the tabled amendments are designed to: clarify technical requirements for wills; enable the creation of a wills registry in the future; to update provisions regarding marriage; include new provisions for divorce and common-law relationships; and enable the validity of Yukon wills in other countries and vice versa.

I would like to note that none of the requirements being introduced will apply to wills created before the amendments came into force. Wills that pre-date these amendments will not be impacted by these changes.

The Government of Yukon views the bill before us today as a necessary step toward ensuring that Yukon legislation is responsive to the needs of our diverse territory. I am personally pleased to provide legislation that fulfills my obligation to protect all Yukoners in an inclusive manner. These amendments provide safeguards against fraud and coercion, while ensuring that the testator's intentions are upheld.

In addition, the rights of married couples in estate legislation have also been extended to include Yukon common-law partnerships. The proposed amendments mirror legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions as well as ratify the international will convention. They represent an important step toward modernizing Yukon laws.

I urge the members of this Assembly to support the passing of the *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)* to ensure that we provide modern, responsive legislation that fully represents the Yukon's population.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and thank the officials with the Department of Justice — in particular, our legislative counsel team — for their excellent work and dedication to improving our Yukon laws and modernizing them for all Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** Since I have already spoken to this bill at second reading and in Committee of the Whole, I will not add much else at this point in time.

While we might have adjusted some of the details in the legislation, generally speaking, we're supportive of the modernization occurring, particularly where it reflects being more in line with the national standard across the country. I will wrap up my remarks and we will support the legislation.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for her summarization of the amendments to the *Wills Act*. I also thank her for her willingness to engage in the detailed walk-through of these amendments to this really important piece of legislation. As she said, it's important for us all to have wills and it's also important for us to be able to understand what the importance of them is and how they can be made. So, this *Wills Act* will do that for all of us as Yukon citizens. We support the legislation as brought forward — the amendments as brought forward. I thank the minister for that.

**Speaker:** Is there any further debate on third reading of Bill No. 12?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate.  
Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I just want to take the opportunity to thank the members opposite, who I understand will be supportive of the changes — the modernization of this important piece of legislation. I thank them for their questions — in particular, the details during the debate in Committee of

the Whole — because I think that's exactly the kind of questions that Yukoners have about this — and the opportunity to make that public through the debate is always a good one. I'm happy to have answered those questions and I'm happy for this bill to come to the floor for the vote on third reading.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** 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. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

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

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 12 has passed this House.

**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

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

#### Motion re appearance of witnesses

#### Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 26, 2020, Maggie Matear, Interim President of Yukon University, and David Morrison, Chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 26, 2020, Maggie Matear, Interim President of Yukon University, and David Morrison, Chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

*Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 agreed to*

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued**

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

**Women's Directorate**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Chair, I would like to start by welcoming Valerie Royle, deputy minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, here today to assist in this debate. I know that we don't have a lot of time. I do have opening comments and I know that we plan to call the department back if we don't get to all the questions. So, I just wanted to make that comment first.

Today, I am really pleased to present the supplementary budget of the Women's Directorate for 2020-21. This budget reflects the many initiatives that the Women's Directorate undertakes with our partners in order to advance gender equality throughout the territory. This government is committed to furthering the equality of all citizens and ensuring that we all have the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. This department is small but mighty in the work that they do.

I will begin with budget line items that were impacted by or came about due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and then we will move on to other key projects.

We already know that there is an undeniable gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. One clear implication is that physical distancing and self-isolation measures mean that

individuals may be required to stay in close quarters with someone who may be violent. As part of this response, the Women's Directorate accessed \$25,000 in funding from the Government of Canada to improve the availability of safe taxi transportation in Whitehorse and support other COVID-related emergency needs.

One of the important mandate items that we have been focused on in our commitment to LGBTQ2S+ inclusion — we have been working with and have heard from the LGBTQ2S+ communities as we take steps to become a more inclusive territory. Several legislative changes have already taken place, including amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act* in the spring of 2017; the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* in the spring of 2018; and the *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)* in the fall of 2018. In the spring of 2020, we tabled a bill to ban practising conversion therapy on youth and adults with a guardian or substitute decision-maker. Due to the pandemic starting during that session, we were unable to complete that bill, so we brought this important bill back during this session and received assent on November 9. It is now law in Yukon.

I am proud that our government is committed to inclusiveness, equality, and respect for diversity of all Yukoners. This is not just an issue for the Women's Directorate but part of our one-government approach to equality. A key aspect of this approach is our LGBTQ2S+ action plan for Government of Yukon. The action plan will be based on engagement with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ communities. We will focus on non-discrimination and improved inclusivity, both within Government of Yukon services and also for the Government of Yukon as an employer. Yukoners told us that there is a need for education and training in many sectors, including health and education. We also saw that there is a need for increased funding for community groups, including an LGBTQ2S+ resource and community centre. I'm really proud of the work that Queer Yukon is leading now to talk to the LGBTQ2S+ community about a pride centre.

Yukoners made it clear that they are ready for action and ready to work together to create more inclusive communities. As we move toward finalizing the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, we will continue to work closely with the LGBTQ2S+ communities to ensure that this work is done right.

Moving on, I want to highlight the work that has gone into the implementation of the sexualized assault response team. The Yukon has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in the country. The majority of the assaults are not reported. Several populations experience disproportionately high rates of sexualized violence, including women and girls between the ages of 15 and 25 years old, indigenous people, and LGBTQ2S+ folks.

The Minister of Justice, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and I — and several non-governmental agencies — have been working to improve services for victims of violence and sexualized assault in Yukon as another key commitment. After several years of dedicated work, we have implemented Yukon's sexualized assault response team, known as SART, in Whitehorse. Learning from the good work of other

jurisdictions, we have devoted resources to SART. The team provides coordinated victim-centred, low-barrier services to victims of sexualized assault. New services within SART include a 24/7 support line for victims to call, a website, weekend SART support workers, on call specially trained medical care providers, specially trained RCMP officers, and priority access to mental wellness care.

SART also builds collaboration between existing services, including Crown witness coordinators, Victim Services, and other supports within the territory. As a result of SART initiatives, victims of sexualized violence in Whitehorse and rural communities now have priority access to mental wellness care through our new mental wellness and substance use hubs. Better coordination of existing medical and victim services is being supported by two specialized staff — a victim support coordinator and a clinical coordinator. They are working in partnership to ensure that there is continuity of care and wraparound services for victims of sexualized assault.

We are developing an inter-agency protocol, recognizing that moving to a victim-centred approach takes work. The member agencies of SART are committed to providing a coordinated and collaborative response for all those victimized by sexualized violence and to support them along whichever path they choose. This is system change — where collaboration is at the centre.

The vast majority of the development and implementation work was funded from within existing departmental budgets. As SART is implemented and strengthened in Whitehorse, we will begin the work with communities to create a model that works for them, starting with Dawson City and Watson Lake, where medical supports are currently available.

As we move to the next phase, we will start our conversations with First Nation governments in each community and build from their expertise.

Another key priority is increasing government's efforts to reduce violence against women. It has been ensuring that Yukon plays a leadership role in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Our government has been working on the issue for several years through a variety of collaborative efforts with First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, RCMP, and the communities. The Yukon advisory committee guided our involvement before and during the national inquiry where the grassroots indigenous women's organizations, elders, and government representatives worked together to find ways to support Yukon families and to move forward together.

As we all know, the national inquiry's final report into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was released on June 3, 2019, leaving our country with 231 ambitious and impactful calls for justice. The Government of Yukon has worked closely with First Nations, Yukon indigenous women's groups, and family representatives to finalize — changing the story to upholding dignity and justice, Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. The strategy outlines four main pathways to guide our action and response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: strengthening connections and

supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability.

The strategy will outline the actions needed, but we recognize that there are years of work ahead to make them happen. We know that complex problems demand complex solutions and that we must work together to accomplish the change needed. We know that all levels of government have to be actively involved and contribute to this strategy. We also believe in doing this work in a decolonizing way, in a way that holds up and recognizes the families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and that brings all key stakeholders to the table. A whole-of-Yukon strategy means that we know that this work won't be successful without adequate time and careful consideration of which recommendations best reflect local needs and priorities.

To support this approach, we have an increase of \$90,000 to support family gatherings in order to bring family members together to review the strategy and capture their voices. The gathering was originally scheduled for March 2020, but it was cancelled due to COVID-19 and was not budgeted for in the 2020-21 budget. When the opportunity to reschedule was possible, the CMOH guidelines required that we host two smaller gatherings instead of one large one, which increased the costs associated with this work.

I'll move on now to the NGOs. For over 40 years, Yukon indigenous and women's organizations have been instrumental in providing solutions, including direct service delivery, advocacy, and grassroots leadership in the areas of wellness, healing, culture, cultural revitalization, and support to family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We rely on their expertise, experience, and connection with families and community members to help us build stronger programs and offer services that governments cannot provide.

This year, the Women's Directorate is expanding support to two women's organizations that would be experiencing a shortfall in funding for their programs due to budget constraints in other departments. The Women's Directorate will be providing an additional \$30,000 in funding for the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre to support A Safe Place. The Women's Directorate will also be providing an additional \$34,500 in funding for the Whitehorse affordable family housing program, which includes a small increase in funding to enable two staff to be on-site, following best practices for safety. Providing support services for vulnerable populations has always been important, but during the pandemic, they have proved to be even more critical.

Finally, there will be \$14,000 to carry forward funding for one indigenous women's organization from the 2019-20 to the 2020-21 budget. The funding is fully recoverable from Government of Canada, the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada, and was approved by them for carrying forward.

