



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 73

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, December 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

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

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

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

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Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, December 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of contact tracing team, health care professions, and essential workers

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge and thank the health care professionals who have made an invaluable contribution to Yukon's pandemic response. The contact tracing conducted by the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit — the YCDC — as well as work done by the office of the chief medical officer of health and the COVID response unit has been essential in keeping our entire Yukon Territory community safe.

Contact tracing is a key to slowing down the spread of COVID, protecting you, your families, and your community. It requires a special skill set that has been utilized in historical disease outbreaks such as tuberculosis, measles, and other transmissible infections. Contact tracers have a profound level of investigative health science and communication skills, which are paramount to tracking the hosts and transmission rates of the virus.

From the time when a positive COVID case has been identified, YCDC investigates possible exposures, using sophisticated tracing methods. Citizens who fall within all levels of exposure are contacted and advised of the next appropriate action. Tracing potential contacts and providing public health guidance ensures that community members who may have been at risk of exposure are doing their part to stop further transmission. Navigating these complex situations is no easy task, since the person is most infectious in the first three to five days of the infection. YCDC staff work with the individual to help them to understand COVID, support their immediate health needs, and put together the puzzle of the individual's interactions from the previous one or two weeks. That is why contact tracers need to fully identify the potential person's movements and who their other contacts may have been. Often, a person who has just received a positive COVID test will be experiencing many different emotions and it takes a skilled, calm, and dedicated contact tracer to help identify all the pieces of the person's story.

Contact tracing techniques and public exposure communications have been and continue to be conducted in the most timely and diligent manner by our essential YCDC and

community nursing staff. Their swift and effective efforts ensure that Yukoners are contacted and provided with the most accurate and recent information about their situation. They work hard to determine not only from whom they got the virus but who else could be at risk of getting it. The YCDC's precautionary tracing measures help to ensure that members of the public are able to receive the support that they need regarding possible exposure, allowing Yukoners to make the best decision for themselves, their families, and their communities going forward.

During these challenging times, services like contact tracing have a big impact on the mitigation and support systems that continue to serve our community well. It is one of the single most effective tools in the investigation, identification, and containment strategy to reduce the ongoing spread of COVID-19.

Thank you to the following nurses at the Yukon Communicable Disease Centre who make up our contact tracing team: Angie MacNeil, Chris Cash, Darlene Lewis, Griffin Brunger, Jan McFadzen, Janelle Greer, Jean Fraser, Jessica Jobin, Lori Strudwick, Cathy Stannard, Michelle Caws, Rachelle Wallace, and Stephanie Combs.

Thank you also to the medical office assistants who play a huge role in records management, as well as answering all the phone calls and supporting the nursing staff: Angela New, Brandi Raymond, and Melinda Hagblom.

I would like to also say mahsi' cho to the nurses from the communities, as you help provide backup surge support to the YCDC team when there are huge numbers of contacts to follow up with. In a territory of our size, the work of one individual can and does make a difference. We are a strong and resilient territory. With the help of our health care professionals and the teams, I am confident that we can get through the second wave by being proactive and continuing to be supportive to one another.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to everyone working on the front lines and behind the scenes to keep Yukoners safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House today to say thank you to the contact tracing team and to a long list of Yukoners who deserve our appreciation and gratitude.

We have teams of people managing contact tracing, answering inquiries, providing information and test results, figuring out logistics, and enforcing orders. We give our sincere thanks to them as their job descriptions have certainly broadened over the last seven months. They truly deserve all of the appreciation as their worlds have been turned upside-down and they have very stressful working long hours and I'm sure are carrying the worry home, as jobs don't always stop when one finishes their shift.

To the health care workers and EMS workers administering tests daily on top of their other regular duties, we thank you for your continued dedication and for your

adaptation to the ever-changing landscape. Mobilizing to perform COVID tests at a carwash was unexpected, but this pandemic has been so unpredictable. Thank you for your support.

To the staff and nurses at the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit, thank you for your continued work informing and educating all of us. It's not an easy task keeping test results and information flowing. You are doing an amazing job keeping Yukoners informed and keeping transmission levels down.

To all of the health care professionals at the hospitals and community nursing stations, nursing staff, physicians, lab staff, and all of those in positions that support health care for Yukoners: Thank you for going above and beyond in your care of patients. This is a trying time for the world and Yukoners, but especially for those in the health care field. We have heard from health care professionals who are facing backlogs of patients and procedures. Wait times can be frustrating, and I'm sure that we have all heard a story or two. We might personally be affected by delays in procedures. Know that your health care teams are working to the best of their abilities with the resources that are provided to them.

To those who work directly with our most vulnerable Yukoners, the staff and health care teams at our continuing care centres: We applaud the efforts that you are making to ensure a healthy, safe environment for residents every day, all day.

To those who are in the field of education, to teachers and EAs, administrators, staff, and paraprofessionals: Thank you for your continued dedication to our students and their education and safety.

Thanks to all of our essential workers who have been providing services to Yukoners from day one, working directly with the public to ensure that our daily needs are met in as safe a manner as can be — some work in our many stores, from groceries to hardware, providing customer service, and keeping shelves stocked. Others provide custodial services to businesses and public buildings to ensure a safe environment for the patrons. Truck drivers drive long distances to move goods in and out of our territory. Thanks to all of the owners, operators, and staff who keep the doors open and allow us to access necessary goods and services — bus drivers who transport our kids to school and those who provide transportation to the public.

I'm sure that we have missed many, but please know that it is unintentional. We know that Yukoners are the most giving people and helpful to one another, especially during these trying months. Yukoners are continuing to prioritize safety within their communities, and that deserves our special appreciation.

As we head into the holiday season, be mindful of others, and don't hesitate to thank those who might need an extra boost in their day. A simple thank you can make such a difference. Let's pray that the criticisms are few and that the thanks are plentiful.

Applause

Ms. White: Words aren't adequate to express our thanks to all of those who are working on the front lines of this pandemic — to those who are standing in the eye of the storm. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do, for the compassion you show and the support you offer in times of fear. Thank you for the sacrifices that you have made in support of others, from missing time with family and friends — maybe the occasional bedtime story — and putting your own needs behind the needs of others.

Thank you for your efforts to maintain our sense of normalcy in times that are anything but normal. Your capes may not be visible, but we all know that we're being supported by superheroes. Through your efforts, our friends, neighbours, and communities are that much safer, so we thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling, pursuant to section 23(2) of the Yukon *Housing Corporation Act*, the Yukon Housing Corporation's annual report for 2019-20.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House recognizes the tragic natural disaster in Haines, Alaska and encourages Yukoners to show their support for our neighbours during their time of need.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Nunavut to address problems with respect to insurance, including:

(1) commercial insurance rate increases of 30 to 50 percent for northern Canadian businesses, particularly in the accommodations sector;

(2) rate increases for condominium corporations on condominiums; and

(3) cessation of service to northern Canada by many insurance providers.

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

THAT this House congratulates Keith Byram, Jack Cable, Bess Cooley, William Klassen, Dr. Sally MacDonald, Agnes Mills, Doug Phillips, Gertie Tom, Ron Veale, and

Frances Woolsey for their induction into the Order of Yukon for 2020 for their demonstrated excellence, achievements, and outstanding contributions to Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to recognize the unique challenges of the north by making COVID-19 vaccines available to the three territories on a higher than per capita basis.

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

THAT this House expresses its solidarity with residents of Haines, Alaska and urges the Government of Yukon to participate in relief efforts, both financially and otherwise.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Government employees working from home

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The health and safety of employees and all Yukoners has been our top priority since the beginning of this pandemic. Back in March, the public service reacted quickly to the threat of the pandemic, and in line with the advice of Yukon's chief medical officer of health, employees were directed to work from home wherever it was operationally possible.

The public service did an exceptional job moving quickly to ensure that all employees had the technology and other necessary supports to work from home effectively. When Yukon moved into phase 2 and 3 of *A Path Forward: Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions*, the territory moved through the process of gradually reopening. The Yukon government public service followed suit with direction to employees to begin a slow and gradual return to the workplace.

As part of this gradual return to work, many new health and safety measures and precautions were implemented to support employees. We are continuing to adapt and enhance safety measures in all workplaces as the situation evolves, in accordance with the advice and recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Many employees have continued to work from home since March while many have been eager to return to the workplace. Our Yukon government is a large organization with varied operations among our departments. It is important to recognize that many of our employees cannot work from home, as they deliver critical and essential services to the public from the official workplaces.

As a result of the unique nature of the work carried out across departments, there is inevitably going to be some variation in the number of employees working remotely across departments. Looking at the organization as a whole, in late March, approximately 50 percent of Yukon government employees were working from home, either full or part time. By late June, that number was 34 percent, and on November 16, 11 percent of the Yukon government employees were working from home, either full or part time.

Over the last two weeks, as of December 2, this number has gone up to 13.7 percent. We expect this number to continue to increase in the coming weeks. The Public Service Commission is currently developing additional guidance following the chief medical officer of health's December 1 recommendation for employers to increase the number of employees working from home, where possible. We expect that to be issued no later than Friday.

Within the Government of Yukon, some positions are well-suited to working from home; others are not. Departments have successfully and safely managed their workplace within the parameters of the guidance provided, displaying an exceptional level of professionalism while continuing to deliver the services that Yukoners depend on. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, we will remain nimble and adjust accordingly, continuing to ensure that Government of Yukon workplaces are safe. We will continue to prioritize the health and safety of all public servants and ultimately all Yukoners while maintaining the exceptional service delivery that is characteristic of this public service. We will continue to learn from this experience as we further develop a long-term approach to working from home for the Government of Yukon that will endure well beyond this pandemic.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to reply to this ministerial statement today. The Yukon Party Official Opposition believes in taking necessary measures to keep all Yukoners safe while adjusting to the realities of the pandemic. That, of course, includes working from home.

In March when the pandemic first hit, Yukoners quickly adapted to this new reality. Employers put in guidelines, and employees, when they could, worked from home. This meant learning some new technologies so that they could keep connected with their co-workers, employers, customers, and the public in general.

All employers and employees, both in the public and private sector, functioned as they could through the spring and summer. As we got into the fall, some of those folks were able to get back into the office, but we knew that the reality was that they could be working from home again.