These are the supplementary budget details that we would like to approve today. With that, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you very much for listening to my opening comments.



**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank Ms. Royle for joining us in the Chamber today to help out with these questions that we have.

On April 3, the Yukon government announced that they were providing vulnerable women with cellphones that they could use to access calling and texting data in order to safely access supports. Now, service was cut off on May 29 after the government experienced higher-than-anticipated data usage which resulted in some significant fees.

Did the department place any restrictions on the data usage when these cellphones were provided to the individuals?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, one of the unintended impacts of COVID-19 on marginalized populations was limits to safe phones and Internet access. In March, we worked quickly with Northwestel to purchase 225 cellphones and 325 voice, text, and Internet packages based on Yukon government's rate with Bell Mobility. Northwestel also donated an additional 100 phones and all 325 SIM cards needed.

These were distributed to 325 women in need by the Yukon Status of Women Council and their community partners during the month of April. The total approximate cost of the cellphone program — excluding the purchase of the phones — was \$115,000, and this is pending the final invoice. So that's still something we're working out the details on, but we anticipate that it will be in this range.

This program showed us that the need was greater than anticipated. When Yukon government was notified on May 26 that 4,865 gigabytes of data had been used, with a total cost of \$58,756, we made the difficult decision to suspend the phone lines as of May 29. I think the — sorry, just one moment, Mr. Chair.

The program included three gigabytes of shared data per phone. At the time — and this is one of the limitations of the program — we could not place hard restrictions on data per phone due to the use of YG's corporate account, which enabled us to get unlimited voice, unlimited text, and three gigabytes of shared data for \$40 per month per phone. Again, as I have said, we have worked with our partners. We worked with the Yukon Status of Women Council and the phones were distributed by them. The parameters were set out by them based on our agreement. The responsibility of speaking directly and working directly with those who were in need of these phones was the responsibility of the Yukon Status of Women Council. When we found that the data had gone over significantly, we had to act quickly. We knew that we only had a limited amount of resources in this budget.

Maybe I will just wait to see if there are more questions around this particular issue before I go on.

**Ms. McLeod:** My question was about whether or not there were any restrictions on the data usage that were provided to the individuals. The minister indicated that the restrictions on data usage, of course, came about as a result of the data plan that government was using for this purpose, so that's understandable.

I guess that part of that question would be whether or not the people who took the phones were advised of the limitations. The minister may correct me, but I thought she said that this

was part of what was expected from the Yukon Status of Women Council — to advise folks about what their limitations were in this program. The minister also said that if there was an ability — because I would have asked — to cap the limit and have service cut off when the data has been reached or receive a warning — I know that I get a warning on my phone. It seems that the minister indicated that, no, this plan doesn't have that capability.

So, were the individuals who have the phones able to track their data usage on their phones to know whether they were reaching their limits? I know that on my personal plan, I can, of course, go do that, but I don't know if that would be the case with a government-wide plan, whether or not an individual is able to go in and see where they are at with their usage for the time period — so, if the minister can talk a bit about that.

Of the 325 women who were provided with phones, how were those women in need identified?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that some of the questions that have arisen from that summary of what I have just gone over — in terms of the limitations of the data — again, because it was a corporate type of account, the individuals would not have been able to see the overall data usage, but warnings were given throughout. So, I know that the Yukon Status of Women Council spoke to each of the individuals who received the phones and explained that there had to be limited data usage on this — that this was for emergency purposes. The Status of Women Council also had them sign a form around the agreement with this program. Again, this was a quick response.

One of the other things that I want to say is that we were, I think, the first in Canada to provide this kind of service. It was raised with us through the Yukon Status of Women Council that this was a concern. It was also an immediate concern of mine — just knowing the work that I have done in my previous work, that this was going to cause a lot of vulnerability for a lot of people and cause a great deal of anxiety. If there was one thing — of many things — that I lost sleep over during COVID-19, the vulnerability of women and children was probably the one that I lost the most sleep over, because we knew what isolation would cause for women who were experiencing gender-based violence, particularly in their own home.

I'm not sure if I answered everything. I do want to say though, as well, that we did receive additional COVID-related funding. That was accessed through the Government of Canada, and \$23,000 was put toward the cost of the cellphone program. So, we were able to offset the cost of this to YG and regulate normal programs. I know that the folks across the way know our budgets are really small and that we stretch them as far as we possibly can.

The other great news that has come out of this is that the Yukon Status of Women Council has been able to access funding through the women and gender equality fund to continue this program. All of the devices that were given out — the 325 pieces of equipment that were given out through this program became the property of the folks who obtained them and the program has continued through our partners. I think that the investment that we made — I think sincerely — this outcome of having to have the phones disabled for a few days

— we had them up and running again by June 3, so there was that few days where folks did not have phone access. So, we were able to initiate the phones as quickly as we could. The program ended for us on July 31.

The other part I think that the member opposite mentioned in the question was: How did we choose the women or folks who received the phones? This was done by our partner, the Yukon Status of Women Council. They were the ones who did the assessment on who would need those phones and worked with all of the other equality-seeking groups to ensure that anyone in need of this type of device got the device. So, lots of good news out of that and lots of learned lessons. Again, things were put in place very quickly to respond to a need that we knew was there and that was verified through our partners.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for her answers today.

I do have more questions for the Women's Directorate; however, because we're down to seven minutes' time, I'm going to turn this over to the Leader of the Third Party.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for Watson Lake for that very much. Thank you. Welcome, of course, to the official.

Just to go back on the issue of cellphones — because believe it or not, it feels like it was 17,000 years ago and I totally forgot about how frustrating the cellphone process was.

The one story I want to share is being approached by someone who had been given a cellphone. What they said was that, for the first time in their adult life, they had access to information — for the first time ever — keeping in mind, of course, that the library was closed — couldn't access the library. You couldn't access, for a part of the time — and at some point, with Community Services, we'll have that conversation — there wasn't Wi-Fi available from the library. It wasn't available in the parking lot.

At the time — at the very beginning — when all the COVID stuff was going on, the vast majority of updates were online. They weren't in the newspaper. They weren't on the television. The only place you could get the information was online. This woman came to me and she said that for the first time in her life she had access to information. Then, without any warning, it stopped.

So, I appreciate that things moved quickly and that things were covered, but to blame — sorry, let me change those words. When the minister said that it was the responsibility of the Yukon Status of Women Council to let women know about their limits — I'm sure that in this House at different times — I know when I was new to cellphones and the idea of plans and information — I have nephews — and let me tell you, until you understand what data is and how it works, you miss those limitations.

I guess the shocking part, when this all was going down, was that the statements that were made in the media made it sound like it was the women's fault. I don't think that was the intention; I don't believe that was the intention; I can't imagine that was the minister's intention. But that's how it came across and that was very hard.

When the decision was made to stop — I mean, I had conversations with the women's organizations about the ability for them to reach out. One of the concerns they had was that

they weren't going to be able to contact everyone. In some cases, the phone worked and then it stopped working. In some cases, it worked earlier in the day or you might have been in the middle of something and then it stopped working. I think the one thing that it taught us was importance of information and the ability to access information.

What lessons has the department taken forward from that?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for that. I appreciate that. That was difficult to have that happen. It was difficult for me to get that call — to say there is an issue with the cellphone program and this is what it is and that we're going to have to make a decision here to do a short suspension of the phones.

It was difficult for the exact reason that I said earlier. We knew the vulnerability of the women. That was not an easy decision. The discussion I had with the deputy at the time was that it has to be quick. We advised the Yukon Status of Women Council on the 27<sup>th</sup>. We said we have a two-day period here to get the notices out to the phone users that there is going to be a short suspension of the phone because of this overuse of data. Again, there was no blaming. It wasn't meant to be done ever in a blaming way. Again, this isn't about me, but I will tell you the impact — I mean, I am displaying it right here, right now — the impact.

It was really difficult for a lot of reasons. I became a target as well. I became a target and had to endure some really harsh criticism in our Yukon society. You know what? I worked my entire life for equality and safety — particularly for women. So, that was not an easy time during COVID, given all the other pressures that everyone was under. It was harsh. To be targeted by fake media outlets like Whitewash displaying my picture and sending out messages that were just disgusting — it was hurtful not only to me but to a lot of women, especially indigenous women. I can't tell you how many calls I got from women sobbing because, for them, I am one of the people out here really advocating for their well-being and for their safety, and a role model — that if you can dream it, you can do it. So, to be targeted in that way was really hard, and it was over an issue that was not the intent.

So, I understand — I think that is what I need to say about this. Have we learned? Absolutely, absolutely — we have learned from this situation, and we know that if this wasn't a really quick response to an immediate need, we would have had time to think through and mitigate maybe — and think through what some of the issues could have been. This was one that we thought we would be able to have the controls in place through our partners. I did not have direct access and nor did my department have direct access to those who received the devices. I am happy to have been able to talk about it today because it definitely deserves discussion here in the Legislative Assembly.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for sharing that with us, but what I did ask about was: What did we learn? What did the department learn from that experience? I see the Clerk-at-the-Table looking at the time. I believe that we have a witness coming down, so I will sit down now and look forward — I can keep going. Oh, sorry, Mr. Chair — sorry to the Clerk, and

sorry to Hansard and anyone who can't see — masks make things very exciting.

Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from Yukon University.

In order to allow witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

*Recess*

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

### Appearance of witnesses

**Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from Yukon University.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses and would also ask the witnesses to refer their remarks through the Chair when they are responding to the members.

*Witnesses introduced*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I ask my colleagues to welcome Maggie Matear, who is the interim president of Yukon University, and David Morrison, who is the chair of the board of governors of Yukon University. I know that they will have a few opening remarks and are available to answer questions here today from the Members of the Legislative Assembly. I thank them for coming and for the answers that they will give and the information that they will provide to Yukoners through this process.

I will not take the opportunity to also welcome who is with them — in case I get that incorrect with masks and other things — but I know that there are a few other folks involved with the board and the university, and I will ask that they recognize them in their opening remarks. Thank you for being here.

**Chair:** Would the witnesses like to make opening remarks?

**Mr. Morrison:** Yes, Mr. Chair. We have a few minutes — not lengthy. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Minister McPhee, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and Yukoners for allowing us to speak with you today.

I would like to acknowledge that we are present on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

On May 19 of this year, Yukon University was born and is Canada's first university north of 60. I would like to thank all members of this Assembly for unanimously supporting the legislation that created Yukon U almost one year ago to the day, culminating from years of work and input from students, employees, and Yukoners.

The *Yukon University Act* enshrines the university as a hybrid institution that offers a wide range of programming and pathways for students. As an institution rooted in Yukon's history and culture, we are committed to working with Yukon First Nations and communities to meet the diverse education research needs of Yukon. The act also commits the university to include respect and honour for Yukon First Nation knowledge, world views, and educational priorities in its programming and operations, something that we are proud to lead the country in.

The act established a shared model of governance for the institution — a senate and a board of governors — and an expanded board to 17 members from 12, including representation from Yukoners and faculty. As board chair, I am excited by the diversity, experience, and passion of the board. I look forward to working on setting the university's first strategic plan, which will be developed in the coming year.

Planning continues for the new science building. The steering committee has devised a values and principles document that prioritizes flexibility of use, the student experience, reconciliation, and the integration of research and teaching. With the support of the Government of Yukon, a functional plan offering several construction scenarios has been completed.

Leading into the historic evolution of our institution in the 2019-20 academic year, our new programs are attracting interest. We have national recognition for our reconciliation and research experience, and we have demonstrated our resilience during a global pandemic. Just today, the PIVOT program, part of the Yukon University's innovation and entrepreneurship unit, has just been honoured by *Future of Good* as one of Canada's top 100 recovery projects. *Future of Good* is a magazine focused on social responsibility and sustainability initiatives.

In September 2019, we welcomed: 27 students into the new bachelor of business administration program; 35 new and returning students into year 2 of the bachelor of arts in indigenous governance; 14 students enrolled in the Yukon First Nations arts certificate; eight in the climate change policy post-degree certificate; and five in the millwright pre-apprenticeship program — students not just from Yukon, but from across Canada and around the world. Student satisfaction with course content, support services, and quality of instruction is at 90, 92, and 94 percent respectively.

We continue to demonstrate our leadership and commitment to reconciliation. Working with our partners at Vancouver Island University and the McConnell Foundation, we hosted a summer institute in 2019 that attracted leaders from 31 colleges and universities. Delegates met in Dawson City, Carcross, and Whitehorse to learn from our relationship with Yukon First Nations, share best practices, and chart a meaningful path forward on reconciliation.

Our research programs are gaining increasing attention. Dr. Michael Ross and the Northern Energy Innovation team won an award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers for pioneering renewable energy work in Nunavut. Dr. Guillaume Nielsen was awarded the NSERC Industrial

Research Chair for Colleges in Northern Mine Remediation, reinforcing the importance of the work being done here.

We made the list of Canada's top 50 research colleges again, earning the top spot for number of paid student researchers. We have 43 of them when compared to similarly sized institutions.

Along with the rest of the world since March, our lives have been dominated by the threat —

### Chair's statement

**Chair:** Order, please. Pursuant to the Chair's statement from the 2019 Fall Sitting, five minutes is the maximum amount of time for opening statements by witnesses. You have now reached that mark.

**Mr. Kent:** I would like to take the opportunity to welcome Mr. Morrison and Dr. Matear here today.

Before I begin with some questions, I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Karen Barnes in her former role as president starting with Yukon College and then transitioning to Yukon University. I would also like to congratulate her on being one of four 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients from the University of Alberta. I thank Karen for all of her work in getting and transitioning Yukon College into Yukon University, and I wish her and Dean well in whatever they have decided to do now. I notice on social media that they're self-isolating quite a bit, so perhaps they're travelling a little bit more than the rest of us are, but good for them. Again, thank you to Dr. Barnes for all of her work in getting us to where we are.

I do have a number of questions. The first set of them will come out of the 2018-19 annual report. As well, I have the financial statements for the year ending on June 30, 2019. Those are the first couple of things that I will touch on.

The first question that I will have with respect to the financials — looking at note 15 here, which is the "Government of Yukon contributions", in 2018, they were approximately \$20.7 million. In 2019, it increased by approximately \$1.3 million to just over \$22 million. I'm just curious — I know that we don't have the audited financials yet — what the contribution would be for the year ending June 30, 2020, if the witnesses have that information.

**Ms. Matear:** I thank the member for his question. The \$1.3-million increase in the last annual report reflects an increase that the government gave to us to support the efforts of transition to the university. The most recent financial statements, which are not quite audited yet but which are on their way to completion, will reflect another increase to about \$26 million.

**Mr. Kent:** So, on that same note, there are services received without charge that were, in 2018, \$3.98 million and then, in 2019, \$4.46 million. Again, do the witnesses have the 2020 numbers? And if they could perhaps just give us a brief explanation of what that line item encompasses as far as what types of services that they are receiving from the government without charge.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the line item reflects the contributions that YG — Yukon government — is making toward the campus facility, so they are providing maintenance, custodial services, and, in some cases, landscaping — things like that. That comes to about \$4.7 million for this year.

**Mr. Kent:** I'll jump up to note 14, which is "Expenditures by object". I have just a couple of questions with respect to this line item. Again, I have the 2018-19 numbers, so if the witnesses have the 2020 numbers, that would also be helpful.

Salaries, wages, and benefits in 2018 would have been about \$29.3 million, going up to \$31.1 million in 2019. So, again, if the witnesses have the numbers for 2020, that would be great.

How much of this reflects collective bargaining increases? And perhaps, if we could get a breakdown of the number of FTEs at the college throughout 2018-19 and then, if the information is available, how many FTEs there are for the year ending in June 2020.

**Ms. Matear:** At this time, we don't have the final numbers for the 2019-20 financial statements, but I can commit to getting those to you before the second week in December when we expect to have the audited financial statements.

With respect to the member's other questions about the breakdown in FTEs, I do have that information here. If you will give me a moment just to find it. I want to make sure that I am giving the member the accurate information.

In 2018-19, we had 309 perm-term employees and 350 casual employees. That has changed just slightly this year to 298 perm-term employees and 341 casual employees. In 2018, the breakdown of the perm-terms was 103 faculty and 145 sessional instructors. Non-instructional employees were 181 perm-terms and 189 casual employees.

**Mr. Kent:** I have a couple more questions with respect to the "Expenditures by object" note in the financials here. The next line below the salaries, wages, and benefits is "Contract services". So, in 2018, there was approximately \$6.7 million attributed to that line. It went up to \$8.5 million in 2019. Again, if the witnesses do have the information with the 2020 numbers — and then if they can explain that bump from 2018 to 2019 and just a brief explanation of what types of expenditures are under this line item.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I wonder if I could clarify part of the question from the member. The "Contract services" — was that under revenues or expenses?

**Mr. Kent:** It's in note 14, "Expenditures by object", just under the salaries, wages, and benefits. Again, in 2018, it was approximately \$6.7 million, and then in 2019, it was about \$8.5 million.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I think that the question is very important. I want to make sure that I am getting the member accurate information. If I may again defer that until we have the audited financial statements, then I can provide that information in addition to those statements at that time. Then it will also provide the member with a comparison year over year.

I can also commit to providing an explanation about why those may have changed over the past year.

**Mr. Kent:** My last question, then — because all of the other numbers are relatively stable — under the “Expenditures by object” — and if the witness can’t answer and has to provide the information later, that’s fine as well — is about the “Utilities and communications” portion there. In 2018, it was about \$1.8 million and then bumped up to \$2.26 million in 2019. Again, we would be looking for those 2020 numbers and an explanation of why there was that increase from 2018 to 2019.

**Ms. Matear:** I will provide that information with the other financial numbers.

**Mr. Kent:** I have a few questions about COVID-19 measures at the university. If the witnesses could give us an idea of how many — I guess what I am looking for is total enrolment in this current academic year. How many of those students are in person and how many are online?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, based on the fall semester registrations, we are predicting a 15-percent reduction in enrolment overall for 2021 over 2019, but we held stable for 2019.

Right now, we are offering a mix of online and face-to-face programs to respond to some of the restrictions that we’re facing under COVID. The only courses that we’re offering face to face right now are courses where we cannot offer the similar experience online, so that’s mainly referring to things like science labs — biology and chemistry — and things that we really can’t do online and also the practical components of the trades.

All of our other courses are being offered online, except for those in continuing studies, and then we have very robust COVID safety protocols in place to ensure that people are following the “safe six”. Some of those course examples would include things like first aid.

**Mr. Kent:** If the witness can repeat the percentage of reduction for enrolment — I think that she said 15, but I just wanted to confirm that number.

**Ms. Matear:** Yes, Mr. Chair, for this year — the 2019-2020 year — we are about on par with last year. However, in the upcoming year, we are anticipating a 15-percent reduction starting in the winter term.