As the minister has just indicated, more public service workers are indeed shifting to a working-from-home environment again, with the Public Service Commission issuing new guidelines shortly. However, I have to mention that, with the new reality of working from home and new technology comes the issue of connectivity. Suffice it to say, you can't really stay connected with your co-workers and your employer if you don't have solid, reliable computer or cellphone connectivity, both with in-house computer networks and overall Internet connection.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, it was disappointing to hear the Minister of Highways and Public Works chuckle yesterday when asked about recent issues surrounding the government's computer network. How can the public service work from home when they do not have a reliable government IT network?

That also includes other government-related services, such as the Hospital Corporation. When asked about a specific computer network issue concerning the Hospital Corporation, the minister did not even mention the Hospital Corporation in his response. He instead touted the Dempster fibre line project.

While he can talk all day about the Dempster fibre line, the reality is that this redundant line, a project that has seen years of delays under the Liberals, is not helping Yukoners today. In fact, Mr. Speaker, YESAB documents indicate that the line will not be complete and operating until 2025. I sincerely hope that the pandemic will be long over by then.

The minister says that the government is working on a long-term approach to working from home that will endure long after the pandemic. We look forward to scrutinizing this long-term approach when it is released, but for now, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up by saying that I hope all Yukoners, including those who are working from home, remain safe in the coming weeks and months.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission for his statement today regarding the actions being taken by this government, as the employer of over 5,000 Yukoners, to follow the advice and direction of the chief medical officer of health regarding safe work conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are also pleased that the statement comes after persistent attempts by the NDP, including as recently as this week, to get the minister to articulate how Yukon government, as the single largest employer in Yukon, has adapted to the evolving demands of both the continued provision of services across the wide spectrum that Yukon public servants do every day on our collective behalf, as well as finding means of protecting the health and safety of not only those front-line workers whose jobs necessitate regular contact with others, but also sought to understand how the minister has acted to ensure that the directive that he authorized in June regarding working arrangements during the pandemic was being implemented across the public service.

We recognize that many public servants work in settings where they do not have regular contact with the public. As the impact of COVID in the Yukon has evolved to the point where, as we said yesterday, the chief medical officer of health has advised Yukoners to work from home as much as possible — stating that, if you can do so without disrupting workflow or service to others, please work from home. That is a pretty broad parameter for the minister to work within, and we will be interested to see the guidance that the Public Service Commission will be providing tomorrow to Yukon public servants with respect to work-from-home arrangements.

I note the minister's comments about adapting to work-from-home arrangements based on what was learned when the pandemic began. Can the minister indicate whether or not the Public Service Commission, following the lead of other private and public sector employers across the globe, has done any surveying of the 50 percent of Yukon public servants who, he indicated initially, worked from home to determine what the experience was like — what worked, and what did not?

Equally challenging is assisting management in the public service to grapple with their management responsibilities. When structuring and leading a workforce that is working remotely — for managers, it can be hard to understand what remote workers are going through, especially if they themselves have never worked remotely from home before. What tools will the Public Service Commission be working to develop with the public service management to assist them to adapt to these changed arrangements?

I hope that the minister recognizes that, for many people, jumping into managing remote teams due to the pandemic is a baptism by fire. Many of the skills that people have mastered in an office setting do not translate directly to managing remotely. Again, this is where working-from-home surveys can help ensure a smooth transition as well as necessary ongoing adaptive measures required by both Yukon government management and employees to make remote working effective and efficient for all involved.

We look forward to regular updates from the Public Service Commission with data indicating the number of public servants working from home, remotely, and the adaptive measures or assistance offered to facilitate work-from-home arrangements, along with regular updates from a survey of both employees and management.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions for many. If we can use any of the experiences of the past nine months and the coming months to create new remote work standards of excellence, there will be at least one positive outcome of the dire circumstances that we all face together.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the opposition members for their questions, comments, and support for this ministerial statement this afternoon. I will tell the Member for Whitehorse Centre that we have indeed surveyed our employees. We will continue to do that, and we are working toward more permanent work-from-home rules and procedures for the Yukon government that will serve us well beyond this pandemic.

Over the last three weeks or so, we have seen our caseload double. We have all sacrificed so much over the last several months to keep our territory and our friends, families, and neighbours safe. We cannot let things get out of hand now, certainly not on the cusp of a COVID vaccination program.

We have to shore things up. We have to take a look at what we're doing and be more considered. We have to continue with the "safe six", wear our masks, and, yes, start to limit the vectors of exposure. That means limiting the number of people with whom we interact. Part of that is getting more people out of our offices to work from home, where it is possible. This is what the chief medical officer of health is recommending for the Yukon. He is doing that because, from a public health perspective, it will play a role in slowing or stopping the spread of this virus. It will take some load off of our great contact tracing operation, and it will keep our loved ones, friends, and families safer.

I have asked every department and corporation in this institution to look at their workforce with a view toward public

health. Who can work from home in the name of public health? That is the lens, Mr. Speaker. It is not about convenience or who is great to have on hand in the workplace. It is about: Who can I send home today to do the job that they have been assigned? How do I do that? What do I need to do that, and what do they need to do their jobs? How do I get that done? — and then doing it.

We are already well on the way to success. We know what needs to be done. In the early days of this pandemic, the Yukon government sent 50 percent of its workforce home. We deployed tools and refined them over the intervening months, and we slowed the pandemic. It works. It was cited on the news this morning as one of the reasons that Ottawa is bucking the trend in Ontario, bringing its daily cases from hundreds or thousands to just 45 a day — a huge accomplishment. We are trying to stop our own daily case count, and we can do it. This is one of the tools that we are going to employ.

This year, the Yukon government was again named one of the top 100 employers in Canada by Mediacorp, and this is relevant because of the context of this year's criteria. The list was drafted with an eye to how employers have innovated to provide support for employees in communities throughout the pandemic. Mediacorp said that the best employers are better prepared to move quickly in response to a rapid challenge like the pandemic. The top employers made a difference with their employees and their communities.

While a few government agencies were named, there was only one government named — ours — the Yukon government. It made the list because of its responses to the pandemic — its commitment to its workers and its community. I want to thank the hard-working civil servants for all that they have done through this public health crisis, and I ask these professionals, once again, to cast an eye to their business to see who can be tasked with working from home in the cause of public health to blunt what is hopefully the last wave of this global illness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 2

(Standing Order 28)

COVID-19 vaccine distribution to the territories

Mr. Cathers: I request the unanimous consent of this House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity pursuant to Standing Order 28 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. The motion reads:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to recognize the unique challenges of the north by making COVID-19 vaccines available to the three territories on a higher than per capita basis.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is fairly simple. We want to send a united message to Ottawa that we believe that rural and remote parts of this country cannot be treated the same as urban centres, and this is particularly true in the north. We have asked a number of questions about the plans being developed here in the Yukon for the rollout of the vaccine once it arrives. We have asked these questions on behalf of Yukoners who are seeking this information and want to better understand what will happen

in a few weeks when the federal government begins providing vaccines to the territorial government for distribution.

While these are important questions, and we will undoubtedly be asking more in the coming weeks, we recognize that the procurement and supply of the vaccines themselves rest in the hands of the federal government. We also recognize that the Premier is meeting with the Prime Minister and premiers regularly and that he has been clear that the Yukon's position is that different considerations need to be given for rural and remote parts of the country, especially the north. This is very much in line with the position that we in the Yukon Party have put forward on behalf of Yukoners for many years. The per capita funding is inadequate in the north due to factors including our large land mass and sparse population.

In a pandemic, our health care systems in the north have very limited surge capacity to handle an outbreak if one occurs. We believe it's important that Yukoners speak with one voice on this issue on the national stage and that unanimously passing a motion will help the Premier make the case to the federal government that we are united across party lines in support of the health care needs of the Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut. That is what this motion seeks to achieve.

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge has requested unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Haines, Alaska natural disaster relief

Mr. Istchenko: Yesterday, we saw some truly scary imagery come out of the community of Haines, Alaska. The mudslides there have destroyed homes and, tragically, people are missing. The people of Haines are our friends, neighbours, and family, and despite the current COVID border restrictions that have sadly split us up, many Yukoners regard them as part of our community.

Has the government reached out to the government of Alaska to see if they require assistance in dealing with this emergency? Will we deliver help?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite. We've been having conversations internally here. It started with the Minister of Highways and Public Works early yesterday reaching out to Commissioner MacKinnon of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. I know that EMO has reached out to the Department of Homeland Security as well, in Alaska, to offer our assistance. This offer was, as you can imagine, very well appreciated. They are working back and forth right now, and they will let us know if they want to take us up on our offer.

We have a mutual aid agreement with Alaska, as members opposite know, and any request for support would be coordinated through EMO. The US Army Reserve has several trucks en route to Haines, and we will escort them through, as

the highway is currently closed due to icy conditions, and we are monitoring that situation as well.

I just penned a letter this morning to be sent out rapidly to Governor Dunleavy. Suffice it to say, Yukon will be there for Alaska.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

Mr. Hassard: If distributed on a per capita basis, Yukon would likely only see 3,300 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine before March. Yukon needs a plan to prioritize this, because if distributed on a per capita basis, there will not be enough for every member of high-risk groups in the territory for the first quarter of 2021.

Alberta has publicly released details of their plan to prioritize the initial vaccine doses, and their plan indicates — and I quote: “Those vaccinated in Phase 1 include long-term care and designated supported living residents and staff in those facilities, on-reserve First Nations individuals over age 65, seniors aged 75 and older, and health-care workers most needed to ensure workforce capacity and who are most likely to transmit COVID-19 to those at greatest risk.”

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us when Yukon will publicly release a similarly detailed plan?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services has much to say on this topic as well.

In general, the COVID-19 vaccine is absolutely going to be the next big shift in the responsibility for the pandemic, as we undertake the most complicated and complex immunization program ever delivered in Canada. It is a relief to see vaccines on the horizon for this virus. We have been challenged in many ways, and we’re making it through to a light at the end of the tunnel.

We are working extremely closely with federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts on vaccines. I’m in conversations, even today, with the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada and Minister LeBlanc. Canada and other provinces have recognized the unique needs in the circumstances of the north. We have been pushing that envelope extremely at every turn, at every meeting, at every FPT conversation — particularly when it comes to delivering health care in general, but the vaccine as well.