**Mr. Kent:** What do the witnesses anticipate that reduction in enrolment — what is the anticipated reduction in revenue as a result of that reduction in enrolment?

**Ms. Matear:** We anticipate a reduction of about one percent of revenues as a result of that change in enrolment.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Before I move into some questions from the annual report, I will note that the president between Dr. Barnes and Dr. Matear was here for a shorter time than I think a lot of folks had hoped. He obviously moved on to, I believe, Ontario for a different opportunity, but I am curious if there are any costs associated with his initial relocation to the Yukon or back to Ontario — and what the costs were associated with the initial recruitment of the previous president — and then if there is a recruitment process underway now for a permanent president.

**Mr. Morrison:** Perhaps we could tag team on this a little bit. Dr. Matear will get some numbers for the member. The

board has not started a recruitment process quite yet, but we will be doing so in the new year. Our view of the world was that we should let everything settle back down for a bit and give Dr. Matear a chance to get in the chair and calm things down, because that move was a bit disruptive.

We do plan to — and have struck a group to — begin a recruitment process but not until into the new year.

Dr. Matear has given me some numbers, but I’m going to give them back to her because she may well have a better explanation on those numbers.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the board hired a recruitment support company to help with the recruitment. The fee for that was \$45,000. Because the search was not considered successful, that company will provide the board with another search. The travel expenses associated with Dr. DeGagné’s tenure here were about \$4,000. He did not actually move here, so there were no monies spent on that process.

**Mr. Kent:** I was feverishly writing down some numbers. The moving expenses for the previous president were \$4,000 to get here. There were no moving expenses provided to move this individual back to Ontario. Am I correct in that?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, that is correct.

**Mr. Kent:** I will refer the witnesses to the 2018-19 annual report that I downloaded from the website. It’s my understanding this is the most recent annual report that Yukon University — I guess it was still Yukon College then — had put out.

I kind of want to walk through a few items in the report. In the message from the former chair of the board of governors Chris Milner, on page 1, I have a couple of questions from his message.

In the second paragraph, he mentions that President Barnes and her team made significant progress on conversations focused on advancing the institution through philanthropy. Future donations were announced by CIBC for \$500,000 in support of the transition to Yukon University. BMO for \$400,000 in support of permafrost research and private foundations was also stepped up as well with project-focused funding, including a \$500,000 gift from the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Just quickly back to the CIBC donation — has all of that money been received and expended to support the transition from Yukon College to Yukon University?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I don’t have the exact figures on what has been spent. I know that we have received all of the funding from the donors.

I don’t know exactly how much of it has been spent to this date. Again, I can get that information for the member when we provide the other financial information.

**Mr. Kent:** Then, recognizing that the previous question was about the CIBC funding, if the witnesses can also provide us with a breakdown of the \$400,000 in support of permafrost research from BMO and then the \$500,000 gift from the Garfield Weston Foundation and then perhaps an idea of which projects that funding supported as well.

**Ms. Matear:** Again, I can provide that information at a later date, but I don’t have those breakdowns with me right

now. I would rather make sure that I'm providing accurate information than speculate on what I believe.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that. I thank the witnesses for that. I just wanted to make sure that it was on the record as well so that, when they look back to the transcripts here, they can get a sense for everything that we are asking for.

In that next paragraph in Mr. Milner's message, it does talk — and I know that the chair of the board of governors talked about the science building in his opening response. Here it says: "Following extensive lobbying, the Government of Canada ... announced \$26M in budget 2019 to support the construction of a science building at the Ayamdigut Campus of Yukon College in Whitehorse. The building should be completed in 2023."

I'm just curious — since I believe that there is a values and principles document and a functional plan completed — are you still on time for a 2023 completion? I guess that's the question.

**Ms. Matear:** I appreciate the member's question because the science building is something that we're extremely excited about and happy to share progress and updates on right now.

COVID has reared its ugly head and prevented us from proceeding quite as quickly as we would have liked. That being said, we do have a more elaborate functional plan developed with the assistance of Yukon government and the Department of Highways and Public Works. We have a very detailed functional plan now and are ready to go to terms of reference.

We're now just finalizing the documentation to sign the agreement, and we have been talking with the government, with CIRNAC in particular, to see if there is a potential to expand the timing horizon for the science building because of COVID. That being said, the building has a relatively small footprint. We don't anticipate that there are going to be too many delays, even if we do have to maintain a somewhat compressed schedule because of our six-month delay.

**Mr. Kent:** I apologize to the witness if she said it, but I didn't get a sense, given the delays associated with COVID, of when they anticipate that building being completed.

I have just a couple of other questions on it. As far as project management goes, will that project be managed within the college, or will the Department of Highways and Public Works be doing that project management for them? Have they picked a model to build? Will it be a design/build or will it be a design/bid/build, which are two different ways of building these types of capital facilities?

**Ms. Matear:** My apologies to the member for not answering part of his earlier question. We anticipate that the science building will be finished in fiscal year 2024.

Could you repeat the second part of the question again, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Kent:** No problem. How will the contract be structured and who will be providing the project management services? So, will it be going to a design/build, or will it be a design/bid/build process?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for repeating the question. We have been working closely with the Yukon government on this. They have been very supportive in

helping us get to the stage that we are at right now. We will continue to work with them for project management assistance throughout the course of the building.

We are hiring our own project manager as well, who will work very closely with the Yukon government's project management team. We really appreciate the expertise and the capacity that they bring to building projects, particularly in cold-weather environments. We understand that they can really help us meet some of our environmental and sustainability goals around the science building.

We have looked at both of the main project approaches, which are design/build and design/bid/build. We have decided that it is going to be advantageous to us to go with the design/bid/build. People in Yukon are more accustomed to working with that model, and we feel that this is probably going to be our better chance for maintaining an on-schedule project.

**Mr. Kent:** So, again, I note that the contribution from the federal government was \$26 million in the 2019 budget. What is the overall budget at this point to construct this building?

**Ms. Matear:** The functional plan that was recently completed this past June suggests that the cost will be about \$36 million.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the witness for that response. Just looking at the June 2015 campus master plan that was developed, I know that the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining building has been completed and is essentially in the same spot. Can the witnesses just explain where the science building will be located and if it is identified in this master plan?

**Ms. Matear:** The science building is reflected in the master plan, and the site where it will be built is the parking lot that is currently labelled as a "student parking lot". It is opposite the administration wing of the university campus.

**Mr. Kent:** Just to clarify then, I think that, on the front cover of this master plan that I'm looking at, there is an academic and research building. Will that be the location of the new science building?

**Ms. Matear:** Correct.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

I will come back to the master plan in a little bit after we wind our way through the annual report a little bit more.

In that next paragraph — the message from Mr. Milner — was: "In February..." — and I am assuming that this would have been 2019 — "... the Honourable Marc Garneau announced funding of over \$368,000 over two years starting in 2019-20. These funds will support the Northern Climate Exchange at Yukon College, to design and implement systems to identify potential permafrost-related hazards, such as landslides and ground subsidence." Were those funds transferred from Canada to Yukon College at the time, and have they been expended on the projects that were outlined here in the report?

**Ms. Matear:** The funds were transferred. I don't know the extent to which all of the funds were expended, and I can get that information for the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Moving on in Mr. Milner's message, it says: "In anticipation of becoming Canada's first university in the Circumpolar north, Global Affairs will start supporting the UArctic North to North program — a student exchange program that will enable northern post-secondary students to pursue studies in other circumpolar countries. This program will be managed through Yukon College."

I'm making an assumption that, due to COVID-19, this exchange program has been suspended. Had anything been done on it previous to the pandemic? Will it restart — hopefully, this next fall or sooner when the pandemic is under control — and is it still being managed through Yukon University?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, this is another question that I'm really pleased to answer because we just formalized the agreement with Global Affairs to support that program. It has been suspended because of COVID, so we can't do international travel, but it is going to pick up as soon as we are able to resume normal activities.

We're really excited about those opportunities to share Yukon knowledge and expertise with other universities and give those opportunities to students and researchers for cross-pollination.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

I'm going to just flip over the page to Dr. Barnes' message in the same annual report. I have a couple of questions from it.

In the third paragraph, it says that Yukon College continues to deliver several partner degrees. In fact, there was a celebration of 30 years of delivery of the bachelor of education degree — Yukon Native Teacher Education Program, as it's known, in partnership with the University of Regina.

I'm wondering if the witnesses have some recent graduation numbers from that program and also, beyond that, if there are some numbers for placement as teachers into schools in the Yukon or perhaps schools beyond through exit interviews that you may or may not do with the graduates of that program.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I do have some figures on the bachelor of education program. Enrolments have remained steady — about 30 students in the past three years. It has grown from 10 students originally in 2016 to 25 students now. Practicum placements were delayed unfortunately because of COVID.

However, the fourth-year placements with Yukon schools are now set up for a January start, and we have 18 in total ready to go. We are trying to find better ways to track employment statistics. It's a continuous improvement effort with us. I can go and try to get the most recent figures for the member. I don't have them with me at this time, though.

**Mr. Kent:** I'll appreciate getting those numbers.

Just moving down a little bit in Dr. Barnes' message with respect to international students, it says: "An increasing number of students are coming to Yukon College from around the world. Given the Yukon's persistent labour shortages, the Yukon Government is aware of this potential source of labour, and as such, initiated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, which aims to raise awareness of Yukon

employment opportunities among eligible international students."

I have a couple of questions from this particular portion of Dr. Barnes' message. Can the witnesses provide us with the number of international students and perhaps a comparison to last year's enrolment so we can get a sense of how those numbers have gone down? I'm assuming they've gone down — but if they've gone down substantially or not. Can we find a copy of the MOU on Yukon College's website, or would the witnesses be able to provide it? It may be there. I was just unable to find it when I was preparing for this afternoon.