Proportionally, the territories have the highest health care costs in the country. Communities throughout the north are spread out over hundreds of kilometres and we are generally small and rural and often in remote and isolated areas. There are active conversations right now underway on the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine and these discussions are looking at rollout plans and priorities for all Canadians. We are pushing northern, rural, and remote as a priority for this government.

Mr. Hassard: The government has claimed that there is a plan for the vaccine rollout, but so far, they have kept it secret. The government needs to show more urgency in getting a plan for vaccine distribution and rollout developed and released publicly. Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam has stated that the decision as to who gets first access will ultimately lie with the provinces and territories.

This morning, Saskatchewan announced that their detailed plan will be released next week. Yesterday, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide their plan on how the government will determine who is high priority for the initial vaccine distribution, but the minister didn’t answer.

Can the minister at least tell us when Yukoners will be told how the Yukon government will prioritize the initial vaccines?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would be happy to speak about the vaccine. The member opposite has suggested that we don’t have a plan. I want to say to Yukoners that we need to remember that we just gave a tribute to our staff. The staff that we have and the management at Health and Social Services are well-positioned for the mass delivery of vaccinations. They have been doing it for many years throughout the annual flu vaccination campaign.

To give some perspective: In the first four weeks of our mass flu clinic this year, 12,468 Yukoners were vaccinated. That is more than a quarter of the territory’s population safely vaccinated in one month. I would like to hold up that team within Health and Social Services for the incredible job they are doing and the incredible job that they continue to do. We know that we have a team and an organization that is well-established and have the expertise to deliver vaccines in the territory. What we do not know yet is which type of vaccine — or perhaps vaccines — that the Yukon will be receiving. This will be further informed by our rollout.

Mr. Hassard: I actually said that the government claims to have a plan, but they seem to be keeping it a secret. This morning, the Saskatchewan Health minister told national media — and I quote: “... I want everybody to know: We in Saskatchewan are ready to go.”

“As soon as the federal government is able to start delivering the vaccine to us, we will be ready to deliver that to Saskatchewan people quickly and safely.”

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if Yukon is similarly ready to go?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I just heard from the minister was a yes. What I just heard was a record number of vaccines deployed for the flu vaccine just in the last couple of months. What I’m hearing from the minister is that we do have the plans to make sure that, as the news comes out about vaccines, Yukon will be ready for distribution.

If it’s a flu shot or a vaccine for COVID-19 — very similar processes. We are in a very good place right now. We will share information as it comes out, as far as vaccine planning. We have been pushing on a national level to make sure that northern, rural, and remote communities are at the forefront of vaccines, but I want Yukoners to know that what they need to do right now is to still practise the “safe six”.

We are not out of the woods yet, Mr. Speaker. We need people to hold on. It’s like holding your breath when you can still see the surface of the water. We’re there, folks. We just need you to be a little bit more patient and to make sure that we’re still maintaining our “safe six” and also still maintaining our humanity — being kind to others, being respectful to others. That’s really important at this time, and we will be announcing

the vaccine rollout when we have all the details and not a second beforehand, but right away.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic rent freeze

Ms. White: Housing is critical at all times, and even more so in the middle of a pandemic. Yukon laws offer little to no protections for tenants. There is absolutely no limit to how much a landlord can increase rent once every 12 months. In the middle of a pandemic, some tenants are facing hundreds of dollars in rent increases. This is unacceptable, and I hope that the Premier and his ministers agree.

The good news is that they have the power to do something about it under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. Will the government immediately implement a rent freeze until at least next summer to ensure that no tenant loses their home in the middle of a pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have used the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to put forward measures to protect renters during the pandemic. If they are affected by the pandemic, they are not to be evicted. That is the rule that we have put in place. The member opposite is looking for more support. I thank her for bringing forward this suggestion. We will happily look at it. I said that during debate on the budget just recently.

I also want to note, though, that I am getting mixed messages from the members opposite. They have criticized, for some time now, ministerial orders, but in the two times that they have stood up in Question Period to ask me about ministerial orders, it has been to please introduce new ones.

So, I appreciate that the members opposite are looking to keep Yukoners safe; so are we. I thank them for their suggestions.

Ms. White: In Ontario, Doug Ford has passed a rent freeze for all of 2021. I know it is hard to grasp, but Doug Ford's Conservatives have done more than this government to protect tenants from rent increases during a pandemic.

Yukon tenants deserve more. There are no circumstances that justify a rent increase of hundreds of dollars a month. The fact that Yukon laws allow rent increases without any sort of restriction shows that this government is not standing up for tenants. This government has had four years to change the act and to put a cap on rent increases, but they haven't. Because of their inaction, some tenants are now facing hundreds of dollars in rent increases, and there is nothing that tenants can do about it. People risk losing their homes in the middle of a pandemic.

Does the minister think that it's fair that tenants have no protection against unlimited rent increases? If not, when will he do something about it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, I think that we did something about it in April. I will look back to try to understand what the timing was, but we did bring in eviction protection. That was out of debate and discussion here in this Legislature. We did bring it in April. I think that, just shortly after that, I stood up with the Minister of Economic Development to talk about support for employees — to give them additional support — and so we have supports that are out there now.

I appreciate that the members opposite are looking for more supports. As I have said previously, we will happily take

a look at that. Right now, I think that we acted quickly, and we will continue to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

Ms. White: I think that the minister will find that the eviction clause was negotiated by the NDP when we were asked by the Premier to pass a budget with very little debate.

I asked a very simple question, and I would like the minister to answer it directly. Does he think that it is fair that tenants have no protection against unlimited annual rent increases, especially during a pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: As I have often said in this Legislature, when we are here to work to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, we appreciate suggestions from all sides of the House. So, let me acknowledge and say thank you to the member opposite for the New Democrats' role in bringing forward that suggestion. Maybe she could thank us for bringing it in quickly. We did it right away.

Do we care about Yukoners and protecting them and about keeping them safe, well, and housed during a pandemic? Yes, we absolutely do.

Question re: Transitional housing for female inmates

Ms. Hanson: Yukon women continue to face a lack of real support when leaving the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. For years, women who are released after serving time at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or transitioning from federal jails have not had the option of going to a halfway house. For some women awaiting trial, this means that they have to remain in custody because there is no option available to provide proper supervision.

In August, the government issued a request for expressions of interest for a 24/7 supervised housing option for women transitioning back into the community or involved in justice matters.

Can the minister tell Yukoners where the plan for a new women's halfway house is at, nearly four months later?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I can advise the House that the Department of Justice is exploring options to establish dedicated and supervised community housing for justice-involved women in the Yukon. We know that it is critical that justice-involved women have access to structured and supportive housing and gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed services as they make their transition back into the broader community.

As such, we are in the community conversation phase of this project, discussing potential location and program models for the provisions of a 24/7 supervised community housing program. We're working with several stakeholder groups and other orders of government in that conversation. I will happily go out and speak with the department to get a timeline and bring it back through a legislative return for the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that response, Mr. Speaker, because women involved in the justice system don't have access to the same supports as men do. That's now — and has been. This means that some of them have to spend more time in jail simply because they are a woman. This is blatant discrimination.

The lack of a women's halfway house also undermines the objective of rehabilitation that is supposed to be the purpose of our justice system. Halfway houses are an essential part of a safe and supportive transition back to the community.

So, until the Yukon has a women's halfway house that the minister has talked about now beginning to work on, what is the government doing to address the lack of support for women transitioning back into the community today?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Even though I have risen to speak about it here today, I will note that the Department of Justice has been working on this for some time. I will find out when that work began, but we know that, earlier this year, on May 1, the John Howard Society began operating a 24/7 supervised housing program for justice-involved men. That was after the ARC was closing down. That centre opened up. I think that there was initial conversation right at that time. I had some conversations with the Minister of Justice about making sure that we are also looking at women, to support them. We agree that this is an important service. As far as I understand it, the Department of Justice has been working toward this.

I am happy to get more information for the Members of the Legislative Assembly on this important program, but I would just like to say thank you to the Department of Justice for the work that they've been doing to support those folks coming out of being in the corrections system. We want them to integrate well, and this is a great way to help them to integrate back into society.

Ms. Hanson: It would be a great way if it was applied equally to men and women. Unfortunately, there are no supports being provided to women.

Mr. Speaker, a building located on the property of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre was once utilized as part of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre's women's living unit. It was a residence for women in custody and offered them a separate living unit where they participated in a variety of life-skills programs that enabled them to transition back into the community. Elders were encouraged to visit and offer programming. With the completion of the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the building then became Takhini Haven, a group home for adults with intellectual disabilities. Currently, it stands empty and has been empty for quite a while.

Has this building been considered as a halfway house for women? If not, why not?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to say thank you very much for the question. I am happy to turn back to the Department of Justice to get an update for this House. I have indicated that the Department of Justice has actually been working over the summer to find adequate supports for women. I will say that we have been in conversation with the Challenge Disability Resource Group, with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, with Safe at Home, and with the women's transition home and Betty's Haven.

I think that, through these discussions with our partners, stakeholders, governments, and subject matter experts, it will help us to come up with a support system for the unique needs of justice-involved women in the Yukon. I'm happy to get an update for the members of this House on that good work.

Question re: COVID-19 exposure notifications in schools

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. This is neither open nor transparent. Parents, students, and staff deserve to know if there was a positive case in their school.

Will the government reverse this decision?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I appreciate that there are some continued questions and concerns from the school community and from the members opposite. The school operational plans are unique to each school. They were prepared by the school community, with the guidance of the office of the chief medical officer and with support from the department. These operational plans also cover how a school will respond if staff or students develop symptoms of COVID-19.

If there is a confirmed case, the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit will identify and directly notify anyone who has been in close contact with that case. They will provide direction on who should stay home and self-isolate. A confirmed case will not necessarily mean that a school will close. Again, the YCDC will provide the direction on who needs to stay home and self-isolate.

Again, we're following the recommendations and guidelines of the chief medical officer, and we will continue to do that. I look forward to further questions.