**Ms. Matear:** To respond to the member's questions about the number of international students that we have, in 2018-19, we had 173 international students, plus an additional 22 who arrived on a one-month study tour from Japan. That makes up 15 percent of all credit students at the university.

Unlike many universities across the country, we decided not to put all of our eggs in one basket, and so that was one of the reasons that we didn't experience a huge drop in revenues after COVID hit. We've really put the focus on ensuring that the needs of Yukon students are met.

International students do, of course, bring a tremendous revenue-generating opportunity to Yukon University. That's why this year, in 2019-2020, we were pleased to see that 179 international students, plus an additional 26 for the one-month study tour from Japan, attended. Again, we capped that at 15 percent of all of our credit students.

For this year, we are seeing a decline in the number of international students, and a lot of that is because they cannot get visas to arrive in Canada. We have 123 here right now. The majority of these were already here in Yukon or in Canada. We have a handful of arrivals from abroad this year who have successfully self-isolated. Again, we are thankful to the Government of Yukon for allowing us the use of the High Country Inn facility to support those international students in their self-isolation quarantine period. Right now, we have 10 international students who are studying online from outside Canada, and we are not planning to have any one-month study tours planned for this year.

With respect to the MOU, I can get a copy of that for the member. If it is not on our website, I will make sure that we provide that copy to you.

**Mr. Kent:** I have just a couple of questions from that. The witness can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe she said that they capped the enrolment numbers for international students at 15 percent, which was 173 a couple of years ago, 179 last year, and obviously 123 — so it would be up to 15 percent for this current year. How does that compare to the percentage of tuition? I guess my question is: Is there a premium in tuition charged to international students?

I will look forward to getting a copy of that memorandum of understanding, but what types of initiatives are used under it to raise awareness of Yukon employment opportunities among eligible international students, and what countries are targeted with that particular initiative?

**Ms. Matear:** First, I will address the question about the percentage of revenue. Tuition revenue makes up just under

six percent of our overall revenue in the past year. Half of that is from the international students, so there is indeed a premium for international student tuition. Although they make up 15 percent of our student body, or a maximum of 15 percent, they do contribute 50 percent of the tuition revenues.

May I ask the member to repeat the second part of his question? I wasn't sure if he was asking where students were coming from, or how we are recruiting students, or both.

**Mr. Kent:** I will look forward to getting a copy of the MOU that was signed, but it says in here that the signing of the MOU aims to raise awareness of Yukon employment opportunities among eligible international students. If the witnesses can give me a brief summary of what countries are targeted and what types of initiatives are used to raise awareness of Yukon employment opportunities for the eligible international students — also, if they have an idea of what the cost of implementing this MOU is.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for that question and for elaborating on what it meant. We target a couple of countries in particular — India, Japan, and China — but we also look at international students from Italy, Jamaica, Australia, Spain, Bosnia, France, Germany, Mexico, Vietnam, and the US.

In terms of the MOU, I don't have the cost of what it is to implement that program. I can say that we do use the services of international student recruitment agents. That is typical of post-secondary institutions across the country. We have a number of those agents with whom we build very robust relationships so that they understand what we can offer to international students abroad.

They are the ones who have the relationships with the communities that they serve. They are working for us as ambassadors, almost, of Yukon University to help them understand what we can offer to them. We provide those agents with a broad swath of information about not only the university but also the Yukon in general, to try to attract them here.

**Mr. Kent:** I will look forward to getting a copy of that MOU so that I can take a look through it.

I have a couple more questions on the international students. Is there a mix of which programs the students are enrolling in at Yukon University, or are they mostly coming in for degree programs? I will leave it to the witnesses to provide a potential breakdown, if they have one, of the perhaps 123 students who are there this year. What programs are you finding that most of them are enrolling in at the university?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question again.

We have students who are enrolled in business administration, and early learning and childcare — those are two very popular ones with international students — and liberal arts, northern science, multimedia, aviation management, and general studies.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Now, in that second to last paragraph, Dr. Barnes talks about housing. I'll just read into the record what she says. I'll quote again: "Of course, an increase in students further emphasized the housing shortage issue. In February of 2018 the

Board directed the tendering of a pilot housing project with developers in Whitehorse. Kobayashi and Zedda Architects were chosen to provide micro-units in a building they were building in downtown Whitehorse. Five units were made available in January 2019 to students."

Obviously, I understand that there's a housing crunch throughout the territory — and emphasized that housing crunch in Whitehorse and then obviously for Yukon College with what you have on the main campus here. Has this pilot project continued into this year? It says that five units were made available in January 2019. Has it continued into this year? Would it be a total cost recovery? Would the students be responsible for paying the entire amount of rent for these micro-units that are part of this pilot project?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the pilot project did not continue into this year. I don't know the exact reason why, but I can find that information for the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Are there any other projects or, as part of the master plan, are you looking at putting in any additional student housing options on the main campus to take care of the housing shortage that you're seeing?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, yes, this is a really interesting question. It's something that we're working on very hard. We're first trying to get a more accurate grasp of the actual demand for student housing. Many students who are coming in are looking for apartments for family units because they bring their families with them when they come. That's not unusual in universities like Yukon where people are coming from remote communities.

Many of the students are looking for things like individual dorms. We have a good mix of housing on campus right now. What we often find is that we have enough housing but not necessarily the housing that students actually want, depending on what they're looking for.

We're trying to work on a feasibility study that will get us some market statistics and some more evidence-based information on what we actually need before we go forward with looking at other initiatives. That being said, we're looking at some creative ways to support housing needs in the communities, like building tiny houses in our trades section and trying to hire more local people in the communities so that people already have housing and we don't have to try to find housing in a place where it's already scarce for the people who actually live there.

**Mr. Kent:** Is there a wait-list currently for student housing in Whitehorse? Are there student housing opportunities available in the communities for students who are enrolled in some of the community campuses?

**Ms. Matear:** I can confirm that this year there is no waiting list for students to go into housing. Part of that is because of COVID. Part of that is because we don't have as many international students who are attending, and they are the ones who often are particularly interested in our dorm housing.

In terms of student housing in the communities, no, we don't have that. Again, for instructors and staff, we are trying



to hire more people actually from the communities themselves so that we're not creating more pressure on that housing stock.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm curious — with the recently announced bursting of the BC, Yukon, and territorial bubble and as far as being able to travel back and forth — if there are students who are currently in Yukon University housing who are from other jurisdictions. Has there been any thought given to what the plans are around the Christmas break if they do want to return to their jurisdiction? Is there any alternative self-isolation planning being done for when they return to housing here in the Yukon?

I guess that's somewhat hypothetical based on whether or not those students from those jurisdictions are actually in housing here.

**Ms. Matear:** I really appreciate the member's interest in this, because the excellence of student experience is one of the key mandates for Yukon University; it's something we are very concerned about.

We've taken the decision not to allow self-isolation in campus facilities. To that end, what we are doing, right now actually, is that we're working on a plan to support those students who do want to go home for the holidays. We're trying to find some sources of emergency funding for them so that, when they come back, we can arrange self-isolation for them off campus — in hotels, for example. We're working on developing a volunteer program so that people can support the students who are here over the Christmas holidays and away from their families, and we're looking at trying to implement a number of these initiatives to make sure students feel looked after and cared for, whether they choose to go back to their communities or whether they choose to stay.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that answer from the witness.

Looking again on the website, we came across the 2016 to 2021 strategic plan. That's what's referenced on the next page in the annual report. This plan was obviously designed, I think, to get the college through the transition into the university. Has work started on a new strategic plan for 2021? If work has started, is it also to be a guidance document for a five-year term?

**Mr. Morrison:** The board met earlier this week, as a matter of fact, and had their first discussion on the new strategic plan. We laid out a timeline and we've laid out a series of tasks — a large part of which will be consultation and engagement on the plan itself.

We do envisage the plan being another five-year plan. I would say that we're targeting July but maybe August or September, depending on how long the engagement consultation piece takes given COVID and the ability to get people together. It's well underway. We had a very good discussion with senior management and the board early this week.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm not trying to go through the 2016 to 2021 plan in great detail, but there obviously were a number of goals that were set. I'm assuming that the college, now the university, has met many of those goals, but are there any that the witnesses would like to flag for us that perhaps they weren't able to meet, whether it was due to the pandemic or for any types of reasons,

as far as the overall direction and goals that are identified in this document?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the majority of the goals were achieved on time and on schedule. Some of them are a little bit behind because of COVID, but we are continuing to work on those and we will continue to do so throughout the next year.

**Mr. Kent:** I wanted to move on to the Centre for Northern Innovation and Mining and just take a look at a couple of the programs that were part of the milestones for 2018-19. The university and the centre have identified a number of different training programs. Obviously, with the governing council and how that works, often there are changes to what programs are offered. Are there changes for this current year versus what we saw in the 2018-19 year?

I'm also just curious about the trades trailers — the mobile training units — and if they are deployed to a community or a mine site at this time. If so, where are they deployed and what courses are being offered in that mobile trades trailer?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I'm really happy to address the member's questions on that, because the mobile trades trailer is a flagship program for us, and it's one that allows us to bring specialized training from Ayamdigtut out into the communities. So, I do have some information on those.

Since January 19, the mobile trades trailer has served 35 students in Watson Lake, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, and Minto mine. Those students were enrolled in mining workforce readiness, haul truck operations, environmental monitoring, and heavy equipment mechanic pre-apprentice. The mobile trailer is now in Dawson City for a multi-trades and mining program that was co-created with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Minto mine. Right now, there are eight students registered in that for our January 2021 start date.