Mr. Kent: Last week, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services if the government consulted with the Yukon Teachers' Association before making the decision to not notify the entire school community if there is a positive case in a school. The minister did not answer the question at the time; however, since we asked that question, we have seen the YTA come out against the government's policy on this. The president was quoted in the *Whitehorse Star* as saying — and I quote: "I want solid information to be shared because I think our school communities deserve that."

The YTA also correctly pointed out that, despite the government trying to clamp down on information, the rumour mill will go wild regardless. Of course, this could lead to further problems, including misinformation. So again, I will ask the government if they will reverse the policy of not notifying the entire school community of a COVID-19 case.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We will continue to work with the chief medical officer of health, as I have stated, and the department will support the school communities in their unique operational plans.

If there is a confirmed case, Yukon Communicable Disease Control will identify and directly notify anyone who has been in close contact with that case. This will provide direction on who should stay home and self-isolate. A confirmed case, again, will not necessarily mean that a school will close. The YCDC will also determine who needs to be notified within the school community, while still ensuring the privacy and security of personal health information.

I want to just repeat that — ensuring privacy and security is absolutely vital in this situation. You have to really look at the fact that this is a very small jurisdiction and our children and families deserve confidentiality — as we all do. The Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit will notify parents directly if their child has been exposed — as well as the school administration — on a confidential basis.

I just really hope that Yukoners hear that message directly.

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kent: So, it is unfortunate and disappointing that the government is leaving this to the rumour mill to determine. Of course, this could lead to further problems, as I mentioned, including misinformation. Parents, students, and teachers have a right to know if there was a possible COVID-19 exposure in their school. Perhaps an individual in that school is immunocompromised, or someone in their bubble is part of an at-risk group. These individuals should have all of the information necessary to make an informed decision about whether or not to go to school.

Last week, we asked the Minister of Education if she consulted with school councils prior to the government deciding that they would not notify school communities.

So, can the minister confirm today if school councils were consulted in advance? If not, has the minister asked school councils for their opinions on the policy since?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yukoners need consistent leadership and accurate information. Referring to our system as “being left to the rumour mill” is really irresponsible, I think. It’s irresponsible for the members opposite to be talking about our system in Yukon to keep Yukoners safe. We just did a tribute to the good work that is being done in this territory to keep Yukoners safe. It is absolutely irresponsible for the members to be making those statements.

We will continue to work with our chief medical officer and we will keep the privacy and confidentiality of our students at heart. We’ll continue to work with science; we’ll continue to work with good evidence; we will continue to keep Yukoners safe.

Again, Yukoners need to know that any information that they need, they can find it at yukon.ca. I know that the school community is making every effort to ensure that all parents and children are well-aware of the COVID-19 plans.

Question re: ATAC Resources tote road project

Mr. Kent: So, the mining industry and the service and supply sector continue to raise concerns about the Liberal decision to deny permits for the ATAC tote road. Now, despite the minister’s best efforts to throw the department under the bus, the buck stops with him. The project received a favourable environmental assessment recommendation from YESAB in 2017. In 2018, the minister changed the rules of the game and added two more years to the process. As I pointed out yesterday, changing the rules midstream creates uncertainty. This decision is going to have a devastating impact on the Yukon’s reputation as a safe place to invest. We’ve already seen the Yukon drop as a favourable place to invest earlier this year, according to the Fraser Institute report.

What is the minister doing to salvage Yukon’s reputation as a safe and good place to invest?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, concerning the first comment that was made by the member opposite, I support the good work of the department. I absolutely understand that, at the end of the day, as the member opposite said, the buck stops with the minister — absolutely. I think that there is an application that we’ve talked about a lot this week. The technical team inside the department made their decision. I stand behind that decision. I do understand that part of the job, and I support the good work. They are hardworking people.

This sector — as much as you’ll hear from others — has been active over the last number of years. You can see it in their exploration numbers. You can see it in the opening of new projects. All of that takes a tremendous amount of work.

I do know a little bit about having to take on the communication piece. Coming into this job, there was a lot of work and salvaging to do.

We were coming out of a recession, and we had gone through a massive number of legal cases. What we were being asked, as we went out to mining conferences, was: Was there going to be some stability between relationships?

People felt, within the industry that — whether it was bankers or investment boutique firms — that was key. I have been down this road before, and I think the stability that we have now is leading to investment.

Mr. Kent: So, the Beaver River subregional land use plan was to be completed in March 2020, prior to the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. We’re nine months and counting past that deadline. This morning, yukon.ca says that the draft plan won’t be ready until March 2021, with the final plan to be determined.

Once again, we see this minister over-promise and under-deliver on timelines, with no end in sight for the completion of his plan. There are a number of other claim holders in this region who are active now and are looking for answers. I’ll ask again: Does the land use plan have to be completed before they can advance their projects, and if so, when will it be done?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just as of last week, we had a number of conversations throughout the geoscience conference with many companies. We’re always open for conversations with them. Our office can have those discussions. We’re probably not going to have them through the conduit of the critic for Energy, Mines and Resources, but we would always be open to having those discussions directly.

Overall, I think it’s important to say to the industry and to those who are looking to invest — I know this week, there’s another company that just formed and they are doing really well — a lot of investment into them. Tomorrow, they’re going to be announcing sort of their work on the stock exchange — a brand new company in the Yukon focused on mining in the Yukon, and it basically has been built around a commitment to the Yukon in trust.

Again, just a couple of quick things — for anybody who is out there, please engage early, often, and consistently. For those folks out there, building relationships on a people level is so important. Follow through, of course, for any of the companies,

on the promises they make with their stakeholders and for them to be patient.

Those are just some things that I would like to share today for any of the companies out there that are working — again, patience being the key piece as well.

Mr. Kent: I'm not sure if the minister heard the question, but I asked about the Beaver River subregional land use plan and when it would be done and if those claim holders have to wait until it is done to advance their projects.

So, we have been hearing from many companies and investors since this decision was made. The company most affected by the minister's decision has seen a 20-percent loss in their share price since Friday. The minister has said that all is well with the investment community, but we are hearing a much different story. Companies and investors are looking for a stable and predictable permitting process and this minister has thrown that out the window with his new way of doing business.

The big concern is that this project actually received a favourable environmental assessment recommendation in 2017, only to be denied by the minister just this last week.

So, what assurances can the minister give to the mining industry that they won't endure the same treatment as ATAC did, where the rules are changed at the eleventh hour?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it is important, as well, just to remind members opposite that — when you think about projects moving ahead in that particular region, the things that come to mind are the two mines that have opened over the last 24 months and that are employing people in that particular area. When it comes to folks who are working there, they are advancing those projects — I think that those folks are going to continue to advance their projects. They are going to continue to spend dollars and they can do that work.

Again, some of the notes that I just shared as answers to the last question as well — those are really good pieces of information and they actually come from the Yukon Chamber of Mines. For anybody — please, the Chamber of Mines has a mineral engagement and consultation tool, and it talks a lot about ways to engage. So, I think that folks should reach out to that.

You know what — we will continue to have conversations. We are seeing companies open in the Yukon. We are continuing to see investment. My sense is that we are going to see very extensive exploration next year. Also, I have service sector companies calling me now and saying that they need 40, 50, 60, 70, 120 people — so those are all things that indicate that we are going to continue to go in the right direction. I know that our reputation will continue to be there, but it has to be built on ESG models, and that is what we are doing here.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Streicker: 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 Acting Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing 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.

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

Recess

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

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

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

Is there any further general debate?

Women's Directorate — *continued*

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am just waiting for the officials to come in. We have Hillary Aitken today. She is the director of the Women's Directorate, so I am happy to have her join us today.

Before we get into further questions from the members opposite in the debate today, I just wanted to follow up on some of the — where we ended the last time was talking about the COVID-19 phone program. One of the questions that was on the floor was regarding lessons learned. I wanted to just give a bit of information in terms of that before we get into the other questions.

We recognize, of course, that the unplanned suspension of this program was disruptive, which was never intended. The program was created in order to respond to emergency needs. It was therefore designed without the necessary time to address all the risks. We have learned that, although we need to respond quickly to emergency needs, we also need to make sure that we take the time to put in place measures to mitigate those risks.

The Yukon Status of Women Council conducted an evaluation of this program in August 2020 by talking directly to 22 women who had received the phones. The most frequently identified uses of the phones, as identified by respondents, were: to stay in touch with friends — 100 percent; family — 90 percent; followed by education — 45 percent; then working — 27 percent. This initiative has certainly illustrated the need for ensuring safe and reliable access to phone and Internet

usage. However, the evaluation results also illustrate that, although there is a need for Internet access, affordability of basic phone use remains a barrier for many.

As a department, we have also learned that we have community partners who are ready and willing to identify problems and work together with us on solutions. We always need to make sure those relationships are well-defined, with clear roles and responsibilities.

I was so pleased to hear that the Yukon Status of Women Council successfully received funding from the Red Cross to operate a phase 2 of the program as of November 9. They are providing vouchers for cellphone plans and data. They have also employed a technician to provide support to women with their phones. Although this program did not operate exactly as planned, it is not a small accomplishment that 325 women now have access to a phone that they didn't have only a short month ago. The steps that we took helped this phase 2 of the program to get off the ground. I'm thankful to those organizations in the community that continue to provide support to women who need it.

Now I'll open for questions.

Ms. McLeod: I want to welcome the official back to the House this afternoon.

When we left off, I had been asking the minister some questions regarding the cellphone program. After the program was suspended in June, the minister said that the plan was to reinstate the service to the phones, but only to provide them with calling and texting capabilities with no data attached. Can the minister confirm that this was done? What was the cost per month for the service?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The phones were suspended for a couple of days, starting on May 29. All of the phones were reinstated by June 3. It was during that period. So, some were reinstated before June 3, but all of them were reinstated by June 3. The cost per month for the phones, as I stated previously, was \$40 per plan. When they were reinstated, they were reinstated for phone and text.

Ms. McLeod: So, the cost, as the minister said, is \$40 per month per phone for calling and texting capabilities. If there was a measure of data that was included in that, what is the additional cost to provide that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The total cost of the phone program ended at \$115,000. As I previously stated, the original amount per month was \$40. I will have to get back to the member opposite on whether there was a reduction there, but the total cost ended at \$115,000 for the program.

Ms. McLeod: I take it, then — and I thank the minister for the clarification — that the original contract was \$40 per month, which included phone calling, texting, and data.

Does the minister anticipate that this program will continue — and until what time or date?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I stated in my opening comments, our program ended at the end of July — July 31. The Yukon Status of Women Council has received funding from Red Cross to operate a phase 2, so this program has been in place as of November 9. They are providing vouchers for

cellphone plans and data. They have also employed a technician to provide support to help women with their phones.

Ms. McLeod: It is good news that the program is continuing, but I will take it, then, that the program is no longer in the hands of the Women's Directorate and is now centrally self-funded through the Status of Women Council.

Does the minister know if the plan is going to be expanded to include any more individuals who require access to a phone? I presume that it will be necessary to know how women are to access this program if indeed it is going to be expanded.

I'll just let the minister comment on that, please.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this program is now completely under the Yukon Status of Women Council, and it remains their responsibility. We know that the equipment that was provided — the 325 phones — are the property of the women who receive them. I do not have all of the details on whether new equipment is being provided at this time, but that's something we can certainly find out. We can return to the Legislative Assembly with that information.

Ms. McLeod: I would appreciate that information. While the minister is speaking with the Yukon Status of Women Council, perhaps we can find out what the outreach is going to look like and how this program might be expanded. One of my questions in all of this is: How many rural women have been serviced by this program? What kind of continuing outreach goes on to attract them to apply for this program?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We will return with the details of the current program. When we established the program, it was the Yukon Status of Women Council that did the direct outreach to those who were in need of this program.

The Women's Directorate at no time had access to the folks who were receiving these phones. Part of our partnership was to provide the funding through the Women's Directorate. The Yukon Status of Women Council had the direct contact with folks who were receiving — they were the ones who determined who got the phones. I certainly can get a breakdown in terms of how many were from outside of the City of Whitehorse. Our other partner on this program was Northwestel. They provided the equipment and the set-up of the phones.

Ms. McLeod: We've talked over the past number of weeks about unintended consequences related to COVID-19 restrictions. One of the major concerns is the increase in situations involving domestic violence. Aside from the cellphone program, have there been any changes in supports for those who may be experiencing an increase in violence in their homes?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes.

While I'm speaking to this, I would like to thank all of the shelters that have continued operating during COVID-19 — Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake, Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse, and the Dawson shelter. These services continued. They made the adjustments that they needed to in order to ensure safety and social distancing.

We also had the sexualized assault response team that was established in March 2020. The sexualized assault response team was implemented in Whitehorse and was expanded and

improved services available to victims of sexualized assault, including emotional, medical, and legal supports. Key components of this program include a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault. Victim support workers are available for after-hours support on weekends and a roster of on-call physicians specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault.

That was an additional service that came into effect just prior to the pandemic starting. We have introduced it in early March 2020, so that has been in place. I also know that all of the not-for-profit organizations that work to provide services to folks who are experiencing gender-based violence — all of the supports and resources that they needed to operate were provided. There was additional funding to those organizations provided through the federal government also.

One of the items in our supplementary budget is the safe ride program, so additional funds were provided for safe rides through taxi services. Those are some of the additional supports that continued on during the pandemic and were enhanced — and also the new sexualized assault response team.

Ms. McLeod: The minister referenced SART, and this has been a program that has been in development for some time — certainly predating the pandemic situation. I'm happy to hear that it's underway.

What I would like the minister to comment on is how outreach for SART is being done and how it is assisting women and others in rural Yukon. The minister has referenced the safe taxi transportation for those who need it here in the city. I'm wondering — I mean, not every community has taxis, of course, so are there other supports that are in place for rural Yukoners that would compare with this initiative that is helping folks in Whitehorse?

I'm looking for — I recognize the minister said that some additional funding has been provided to groups within Whitehorse. I'm wondering if additional funding was provided to, for instance, the women's shelters throughout Yukon to help them provide additional supports for women.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start in terms of the questions around the SART program and then I will go into some of the additional supports and resources that were provided to shelters.

Again, the SART program was introduced and, yes, it was under development for some time. I worked alongside my colleagues at Justice and Health and Social Services to establish this new approach to assisting folks who have experienced sexualized assault. This was established in March of 2020, so it was just before the pandemic started. It has been an important resource for women and/or anyone experiencing sexualized assault.

Again, the components of the SART program are: a 24-hour confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault; victim support workers are available after hours and weekends; and a roster of on-call physicians specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault is also part of the program. Agencies work closely together to ensure that services continue throughout the pandemic, with some modifications, where necessary, to

accommodate public health measures. The numbers of victims reaching out to SART agencies during the pandemic have been a little bit lower than we had thought and lower than the same time period in the previous year, which reflects national and international trends.

While I am speaking about SART, I will go through this a little bit — right now, we are moving into evaluating SART to determine what is working well and what gaps remain. We will be talking to agencies involved in SART as well as other community agencies that support victims of sexualized assault.

Once SART is fully implemented in Whitehorse, we will be working with communities to create a model that works for them. We acknowledge that, of course, communities have unique needs and are different from Whitehorse and we will work together to address those challenges.

I just want to make sure that I covered all of the components of the SART. I mean, we can continue talking about it a bit more.

In terms of additional resources to shelters — the shelters received \$25,000 per shelter from the federal government to enhance — and, again, all of the supports that we normally provide to our shelters were all provided under our transfer payment agreements. Additional dollars were provided through the federal government to the shelters directly. In the communities, the shelters do have mechanisms to assist women to get to the shelter, if they need that. We have provided some resources, as well, around the safe ride program in the City of Whitehorse.

In terms of additional funding — women and gender equality — which is where the funding was provided initially for the \$25,000 in the first round — there is also a second round of funding that is being worked on right now for organizations working on gender-based violence. This will be a total of \$45,000 per organization.

Ms. McLeod: So, the additional funding that the minister just referenced — is that included in this supplementary budget, or is that something that we can anticipate seeing in the spring budget?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have to clarify my previous comments. I made a mistake in terms of the \$45,000. This is a new fund of \$45 million to organizations that work on gender-based violence. The details are still being worked out around the distribution of that funding. That would be, I believe, for the new fiscal year or sooner — I'm not sure. We will get more details on that, but that is something that was just announced and is being worked on right now.

Ms. McLeod: The minister referenced a review of SART that is being undertaken. My last question today is regarding when that review will be finished, whether or not it will be shared, and who it's going to be shared with.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The evaluation is internal; it's an internal evaluation of SART. It's working with the implementation committee, which includes a number of partners outside of government as well. At this point, there is no plan to publicly release that document. I would be happy to share. It will help us to determine what's working and what

isn't working and to make the necessary improvements to it, as it is a new program.

In terms of the completion date, the data has now been gathered. It will be completed within the next couple of months. I will be happy to come back or provide information to members opposite. Of course, if there are changes to the programs as a result of the evaluation, we'll absolutely be sharing that publicly.

Ms. White: I thank the minister and the officials here today, possibly for the first time in the Chamber — very exciting.

Before we get started today, I just wanted to take a minute to really focus and offer my congratulations to all those who were involved in the creation of the sexualized assault response team, the SART. Words will never be adequate to say how important that is for people in the community.

I know that there are always growing pains at the beginning of things, but what we've signalled to folks experiencing this kind of violence, this kind of trauma, is that we hear you, we see you, and we'll do a better job at supporting you. I think that's really important. I appreciate that very much.

Something that just recently came out — and by "recently", I think it came out yesterday, dated December 2 — is the "Gender-based Violence in the Territories, 2018". I'll just ask if the minister can nod if she has seen the document. Excellent.

I was just checking, Mr. Deputy Chair, before I ask questions about it, very specifically, because it would be very unfair to ask about a document that someone hadn't seen.

It's dated for 2018 and it is about gender-based violence in the territories. The reason why I just wanted to bring it up right now is that the shocking truth is that Yukon — this is not an award that I think we would want to lead — leads in all three territories for percentages of both men and women over the age of 15 who have been the victims of physical or sexual assault. That is disturbing on so many different levels. We know that we have a violence problem in the territory. This has been long and ongoing.

I wonder if the minister had any thoughts. How is her department taking this information, and how will that get turned into action?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. We are aware of the report by Statistics Canada, entitled *Gender-based violence: Sexual and physical assault in Canada's territories, 2018*. We're currently reviewing the data. The report demonstrates the reality faced by victims of sexualized and physical assault in Yukon. We share concerns about the high rates of violence that Yukoners are reporting.

The Government of Yukon has been working to build more options and services to support victims of violence. As I've stated today, in March 2020, we launched the sexualized assault response team, which focuses on consistent and coordinated front-line response and on individual victim's needs, options, and choices.

In May, through the Department of Justice, we launched an independent legal advice program, which supports victims to access confidential legal advice so that they can make

informed choices about their next steps. Support is also available for victims of sexualized and physical violence through Victim Services.

A victim can seek support before they decide to report an alleged offence or even if they do not want to report the offence. We encourage victims to contact Victim Services. We can explore options with the victim based on their circumstances, help them make a safety plan, and access safe housing if they need it. Victim Services is independent of both the Yukon RCMP and the Crown.

I have worked closely with Victim Services in my previous life and when I was the director of justice for Kwanlin Dün and also in the work that I have done in other Yukon communities, particularly Watson Lake.

In terms of other responses to gender-based violence, specifically against women, we have been working for some time to support the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The work that we have done around Yukon's response is significant, and we're preparing, at this point, to release the final strategy for Yukon.

There are tremendous actions within this strategy. The Yukon government has worked closely with Yukon 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. These pathways are strengthening connections and supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability.

I have been a co-chair of the Yukon advisory committee. We met with partner stakeholders to finalize the Yukon strategy, and we are preparing to renew the 2016 declaration of the Yukon regional roundtable.

We're also working with community partners to host a gathering of family members of MMIWG — sorry, that's past.

The action plans that are coming out of the Yukon strategy are going to be significant and will really and truly change the story. This is a long-term strategy. There are 31 action plans within that strategy that will address safety issues, but also really look forward in terms of — when we did the strategy, we really looked at everything. We looked back at truth and reconciliation. We looked at all of the 231 calls for justice, so this is significant. The implementation of this strategy — although it is really focused on indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit plus — we know that it will change the story for all women through the implementation of the actions taken within it.