**Mr. Kent:** I am not sure if it was underway prior to the pandemic and the closing of the border between Yukon and Alaska, but there were some mine simulators that CNIM owned, and I believe that they were just south, or perhaps north, of Delta Junction. I'm curious if that partnership continued. Obviously, it would be in some sort of hiatus right now, I'm assuming, with the pandemic, but I'm curious if that project and that partnership with Alaska has continued. If so, is the university anticipating that getting underway again when we get out of this current mess that we are in right now?

**Ms. Matear:** Yes — and it is a very exciting program. I actually had the opportunity to visit that last year at their graduation ceremony. Ten students completed the program earlier this year. We have had to suspend it, unfortunately, because of COVID, but we intend to pick that up again when we are able.

**Mr. Kent:** That and some of the other curriculum developed — sort of pre-Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, and then since the building has been built and the program has been offered — were part of an MOU, or an agreement signed between Yukon and Alaska. Is the university still operating under that agreement, or are they looking at renewing that agreement? At the time, I think it was signed in Juneau with the University of Alaska Southeast, so I'm curious

if that agreement is still in place or if there is work being done to renew it at this point.

**Ms. Matear:** The agreement is still in place. I don't know the status of renewing the agreement, though, and I can get that information to the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that. Just before I move on from the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, I am curious how many graduated from the most recent cohort that you have statistics for, and how many of those individuals ended up employed in something close to the field — whether it is in a hardrock mine or a placer mine or doing the work that they received training for?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I do know that 10 students graduated. I don't know their employment status at this time. I will see how much information we have available on that for you.

**Mr. Kent:** I wanted to ask just one question about the Northern Institute of Social Justice. I recognize that obviously there are a number of important courses that are offered through this program and through the work there. It has been very valuable. I took a couple of courses there a few years back, and I enjoyed them and found them very helpful.

I'm just curious, though, when it comes to the numbers that are enrolled in these programs, how many — again, for the most recent year that you have statistics for — individuals enrolled in these programs at the institute? If you have a breakdown, how many would have been from the public sector versus how many would have been from private sector companies — if the witnesses have that information?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for his kind words about the course quality for when he experienced some training from the Northern Institute of Social Justice. I don't have the figures or the breakdown of the numbers of who took programming through them in the last year, but I would be happy to pull those together for the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I think I took conflict communications and conflict management. I have put it to use, I think, for the past number of years perhaps. Perhaps I forgot a few things from there too, but maybe it's time for a refresher.

I just have a couple more questions, and then I want to turn it over to the Member for Whitehorse Centre so that she gets a chance to ask questions of the witnesses as well.

When it comes to the Yukon Research Centre — I know the board chair mentioned this in his opening remarks and talked about the number of students hired as far as research funding. I'm curious if the transition from a college to the university has opened up additional research envelopes, and if we are seeing that increase now or if we're anticipating increases here as the university gets more established and as it moves forward.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, again, I really appreciate that question, because research is one of the things that we hope to continue to expand on as we've transitioned from college to university.

Indeed, the transition to university does open up some more funding opportunities for us. We are looking at those.

Fortunately, we are also able to maintain some of the relationships with funders through our status as a college. We have broadened the number of opportunities that we are able to access, and the future looks very bright for research at Yukon University.

**Mr. Kent:** I just want to ask a couple of questions about the university foundation and the work that they are doing. There is a national fundraising campaign that the foundation embarked on in 2019. It is a two-phased, \$86-million campaign, which incorporated federal, territorial, and private sector funding. Obviously, that \$26-million contribution from the federal government was part of that fundraising campaign. I am curious if the witnesses have an update on where they are at in terms of timing. Are they still in phase 1, or have they moved to phase 2? How much money has been raised so far toward that \$86-million goal?

**Ms. Matear:** Currently, the foundation has raised about \$2 million for various aspects of the university operations. We are really focusing on three things right now. Raising money for the science building — I mentioned earlier that we are hoping to spend \$36 million in total on the science building, of which \$10 million we anticipate to come from fundraising dollars. We are also focusing on the Institute of Indigenous Self-Determination, which is another program that we've worked on and co-created in consultation with Yukon First Nations. We are also raising funds for student awards and student support services.

Right now, we are looking at a more formalized approach to fundraising and building a plan to manage that campaign. We look forward to being able to finalize that early in the new year.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that response.

My final question is more of an anecdotal one. I know that, in our travels and in talking to colleagues who represent rural ridings throughout the Yukon, there was a lot of concern when the college was transitioning to a university that it might present a little bit of intimidation for some of the community members to attend a university. I guess the question that I would have is: What are the enrolment numbers like in the communities?

It's difficult, obviously, with COVID to get a true reflection and a true comparison, but what are the trends like in the communities that we are seeing since the transition to a university occurred?

I'll let the witnesses answer, but that will be my final question. I would just like to thank Dr. Matear and Mr. Morrison for coming here today and answering the questions that we had.

**Ms. Matear:** I would like to thank the member for articulating a concern that we've heard throughout the Yukon, and that is: Will the Yukon University stay true to its roots and continue to provide programs at the college level and the vocational level for Yukon students? The answer is a resounding yes.

We're a hybrid university. We're different from other ones. We know that it's really important to be able to provide the broadest possible number of opportunities for Yukon students. We work very closely with partners, rights holders,

stakeholders, communities, and the government to make sure that we're responding to those needs at all times.

The 13 campuses in our communities form a vital part of what we're able to do for Yukon. It also makes us a little bit different in terms of how we try to ensure that students in the communities have the same opportunities as those who come to Ayamdigut. We recognize the value of students being able to stay in their home communities for educational purposes. If you can look for a silver lining from COVID, I think one of them is that we really accelerated our efforts to try to put more courses online so that students in the communities could stay with their families and stay at work, if they so chose, and participate from their communities instead of having to come to a different community where they may not know people or have the same number of supports.

To that end, I do have a couple of statistics that I can share with you in terms of numbers. In 2019-20, 837 students took courses at campuses outside Ayamdigut. Of those, 542 were credit core students. That's down from 2018-19 when the number was 1,600 students, 607 of whom took credit courses.

The reduction over this year is a function of COVID. It hit us at the six-month mark, so we're seeing a fairly significant reduction. However, I think it's really interesting to know that proportionally more of the community campuses were involved in credit courses than in non-credit courses. I think that's a really good sign of an increasing confidence in people that they don't need to be intimidated by taking credit courses. They don't need to be intimidated by the fact that we're a university now, because we're the same as before, but we've made the pie bigger.

We're now offering more different levels of courses for students and creating more opportunities for them to stay at home while improving their education.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witnesses for being here this afternoon. We reflect back, as the chair of the university mentioned at the outset — it was almost a year ago that we were here seeing the passage of the *Yukon University Act*. It's unfortunate that we weren't able to celebrate that transition as it was planned in May or June. I know that Dr. Karen Barnes had been quite excited about that. I was pleased to see some recognition — I think earlier this month when she was appointed as a director of Polar Knowledge Canada. Then I was doubly pleased last week — last week or sometime earlier in November — when we saw the first two honorary doctorates being awarded to Dr. David Joe and to Dr. Audrey McLaughlin. It seems to me that it is incredibly important that the transition — I've said this before. There are times when you realize how old you are, but I can remember when Audrey McLaughlin acted to do an evaluation of a program that was run here. The first time, there was a group of social service workers for *Indian Act* bands in the territory who wanted to get training. Everybody kept saying, "You can't do that; you would have to just take like a little course here and a little course there." Some of us felt that you needed to offer an accredited course. What would these people who live in communities — how could they do that? In fact, they did an accredited course and some of them went on to do degrees in social work.

Dr. McLaughlin, as she is now, did the evaluation of that program. So, it takes some time, Mr. Chair, but you do see that transition occur in our communities.

At the same time, this is a hybrid university. I know that there are concerns in the communities with respect — and in Yukon — that focus — as my colleague down the way here commented on, the importance of the trades and basic adult education and upgrading programs. I know that you share that concern.

I noted in the strategic plan — I'm just going to quote here: "Yukon College will develop and implement a plan to retain, support and attract faculty and staff in order to enrich the institution."

When it was confirmed to me at lunchtime that we were in fact going to be having you folks in front of us today, I thought, "Okay, fine, what do I know but haven't looked at in recent times?" I went back — because one of the things that strikes me when I look at an organization, particularly an organization in transition — and all of us were aware of the change at the very top with the abrupt departure of the president of the Yukon University. I thought that I should just go and look at the organization chart as it is on the Yukon University website. I have to say that I was struck by a couple of things. I do expect some turnover in an organization, but it seems that there are pockets within Yukon University where there are significant gaps. I am not sure if this is just a factor of the university not having posted updates to its organization chart since July 1, 2020, but I counted at least 20 vacancies that I would like some comment on by the board and the acting president.

When I look at department heads — for example, academic services or the chair of the Academic and Skill Development or the three vacancies at SOVA — the School of Visual Arts has become a really important arts and cultural institution not just in Dawson but throughout the Yukon, in what it does in terms of transitioning and developing artists. YNTEP — we talked about the teacher education program here. I am pleased to hear about the success in the growth of the number of students because it did have serious challenges a few years back. But when we see a faculty adviser and coordinator there in education, and when we see the chair of the indigenous governance program and another vacancy there — as we heard from the president, this is a key area. The manager of the learning commons — what I would call the library — as well. We talked about the international students, how important they are and what an incredible — not only enriching a presence for the university, but also a revenue source. We have a vacancy there.