Ms. White: What work is the Women's Directorate doing to support the announcement that was made by both the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services toward the creation of universal childcare? As the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate working toward women's equality issues, childcare is a barrier that is unfortunately faced by more women than men in their ability to re-enter the workforce. What involvement does the Women's Directorate have in that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: When we work toward these types of initiatives, we work with a one-government approach. *Putting People First* was an initiative that our entire government supported. That is certainly one of the recommendations of *Putting People First*. The Women's Directorate and my role as Cabinet minister have been absolutely in support of that strategy.

That is something that is reflected also in the strategy for changing the story to upholding dignity and justice for Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. That is one of the items that is reflected in that strategy. So, again, looking at a one-government approach, we certainly are in support of it.

When I put on my other hat as Minister of Tourism and Culture, I reflect the same there. This is going to be a huge part of opening up opportunities for women to either re-enter the workforce or to enter for the first time, perhaps, or to go to school — so, absolutely in support.

I was talking to a young woman the other day — she is a mother of five children and she said to me that universal childcare will allow her to dream again. That was very moving to hear that reflection from that young woman. The Women's Directorate is absolutely in support. When we look at the one-government approach, we will be embedding the *Putting People First* recommendations throughout all of our work because it is vital, it is important, and it is going to help create healthy, happy, thriving communities with a people-centered approach.

Ms. White: Those are all the reasons why the Liberal government shouldn't delay on universal childcare. We know that the federal government has just announced that it is going to go into a five-year study. I feel like we are past that; I hope that we are past it, anyway — especially in Yukon.

Because we are talking about issues that affect women, does the minister have any information on the timing of the midwifery regulations and when we will see those in place?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our government remains committed to moving forward with the integration of funded and regulated midwifery services in Yukon's health care system. We're very thankful for the ongoing support and time given to this work from physicians, the Community Midwifery Association Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, among others. Successful implementation of midwifery will take the support of all of our health care providers, and we look forward to continuing the work with them.

One of the key components of the integration of midwifery is to ensure that Yukon midwives are able to hold full privileges at the Whitehorse General Hospital, and the minister responsible is working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to make sure that this happens.

We have heard from physicians, midwives, and experts across the country that midwives holding full privileges is really key to ensuring that Yukoners using midwifery services have access to continuity of care and to ensuring that midwives are able to work to their full scope of practice.

We are taking a phased approach with the integration of midwifery services in Yukon, with the establishment of full

midwifery services in Whitehorse as a first priority. Once the program is up and running, we will then look at how midwives can best practise services in Yukon communities.

I know that, while the pandemic situation resulted in some delays in the work, the minister is happy to be moving forward with the key recommendations from the Canadian Association of Midwives, which is to hire the necessary expertise to help move forward with the integration of midwifery into Yukon's health care system.

I would really encourage the members opposite to bring this forward again when the debate for Health and Social Services resumes in the House.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. If she had any influence on when Health and Social Services might be called up for supplementary budget debate, that would be fantastic. If she could put in a pitch for me to get the breakdown of the \$34 million that we have been asking for, that would be great.

I'm going to move on to the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues — or YACWI as it is often called. I think that it's important to note that this is legislation that was brought forward initially by Margaret Commodore. She was the first aboriginal Minister of Justice in Canada. Despite what we've heard in the Chamber, she was indeed the first female Minister of Health and Human Resources in Yukon. Since then — including our current Minister of Health and Social Services — that brings it up to four women who have led that department. That's awesome.

I have questions about YACWI and its direction, because there has been a lot of confusion in the community recently about what's happening with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start by acknowledging Margaret Commodore. She blazed the way for a lot of us and she is somebody I hold in high regard and have known my entire life. She was very, very close friends with my family, so she was part of my life always as I grew up in the territory. To see an indigenous woman in the Legislative Assembly was something that I — to be here today and to know that folks like Margaret blazed that trail for us is incredible. I have very high regard.

I know the history of YACWI and how it came to be and that it was Margaret Commodore who started this and it was very vital at the time. We value the advice of the recommendations that the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues has provided to the government since its inception in 1992.

However, much has changed in the last 30 years. The scope and capacity of the Women's Directorate and the community organizations have also grown and our understanding of gender has shifted as well. I think about the changes that happened. Self-government happened in the last 30 years. We have a number of self-governing First Nations as well.

In terms of gender-equality seeking groups — they have expanded in the territory. In recognition of this, I have worked with the council members to review the function and focus of YACWI in the current Yukon context. Although COVID-19 has impacted our ability to gather as a large group, revisioning

continues, with input from women's organizations and the LGBTQ2S+ organizations.

We are also continuing to advertise and recruit for new members who will bring expertise and representation to this council, always encouraging Yukoners who are passionate and working toward gender equality to consider putting their name forward.

The work toward revisioning continues. We currently have a contractor in place working with YACWI and other partners and stakeholders to work toward a revisioning of YACWI in Yukon's current context.

Ms. White: Just some questions: Does the minister believe that we have reached the point in Yukon where women are equal to men? Do we have the same opportunities? Have the barriers been removed? At this point in time, are men and women on equal footing in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think that the dial has moved, but we're not there. I don't believe that we are there. I believe that there still is a need for an advisory committee such as this, but revisioning is necessary at this time to reflect the current scope and capacity of the Women's Directorate.

Again, community organizations have grown and understanding of gender has shifted. So, we are looking to work with the current council and other stakeholders throughout Yukon to work toward some changes to the mandate of this council and to strengthen it. That is really the goal — to strengthen it into Yukon's current context, not taking away the focus on women and women's equality — because I do believe that we absolutely do need to have that focus now and into the future — but we also need to expand our capacity within this advisory council to look at the other equality issues that we have in our current context in Yukon.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. The reason why I ask is — I guess, a bunch of different things. I spent a lot of my time for the first number of years talking about the importance of gender-neutral washrooms and the importance of accessibility and being able to say if we use the bathroom. But what my friends always told me is that it wasn't about them taking away accessible washrooms for people with disabilities; it was about building better washrooms so that they could access them as well. I say this because, if we talk about YACWI — Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues — I would say that there is just as much reason to have a Yukon advisory council on gender issues where we could have a bigger table or a different table with different issues. I say this in terms of, right now, I believe that there is a lot of cross-pollination that would happen between issues that affect the LGBTQ2S+ community and the women's community, but also where they diverge and are quite different.

What I was taught about the bathroom issue is that it was really important that we didn't take away from one equity-seeking group to give to another equity-seeking group. What we really needed to do was to make sure that we had enough of both.

Has that come up as a conversation when we are talking about changing either the makeup or the direction of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues?

Hon. Ms. McLean: At this point in Yukon, we have 14 women's equality-seeking organizations. We have three LGBTQ2S+ organizations, and then we have YACWI on top of that. I want to just highlight some of the changes that have been made federally. Within the last two years, the Status of Women Canada made the shift to change their mandate to focus on women and gender equality. They changed their name and their mandate to be inclusive of the LGBTQ2S+ community, and it has been a successful change that we're seeing. I think that women and gender equality can live together.

It's really difficult for, I think, any minister coming in to ensure that you are able to meet with — and ensure that you have the perspective of — all of those organizations. I think YACWI, being more reflective of our current state in Yukon and our current context, would be helpful to any minister in the future. Making some of these adjustments now will strengthen it, and I do think an advisory body like this can be inclusive of women and other gender equality.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. When can we expect to see legislative changes for the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues legislation coming forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We're working with a contractor to do this review. If legislative changes are required, I would be working with our Cabinet Committee on Legislation to have any legislative changes brought onto the legislative agenda. I would want it to happen very quickly if legislative changes are needed, but I have to work with my colleagues. The chair of that Cabinet committee is the Minister of Justice.

Ms. White: Is the minister planning on changing either the title of the Women's Directorate — whether it's the title, whether it's the action — are there larger scale changes planned there?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are a lot of things under consideration right now. Again, I work with my colleagues at the Cabinet level. Those are matters that, when we have a final report and we make some decisions on possible changes, we would be having those discussions at the Cabinet level. I'm not the only one who would be making that decision if that were one of the options put forward. I would be working with all of my Cabinet colleagues to do that if that was the path forward.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

Seeing none, we shall proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the
amount of \$2,696,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures
Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed
to
Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,696,000 agreed
to
Women's Directorate agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will share a few comments at the start concerning the Energy, Mines and Resources supplementary budget. Before I start, I want to welcome the officials. Deputy Minister Paul Moore is here, as well as Assistant Deputy Minister Shirley Abercrombie. Both have spent many hours in here over the years on budget debate. Again, thank you for being here today and for the work that you folks do.

With Energy, Mines and Resources, it's important to just touch on the fact that folks can imagine that, between our last days in here in the spring until now, the teams have really had a tremendous amount of pressure, and folks have really risen to the occasion in a number of areas.

Some of our staff were requested to help with some of the work on borders and we are lucky to have folks who are very talented and understand that work. They have spent time ensuring the safety of Yukoners. As well, early on, there was a lot of discussion and hours spent on trying to ensure that — especially in the mining sector — there was activity happening both in placer mining and with exploration.

Again, the staff are really doing a lot of work directly with exploration companies, as well as reaching out to the companies that support those industries and also directly with the producers — Minto and Victoria Gold at the time — and also on the placer side. So, there was a lot of back and forth work with people providing good client services and working with other departments to ensure that people could move forward. I think, in the end, what we saw was a delay in our

season on the exploration side, but then the ability for folks to get out in a really long season where people are still actually undertaking exploration. As of last week, there were still at least one or two companies that were going to try to extend into mid-December.

On the placer side, we have seen what has turned out to be a record year for production. A lot of that work was made possible by the folks inside our departments, which we will just touch on in a second. Even the ability for the Yukon Geological Survey and minerals to work together and raise the Yukon mineral exploration program to ensure that we have had the most money in there — that has really led to a lot of reach to more grassroots exploration programs this year. We will go through them and have the opportunity to touch on particular branches and the work that they have done, but really, a lot of folks have really been stepping up to do the good work on behalf of Yukoners.

So again, Mr. Deputy Chair, I rise to present the first supplementary budget 2020-21 for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has an important role in regulating the responsible development of our natural resources. It is a diverse department, covering the mining, agriculture, oil and gas, land, forestry, and energy sectors. The total appropriations for this supplementary budget are \$1.1 million. This is an increase of about two percent to the department's 2020-21 O&M budget of \$63.4 million.

While some operations of Energy, Mines and Resources have been affected by the pandemic, the budget has essentially remained the same. The only change to report in the supplementary budget is a \$1.1-million increase to the funds available through the Yukon mineral exploration program. This increase provided additional support for mineral exploration projects for the 2020 field season, as part of the Yukon's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expenditures for the Yukon mineral exploration program have increased to a total of \$2.5 million, from \$1.4 million in funding to applicants for 2020-21. This additional investment contributes to the economic recovery spending that will support mineral explorers and enable the location, exploration, and development of mineral projects for the remainder of the fiscal year.

As I mentioned before, the budget for Energy, Mines and Resources has been largely unaffected by the pandemic. We were able to maintain our programs and services at a level to meet the needs of the public and maintain our regulatory responsibilities throughout this exceptional time.

This concludes my remarks for the first supplementary budget 2020-21 for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and I open the floor up to questions from the opposition.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the minister's opening remarks. I too would like to welcome the officials and thank the officials who provided the briefing to us as well on the supplementary budget and as well officials from the spring who briefed us on the mains. As many know, we didn't get a chance to touch on Energy, Mines and Resources in the spring, so I won't have

very many questions about the supplementary budget, but I do have some policy and overall budget questions related to the mains.

I do congratulate the minister on enhancing the funding to the Yukon mineral exploration program. It has been around for a long time. I think that it goes back to the early 1990s when that program was put in place by a New Democratic government. It has since been enhanced and it has changed somewhat over the years, but it certainly provides good seed funding to projects and helps some of those projects to hopefully eventually develop into working mines here in the territory.

Before I ask some questions — I don't think that I will get through all the questions I have today, but I will turn the floor over to the Member for Whitehorse Centre at around 5:00 p.m. so that she can get some questions in, just in case we don't get a chance to get back to EMR.

I just wanted to go back to Question Period today and the series of questions that I was asking about the ATAC project. In the minister's final answer — and obviously, having not seen the Blues yet, I can't quote him exactly, but he did reference a service and supply company that was hiring — I believe that the number was up to 150 people. I'm wondering if he can provide details to us in the House on which company that is, what kind of business they are in, and when they are looking to hire all of these individuals.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll identify the type of sector that they are in. That will probably lead the member opposite to know who it is. They are in the drilling business. They do drilling across the Yukon as well as in other jurisdictions. It's a great Yukon company.

Part of the dialogue with this particular company — I think it is even as high as maybe 100 people. They are quoting for the season. They always try to maximize the local labour force that works with them, but because they've grown to be a global company, from time to time, they're in a position where they're reaching out — and some of their staff are located in other countries, and they have brought those individuals to the Yukon when there has been a need. They have reached out and have asked to work with us. Really, it's not my role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but it also comes into play around the role as minister responsible for immigration. I've requested a meeting with Minister Mendicino at the federal level so that he's aware of this.

This also encompasses other areas of Energy, Mines and Resources — agriculture. Last year, we were in a position where we had some pressures because of COVID-19 and border restrictions and we weren't in a position to move some folks in. For anybody in the Assembly and those listening, if you've watched, there have been a lot of conversations about this across the country. It has been highlighted on different news outlets in the last number of days — more on the agriculture side. It's something that we have to really think about now.

We did receive a letter from the Chamber of Mines talking about — what's the plan by the Yukon government going into the next season? We get into challenging conversations, and

certainly we did this week. The reality is that we do have a lot of companies that we have sat with, and they are looking to commit pretty significant money next summer.

What we've said, in each and every meeting that we've had concerning this — and the deputy minister and ADMs were in meetings with me during the Geoscience Forum. We did them virtually. We spoke with companies and asked: What does the potential spend look like for your season? How many people do you believe you would have here, or how many people would you have to bring from another part of, potentially, the country? Are you thinking that you may need to do an alternative isolation plan for your exploration program? If you are, we would really like to work with you early on that.

February is the date that we have set to say that we would love to see people's plans early — and that's really about talking to industry, too, and the chamber. We want to make sure that we have the room and capacity within the Yukon to be able to provide the isolation — potentially in Whitehorse, if that's what happens. We also want to make sure that we're supporting all of the companies and that we're communicating that through the chamber. I know that the chamber will, in turn, ensure that the service sector folks also know what's going on so that they can tool up accordingly.

Drilling company — I think the member opposite probably knows who I'm speaking with. Feel free for them to reach out. They might need less folks, but there are numbers that have been sort of shared. I think that it was just a fair indication of what we hear is happening.

On the service sector side, more folks are — at least some of the folks whom we have talked to have said that, if they get the amount of work that they have quoted to date, it's going to be a really significant season. Part of my concern, as well, is that the "golden triangle" in northern British Columbia — as they call it. They have raised an exceptional amount of money as well since late spring, and there are already phone calls coming in from BC as well, because they look like they're going to have a pretty serious season.

We want to make sure that Yukon companies are supported and that they know the work that they have so they can be working in the Yukon, because there are going to be a lot of pressures from different jurisdictions as we go into it.

I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Kent: I have a few friends in that business, so I'll be able to reach out to them and get a sense of which company that is, but I have a good idea, based on what the minister told me, so I appreciate that.

At the briefing this fall for the supplementary budget, one of the questions I asked was about the EMR staff working from home. I am just wondering if the minister can confirm, by percentage numbers, the staff — the officials at the briefing gave me an idea of how many were working from home at the height of the pandemic — sort of March and April — and then how many were still working at home in October. So, I am just wondering if the minister can — I apologize, I left that sheet of paper in my office, so I don't have it with me. I am just wondering if the minister can confirm those numbers and what the percentage right now is of EMR staff working from home.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: During the pandemic — officials are just sharing some numbers with me here. We were looking at — about 60 percent of our staff were working from home at that time. Going back to our October numbers, we were looking at about 20 percent at that point working from home. I also can endeavour to get numbers for November, but hopefully that will give an indication. I think that we probably stayed on that same track throughout November — at least through the month of November — at 20 percent.

Mr. Kent: The next topic that I want to discuss and dig in on is with respect to land use planning and local area plans and some of the zoning efforts that are going on out there, as well as questions about the land lottery process that the minister was part of an announcement with — earlier this week or last week — the Minister of Community Services and the Mayor of Whitehorse.

The first topic that I want to touch on is the Beaver River sub-regional plan. As I mentioned in Question Period earlier today, I did find a fall 2020 update on yukon.ca, under the Beaver River planning process. The phases, as they are laid out here — there are phases 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. By the looks of things, phase 2, which is a background report, was completed in October 2020. Phase 3, which is the planning framework, also was completed in October of 2020. I guess maybe I'll just leave it at that before I get into the other aspects here — just to get the minister to confirm that both of those milestones were reached and completed in October of 2020. Again, the first one is a background report and the second one is a planning framework.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, those two pieces have been completed. As we touched on today in Question Period, the next senior liaison meeting — which is very similar to the structure from regional planning where there are representatives from both the First Nation as well as the government — their next senior meeting is in December. I don't have the exact date, but I can endeavour to get that. It is between now and Christmas. I have it now; it is December 14.

Mr. Kent: Then we will move on to phase 4, which is an analysis and draft plan — completion for January 2021. There are five things that are outlined here in the work plan as part of that. So, I just wanted to check with the minister to see if the planning commission and the senior liaison committee are on track to get that completed by January of next year.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm just going to go through a couple of points, and I'll touch on a few different pieces of work, as well as what the member touched on.

As we spoke about today in Question Period, we're continuing to work with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to develop our land use plan, as well as a fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan for the Beaver River in our agreement. We also touched on — the plan was tentatively scheduled to be completed in spring of 2021. There has been lots of discussion today about delays that have occurred.

This work informs all of our work, including our access management plans. The Beaver River land use planning committee, which includes representatives from both the First

Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun as well as Yukon, is advancing this work. Since September 22 — and I did touch on this earlier this week — the planning committee has held seven online stakeholder engagement sessions to gather feedback on the work completed to date.

The parties also recently approved a revised work plan and timelines due to COVID-19 delays, which include the following deliverables by the spring of 2021: a recommended land use plan; a fish and wildlife harvest regime; and a fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan. So, that was the spring of 2021.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to make sure I have this straight. This phase 4, which is the analysis and draft plan — it says the completion is in January 2021. Is that now bumped to the spring? I'll let the minister clarify — or I'll ask the minister to clarify when he's on his feet.

Then phase 5 is the final draft plan — completion March 2021. Then obviously that will be sent to the parties. It looks like there is another opportunity for the public to review the plan — and NND citizens and stakeholders — and then, I guess, it's submitted to the parties. That's under the task list there.

Then the final plan is to be determined by the parties. I am just hoping — the minister mentioned spring of 2021. Is that when he is anticipating that the final plan will be done — that phase 6 will be done?

Again, just to clarify, is phase 4 — the analysis and draft plan — scheduled for January 2021? I think this update was just uploaded to the website a couple weeks ago. I'm hoping that it's still current.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Deputy Chair, I think it's still consistent in the sense that the work that has been identified for January — those two pieces — are on pace to be done. The spring is the other piece which I just touched on, which is the adaptive management and the fish and wildlife monitoring, as well as the fish and wildlife harvest regime. That work is in the spring.

I think what I am going to do — just to make sure I'm giving the most accurate information; I want to make sure that I bring back a legislative return to the member opposite. I want to make sure that this is — as we all know, this is an extremely sensitive topic. I want to make sure that the information I provide here is accurate. So, I will get back with the officials.

But, as of right now, we're still looking for those deliverables in January. It has been shared with me that they are on pace and we're looking at the spring on this new plan. December 14 will be the next senior liaison committee. I want to be able to provide to the Assembly the date for planned completion as well, as the member opposite asked.

Mr. Kent: That will be great. If that information that the minister gets from his officials is different from what's presented on the Beaver River land use plan and agreement work plan fall 2020 update, it would be helpful, I think, to update that information there.