In the community campuses, there are vacancies in terms of the liaisons in Teslin, Watson Lake, and Old Crow. I don't know if these are current or not, but what it did say to me is that — particularly, I would be appreciative of getting the witnesses to explain or to update this House as to what has been done to provide continuity, because an organization that is taking on the challenges of a university needs to have some stability organizationally. It needs to be able to demonstrate that for a lot of reasons — not just to attract staff and retain good quality employees, but also for your students, the community, and

donors. A long-winded thing, but I just wanted to set the context for what my concern is here, and I would be interested in seeing — both from the board's point of view and from the administrative point of view — what is being done to address these vacancies.

There was one that I wasn't sure about and — because, through a conversation with an individual there — I won't go there right now, but I just — if you would speak to those, please.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, if I understand the member's question, it is asking what we are doing in these times of transition, I suppose, to retain and attract employees. Is that correct?

**Ms. Hanson:** That is correct, but also, are those vacancies current — the ones I just identified? So, if they are — and it is now November — that is an issue. If those have been filled and — because some of those are significant in terms of effective delivery, even in a time where we have a lull, perhaps. But you can't have that kind of a lull or gap in an organization in order to have continuity; that is my point. That is why I was looking to ascertain whether or not what is reflected on the website, as of this afternoon, is actually correct.

**Ms. Matear:** I thank the member for her clarification. Some of the positions that are reflected as vacant on the website have indeed been filled since then. I think that it is important to note that recruitment at post-secondary educational institutions across Canada is challenging and very competitive. We are certainly not the only ones who are experiencing some churn not only at the senior management level but throughout the institution.

What we are doing to try to maintain continuity — which is again a very important concept when we are dealing with transition at any time, let alone now, when we are dealing with transition from college to university and during COVID — is that we are trying to get better at documenting processes. We are trying to get better at capturing that knowledge so that it doesn't leave with the person when the person leaves. I spoke earlier about a process of continuous improvement that we are trying to implement across the university and this is one of the things that we're working on with an aim toward making sure that we have information available for people when there is a changeover in a position so that we don't lose that institutional knowledge.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that. Of those vacancies I've identified, the key ones, with respect to director-level positions — are they currently staffed?

**Ms. Matear:** I'm afraid I don't have the organizational chart in front of me, so I can't speak to each of them, but some of the key ones have been staffed. For example, for the registrar's position, there is an interim position in place and that was the associate registrar who has now stepped in. She brings a lot of institutional knowledge into that role. Fortunately, we didn't lose a lot of institutional knowledge there.

Some of the other positions have since been filled — for example, the international student advisor. We have an excellent fellow who has been filling that role for the last couple of months.

What I can commit to is taking a look at the organizational chart as it was in July and making sure you get an updated one.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that, because when I look at significant ones — because we've put a lot of — as the witnesses said earlier today, one of the key first degree granting programs is indigenous governance. When I see the chair's position vacant, I go, "Whoa, that's not a good sign." I would like to know if that position has been filled first and then I will look forward to getting the balance of that information from the witnesses.

On that, when I look at Public Accounts — and maybe I might ask the witnesses to confirm that up until today — because I saw a regulation change today that indicated that the fiscal year for Yukon University has changed — but it's my impression from comments that I sort of heard fly by earlier that the fiscal year is different; it was the end of December. I'll get her answer on that, Mr. Chair.

What we have available to us as Members of the Legislative Assembly is the Public Accounts for the Yukon government. The notes to the consolidated financial statements are indicating, for Yukon College — so this is at the end of June 2019 — that one of the areas — there are a couple of things that arose from that, but one was that the termination benefits that had been paid by the Yukon College at the time had increased by \$240,000 from one year to the next. So, it had gone from \$334,000 to \$575,000. Not only is that kind of organizational stability important for an organization — and, as the witness said, for continuity — but it also costs money.

Can the witness confirm the issue with respect to, up until today, the fiscal year for the former college, now university, and if that trend has continued this year with respect to the almost doubling of termination payments for employees leaving the employment of the university?

**Ms. Matear:** I thank the member again for that question. I can confirm that our fiscal year-end up until now has been June 30. We asked for a change in the fiscal year-end so that we could better align our budgeting and planning processes with those of the government. In terms of the termination benefits, I don't have the actual figures for this year, unfortunately, so I can't comment on those, but once we do get the audited financial statements, I am happy to provide those to the member, along with an explanation of any statistically significant variation.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that.

Earlier in the conversation, when my colleague from the Yukon Party was raising some questions with respect to the area of international students, the witness indicated that half of the tuition that is received from students comes from international students even though they only represent 15 percent of the student population. There were two aspects of it that raised a question: What are the average tuition or student fees paid by an international student at Yukon University, and what are the costs to Yukon University for the recruitment agent, or agents if there is more than one?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I can answer part of that question but not the other part. The second part of the question is: What is the fee paid to international recruitment agents? It

varies between 15 and 20 percent of the tuition. That is pretty typical across Canada for recruitment agents. I don't have the actual tuition amount before me right now. I would rather wait to get that information than to misspeak.

**Ms. Hanson:** I look forward to receiving it. Thank you to the witness.

Mr. Chair, I am asking the witnesses for their insight into this because it was about someone who volunteered, working with students — anyway, I had heard that we are the only jurisdiction that doesn't have health insurance included in the student fees for foreign students. Is that correct?

**Ms. Matear:** I will have to check on that. I know that international students do buy health insurance. I don't know if it is included in the tuition or if it is attached as an ancillary fee.

**Ms. Hanson:** That would be helpful to get that information.

When an international student — if they do acquire private health insurance — what support services and resources are available to them on campus? As the witness mentioned, Mr. Chair, this is a difficult time for anybody who is separated from family, let alone being separated by many, many thousands of miles and dealing with cultural differences — the whole gamut — linguistic differences, perhaps. What support services and resources are made available to international students on campus?

**Ms. Matear:** When it comes to student success, we don't differentiate between whether or not the student is international or local — domestic. So, our student success division actually provides references to a number of different student services. So, we have mental health and well-being supports; we have academic supports. We are continuing to offer those face to face throughout the pandemic because we recognize that online education is not something that everybody cottons on to naturally and they may need a few more supports in order to succeed at their program.

So, using COVID-friendly protocols, we have actually set up face-to-face services at the university not only for domestic students but for international students to take advantage of. We have elders on campus. We have a virtual elder program starting in the wintertime so that we can provide services at a distance as well to students in the communities, as well as to Ayamdigut, and we are continuing to take feedback and do better at understanding the needs of the students. So, this is another one of these continuous improvement projects where we try something, we see how it works, we take input, and we use that input to inform and to improve those student services, but we are trying very hard to make sure that students have what they need to succeed. And we recognize that a lot of them are far away from their families, not just the international ones but domestic ones as well. We have seen an enormous outpouring of support from faculty and from staff to make sure that they do feel welcome and looked after. So, when COVID first started, for example, we had faculty members volunteering to provide meal service to students who were otherwise unable to use their kitchens because of COVID.

So, we have tried very hard to make sure that every student feels that they have a place to go and a safe space to talk to someone if they need those services.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that because I think that's an important aspect. I'm sure — as many of us have had kids at universities outside the territory — thinking about having your kid around the world — well, I actually have had — but yeah, the difficulty of that during a pandemic.

Can the witnesses provide some clarification — I haven't heard much recently about Arctic university, although I do see it in a liaison kind of role in the context of the org chart. I'm just not sure what the relationship is now between Yukon University and what was Arctic university in terms of circumpolar countries.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I would like to get more details on that to provide to the member. I can say though that the recent global affairs agreement that we signed to support students and researchers to travel throughout the Arctic supports our efforts to be involved in circumpolar research and education.

**Ms. Hanson:** I would be interested in following up on that because we are part of the circumpolar north and even the fact, as we mentioned at the outset here, that Dr. Barnes has gone on to be part of polar knowledge — I think we want to reinforce that.

Can the witnesses provide just a clarification — I'm trying to figure out how this organization chart is supposed to fit together because it seems that they're disparate. On page 11 of the organization chart and on page 17, there are two separate entities as depicted in the organization chart. One is the vacant chair of indigenous governance and a few positions there — one vacant, and then there's an indigenous engagement and reconciliation entity. So, can the witnesses describe the relative functions of those two entities within the university structure?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, yes, I would be happy to answer that question.

We do have an associate vice-president of indigenous reconciliation and engagement. We are currently recruiting for that position and expect to fill that imminently. The other position the member refers to is a chair of the indigenous governance program, and that is typically a faculty position that helps coordinate and advise faculty members in that section. That position is currently open.

**Ms. Hanson:** If the witness could elaborate on what indigenous governance is vis-à-vis indigenous engagement and reconciliation — in terms of within the university construct, what do those two groups of people do? What is the difference in their focus? I hate using the term "deliverable", but you know what I mean, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Matear:** That's an excellent question. The indigenous governance program is a degree program that we offer. It's one of our flagship degrees, in fact, that we offer to students. The chair of that handles the academic and delivery components of that program, whereas our AVP of indigenous reconciliation and engagement is a management position that liaises between Yukon First Nations and management and helps provide a gateway to better build relationships between the

university and Yukon First Nations. That person also advises senior management on areas of cultural sensitivity and on ways that we can further indigenize our university, not just our curriculum but also the ways that we operate and the ways that we understand and do things.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that explanation and for the distinction between the roles. The previous incumbent to the associate vice-president position was a powerhouse and an indigenous Yukoner. Is the intention to try to recruit from within the Yukon in terms of academia — somebody with the requisite academic background — for that position?

**Ms. Matear:** Yes, it is our intention to do that.

**Ms. Hanson:** When I had asked the question earlier — and I just want to make sure that I didn't miss it — when I had indicated that one of the important pieces — and one of the witnesses had also talked about the importance of our community campuses — I just want to confirm whether or not there are still vacancies in the positions of either instructor coordinators or community campus liaisons. In July, there were three vacancies. I just want to know if the university is fully staffed in those communities now throughout the Yukon.

**Ms. Matear:** I know that we have made progress on some of those hirings. I am not sure to what extent we are in the hiring process, though. I can provide some confirmation for you on that when I follow up.

**Ms. Hanson:** When we looked again at the Public Accounts, one of the notes was that the *Yukon University Act* was passed on November 27, 2019. The notes were that the university was a hybrid institution that offers a comprehensive range of programming, including trades, adult basic education, certificates, diplomas, degrees, and applied research. The quote that was important in my mind was “The financial impact of this act is not determinable at this time.”

Given a year's experience — a rather busy year, I would imagine — can the witnesses give us a sense of the scope of what they see looming as the financial impact of — maybe it's not; maybe it's all just smooth — the passing of the *Yukon University Act*? So, you were Yukon College and now you are Yukon University — what is the difference in terms of the financial security or lack thereof of the university?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I would like to break that response down a little bit. First of all, there are a great many articles in the *Yukon University Act* that we can't implement right away and that will take time for us to understand how to implement them and what the implications of those are. At this time, though, we are operating within our means. We typically operate a fairly lean organization to begin with. Any growth or change that we make as we progress further into the university journey will be cautious and very incremental based on the students we serve and based on the partners we work with. We are able to deliver everything that we are supposed to deliver within our current budget. We are relying on our foundation, as are most post-secondary institutions across the country, to help us supplement that money. We also have a very thriving third-party contracting and entrepreneurial side of the university that brings in its own revenues to support the programs that we need to deliver.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that. I guess the reason why I asked that question is because, as a college, the parameters and the expectations are much more constrained. As a university, as the witness has just outlined — and we have heard today some ambitious plans with respect to expansion and the science building, but I also heard him — and perhaps the witness can correct me if I misheard — but what I heard was that there was an \$86-million goal for the Yukon Foundation, of which there has been \$2 million raised. The Yukon doesn't have the deep history of, say, the Maritimes, where you have historic and small universities — small towns — but universities have deep roots of 100 and 150 years, where you have Bay Street lawyers who are going to put in \$100,000 or \$1 million. We don't have that tradition in this territory yet; hopefully, we will see that, but we don't have that.

What I am trying to get at is \$2 million — there was a significant amount of work done before the university was declared, in terms of reaching out and the various arrangements that were referenced by my colleague down the way to get that momentum going. Can the witnesses identify whether or not that has been a bit of a hiatus over the last little while or what initiative efforts have been underway with respect to augmenting the amount in that foundation? I don't know if that is the board or the administration.

**Mr. Morrison:** As Dr. Matear talked about in her previous response, this is not a “turn on the lights and we change everything”. The transition is meant to be a slow transition. It is meant to live within the means that we have and the money that we have. We have a lofty goal from the fundraising side of things. That alone will take some time. We have already raised \$2 million plus, and we see that as ramping up over time as we get people who we were able to talk to who will understand the Yukon University path forward in the future and want to support that future. So, I think that we will grow. We will grow slowly for a while and, as we get our feet under us and we have the resources, we will be able to start to grow a little faster down the line, but there is no speedy path to a full-blown grand university, as our southern competitors are. We will take our time and manage our resources.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, if I may add a comment to our chair's response, I would like to point out that our foundation is still very young, and when COVID hit six months ago, many of the funding organizations with whom we work froze their funding, and so, that provided a little bit of a slowdown. That being said, we have an RFP out right now, actually, to work with fundraising and campaign experts who can help us develop a plan that will formalize and help us to understand the steps we need to take to raise \$20 million. So, our shorter term — and when I say “shorter term”, I mean five or six years — our shorter-term goal is about \$20 million. We are looking for expert help so that we can understand how we can actually raise that funding, and then we will move on from there.

**Ms. Hanson:** I appreciate that, and I do appreciate that, of course, during this time, things just shut down, so that activity is not high on many people's — well, it's high on those who need the money — but those who are giving it have been holding off, I think. I raised it in part because when we were

talking about the science building — and so we have an ambitious target, as I heard, to have that completed by 2023-24, but we have a gap of \$10 million. We have \$2 million in the bank. What contingency does the university anticipate being able to draw upon to fill that \$8-million gap?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, we have some promising irons in the fire, but I am unable to elaborate any more than that at this time.

**Ms. Hanson:** You know, Mr. Chair, there are probably a million questions that I could raise, but right now, I don't have them at the top of the head.

I apologize to the witnesses. If we had a bit more notice, we could have had a better presentation this afternoon or more in-depth questions. I just had a suggestion though that the witnesses may want to follow up with the Government of Yukon, perhaps the Minister of Economic Development, when they're talking about the need to find a place to self-isolate students, given that they are providing accommodation relief — or the Minister of Tourism and Culture — in hotels. We have a whole bunch of hotel rooms that are getting paid to be empty, so perhaps there might be some collaboration that may be offered.

Anyway, I thank the witnesses for their presentation this afternoon and for being here, and I look forward to the follow-up information that they undertook to provide to me and to the member from the Yukon Party.

**Chair:** Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't have questions. I see that the Official Opposition and the Third Party have ended their questions a bit early. I'm wondering if the Chair would permit Mr. Morrison or Dr. Matear to finish if they had any other additional remarks from their opening statement. I'll ask you that question first and then I'll proceed after that.

**Chair:** I would beg the indulgence of the members. If it's fine with the members, I have no objection to Mr. Morrison finishing his opening comments.

**Mr. Morrison:** I have to find where I was when I stopped. This is a bit of a guess, but I thought I got through the top 50 research colleges and then I think I ended just about there, so if you will bear with me.

I will start with this: Since March, all of our lives have been dominated by COVID, and the planned celebrations that we had that I think we were all looking forward to for the university were placed on hold. We did roll out the new colours, name, and logo across the territory and it seems — at least if you're up at the university — that students, staff, and faculty have embraced that in a big way. We did get quite a bit of national media across the territory and across Canada celebrating Canada's first northern university.

Dr. Matear has talked a good bit about this, but we did pivot most of the classes to online classes for the summer and, over the summer, developed safety protocols for in-person labs and trades. We set out protocols for those. If you've been to the university lately, it's not an open door which we think of universities as. There is control at the front door. There are standards that everybody has to meet going in and out of the university so that we know who is in the buildings.

The student success team created the Connect2YukonU service to improve response times and access to services for students adapting to a new online reality. Continuing Studies and the Northern Institute of Social Justice are reaching more Yukoners than ever before with virtual and online offerings of their short, professional, personal, and organizational development courses, workplace certifications, wellness, and social justice training.

Despite the pandemic, we have successfully delivered summer kids camps to 376 children and youth, giving them an introduction to Yukon University that we hope will stay on their radar as they continue their education. Hundreds of people have taken blended online and in-person first aid training classes since May.

With the support of CanNor and Yukon government's Department of Economic Development, our Innovation and Entrepreneurship team launched PIVOT. I talked a little bit about the award that we have just been recognized for with the PIVOT program, which is a rapid response program to help both seasoned businesses and early start-ups engage customers and adjust business practices and supply chains during the pandemic. Forty-four coaches and experts were hired to support 66 Yukon businesses. The initiative added \$255,000 to the local economy. Seventy-two percent of the supported businesses were women entrepreneurs; 25 percent overall were based in rural Yukon.

The same team is partnering with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association and the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon to deliver Elevate, a program focused on developing businesses for re-entry into tourism markets once travel restrictions are lifted.

This month, with a generous \$100,000 donation from RBC, we are embarking on the creation of a comprehensive mental health and wellness strategy. Input from students, staff, faculty, and elders will guide the design and delivery of a new expanded initiative. These donations are just some of the fantastic fundraising we are achieving from donors who are excited and inspired by the work of our amazing researchers, faculty, and students. Overall, our dedicated faculty, staff, and students have risen to meet the COVID challenges with patience, grit, grace, and good humour. They are to be commended.

Of course, passing the legislation and bringing Yukon U into existence was only the beginning. We have a deep bench of resilient, experienced leaders across the entire university ready to meet any challenges to come. I am hopeful of the future ahead. Having a truly northern university expands opportunities for Yukoners to learn, contribute, and lead on issues vital to all Canadians — such as climate change, indigenous self-government, and sustainable resource management.

Now the real work begins as we hear from Yukoners, map out our future, and set the stage for all northerners to lead and inform national debates and dialogues.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like to take the opportunity to thank both Dr. Matear and Mr. Morrison for being here today

and answering all the questions that the opposition and the Third Party had for them and providing a great picture of the future of Yukon University on behalf of their organization and on behalf of all Yukoners.

I would like to thank them for being here and would ask that you dismiss the witnesses, Mr. Chair, as they have completed their service to us here today and issue them thanks on behalf of us all.

**Chair:** Thank you, Ms. McPhee. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Dr. Matear and Mr. Morrison for appearing here this afternoon. The witnesses are now excused.

*Witnesses excused*

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

**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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

#### **Chair's report**

**Mr. Hutton:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to Yukon University.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, 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:** The House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on Monday.

*The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.*