One of the other products of the work plan that is identified here and that is still on the website is the road access management plan. The minister mentioned a couple of other

products — the fish and wildlife harvest regime and the fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan. Both of those were scheduled for completion in March 2021, but the road access management plan is identified in this document as well and is scheduled for completion in March 2021.

The tasks identified were to review the draft road access management plan, meet with stakeholders to review requirements, make modifications, and finalize the plan. Obviously, everyone knows what happened late last week and into early this week with the denying of the permits for the road into the ATAC project. Is this work still underway? What can we expect to see in the road access management plan that is identified here to be completed by March 2021?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, it is key to understand that all of the pieces of work that we just discussed here concerning the recommended land use plan, the fish and wildlife harvest regime, the fish and wildlife monitoring, and the adaptive management plan are key components of being able to build out the road access management plan. Those pieces are all feeding into that process. There has been no change in our approach to working with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun on this. It all stems from the signed agreement that we have with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to start this process.

We are still doing that work. That component is still a key piece of deliverables, coming out with these other ones, in the spring of 2021.

Mr. Kent: So, all of these other products that are listed here — the fish and wildlife harvesting regime, the monitoring and adaptive management plan, as well as the road access management plan — are still being developed in spite of the denial of permits that happened earlier this week or late last week? Is that the case? That road access management plan, which I believed was specific to that tote road into the ATAC property — is that work still underway, and can we expect a product on that in March 2021 even though those permits have been denied?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, the pieces that we have spoken about — all of those key products — all work into the key items of a road access management plan. My understanding is that those pieces will be done by the spring. They would then be feeding into that work. So, in my legislative return, I will identify the time period that we are seeing to complete all of those components. That should be able to give the members opposite a good sense about — we'll also identify what the time period would look like to feed that work into a road access management plan. I'll put that in a legislative return.

It's also key to understand — and the member opposite is aware that, when you're into any process like this, you have other partners who are at the table with you. You work together, and there's a committee that defines what they believe to be a timeline that is workable and doable. In this case, during Question Period last week, I strayed away from getting into too much about COVID-19 and what we have dealt with — I touched on it — but I think that, for most folks, it's important to share with the Assembly all of the consultation that we are required to do.

When you are doing permits and work through Energy, Mines and Resources — whether it's issues around land, minerals, or you name it — it usually triggers a conversation that has to happen with affected parties. It has been a really legitimate challenge, since May, for officials. Sometimes the consultation is done through different platforms. We had a lot of folks who wanted to ensure that — sometimes we were asked to push that consultation off to a larger time. In some cases, we were asked to not move through a process at all, and so we did our best with folks to use other avenues to be able to get that consultation work done.

Through a lot of this, you can imagine that we're in a position where — it was difficult. There were legitimate delays that we had to deal with in order to try to make sure that we were respectfully engaging and fulfilling that.

When you look at the change in this work plan, I would say that, pre-COVID-19, when we looked at this work, there were times where we were off of the timeline — I would say that — but I also believe that, since March of this year, it has been really difficult.

Again, I want to make sure, when I come back, that the information we are sharing is accurate, and we'll have our team go through what is listed by the committee, and then we will cross-reference that with this. As well, on December 14, when the senior team gets together, if there is anything discussed at that particular time, we will. I have spoken to the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and we have had discussions over the last week. We are still moving to complete the work that we have set out to do.

Mr. Kent: Recognizing that we are in the back third of the current Fall Sitting and some of these timelines will have passed before we reconvene in March, I am just hoping that the minister will commit to — if the Legislature has adjourned for the Fall Sitting — if he will just get that information to us — and I am assuming to the Third Party as well — via letter, if that information doesn't get to him before the conclusion of the current Sitting.

I am curious as to if the minister has any idea on how much money has been spent to date with this plan. Then just one other quick question on it is with respect to the delays — when the minister — just on the tail-end of PDAC in 2018 — came back and did a ministerial statement on this effort and this sub-regional land use plan, he did at the time say that it would be completed in two years. So, we were expecting it in March 2020. I am curious as to if he has any idea or reasons that we ended up delayed by a year. Obviously, the bulk of the work, we had expected to be done prior to the pandemic — but recognizing some of the pandemic challenges, a lot of that shouldn't have been in place in the lead-up to when this plan was to have been concluded.

So, there are a couple of quick questions: How much money has been spent to date? Does the minister have any idea why there were delays that pushed this out at least 12 months, by the look of the work plan that is on the website?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To date, we have — externally, from a funding perspective — provided \$325,000 to Na-Cho Nyäk Dun for this work. As part of that return, we can go back and

take a look — there are definitely costs, of course, associated with having your own staff — from both Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment — work on this. Both departments have played a role in this work.

I was questioned on this previously — I believe in Question Period, if I remember properly — and that was really about last year having a portion of money that we normally would have allocated toward the YMEP program. We moved that money — I believe the number was \$200,000, and I will go back and confirm that — and that money was moved and provided to the Yukon Geological Survey, which they then, in turn, used for data collection as part of this sub-regional planning process.

I can tell you again, since the execution of the 2018 agreement — so \$325,000. I will endeavour just to get a sense of what our costs are internally as well, and we'll bring that back.

Mr. Kent: The second part of that question was with respect to the delays over the initial two-year time horizon — if the minister has any idea what led to those delays.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to sit down with some of the officials who have worked on it. I know that there has been — a lot of the comments and concerns that we've seen — whether for this work — and in public meetings, we've seen a lot of different comments. So, I think it's a highly sensitive undertaking.

I think as well, in some cases — when we're working with different First Nation governments — and I definitely don't want to speak on behalf of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, but I do know that First Nations like Na-Cho Nyäk Dun have a tremendous amount of pressure on them right now. Every time there is stuff happening there — you have a lot of exploration happening. You also have Alexco, which has been getting ready to ramp up, and then you have Victoria Gold.

Most First Nations — and I think it's fair to share with Yukoners — I don't know the full complement of their team there, but I know that folks get pulled in the same as our folks. People look at the Yukon government and I think they believe there is probably unlimited capacity in different branches to do work. That's not the case. When things in a particular sector are fairly busy, you're in a position where people are getting pulled. That is partially from my understanding, but I think that it is prudent for me to sit down as well with folks not just from Energy, Mines and Resources but from Environment as well to try to get a better sense of all of the things that have played a role in slowing this process down to what we had anticipated for the first timelines early on.

Mr. Kent: I look forward to getting that information either by legislative return or by letter, depending on the timing of it arriving.

I will leave the sub-regional land use plan for a second, but I do want to touch on a few things with respect to the ATAC situation. I am sure that the minister has heard from companies and organizations about their concerns on what this is going to do to the investment climate here. I certainly have, and others have as well, but I do want to talk specifically about a comment that he made during one of the Question Periods this week. I

think it was the first one on Monday when this was raised. It was with respect to the ability for the company to resubmit, so I am looking for a few more details from the minister on that.

When he said that he could resubmit their plan and — I don't have the exact quote with me. But the plan wasn't done and they could resubmit — exactly where in the process would they resubmit to? Was the minister thinking that they would go back to the start of the YESAA process, resubmit, and do work there? Or is there some other advanced stage in this process where they could resubmit? I am just curious about what the minister was referring to when he made that comment during Question Period on Monday.

While the minister is conferring with officials — I did find the Hansard from earlier. I will just quote it: “Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to make a note that the proponent that has applied for this application, which has been noted here, does have the ability to improve their application and apply for this. This is not a full stop on this. They do have that opportunity.”

That's the quote that I was referring to.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: My understanding — and previous to making those comments and speaking with our officials — is that, really, the other piece of it was to ensure that the company had the opportunity to go back and speak with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. That was one of the items that I touched on this week.

My understanding was that — very sensitive. There have been some discussions publicly on the legal piece, and I know that the member opposite understands this well and has been through those types of things. My sense was that they could look at submitting an application that met this now.

The other thing that I have not said this week as we have been questioned — one thing that comes to mind is that, when I started in this job, I still remember having an opportunity — I was with the deputy minister of the day, and we were in Toronto at a meeting during the PDAC conference. There was a former federal politician there as well as some legal — and it was just getting out and branching out to talk to the legal firm and the investment firms.

Part of that legal firm — they do a lot of work in the mineral sector. So, we were there and having a discussion with them. One thing that was said to me in the meeting was — we have talked to the previous folks who were in the last mandate. I don't know if it was the member opposite or some of his colleagues, but what was said at that time really struck a chord with me. We were told that, at the end of the day, the Yukon was going to be — and this sector was going to be — supported. What I learned from this was that, when a particular sector means so much to your overall economy, there's a real responsibility, and inside the Legislative Assembly, you can debate, things can get heated, and lots of things can get said.

But at the end of the day, you want to make sure — it affects so many people, as the member opposite touched on — the service sector — whether it is drillers or their supply chain, it provides so many jobs. It is always important to support that.

The reason I bring that up is because, as the member opposite has said, there are a lot of people reaching out. I think, you know, part of what I was asked today was: What are you

doing to ensure that the overall sector out there — there are lots of questions. I think that one thing that is important — and I touched upon it in my comments this week — is that when we go through YESAB — when anybody does — and there are final recommendations that come out on that work, part of the obligation is that you have to be able to meet those recommendations.

The member opposite has probably as strong — or stronger — an understanding of that than anybody here — because it is my understanding that he spent time in the beginning days being at the executive level — I think, if I'm right — and he can confirm that or not — but, yes, he understands the process very well. I think that is important too — to say to folks that there are times where — and I am not just speaking specifically to this but just in general — where there are decision documents that come out from the Yukon government and there are recommendations that come from YESAB that help define that. There are certain things that you have to do — for any folks — they need to understand that.

That is part of the system and I think probably even under — I don't know of any instances now, but I think even in the previous mandate, there were times when YESAB came out with what would be called a negative decision document or negative recommendations, and then the government of the day overturned that and said, "No, it's a go." So, there are things that happen and I think that all of us have an obligation — like I said today, I stand by the decisions that were made, but at the same time — just anytime, I think, that we have an opportunity to sit down with folks and talk about how the industry works. So, as you can imagine, you don't really have an opportunity within responses during Question Period to talk about that.

I will leave it at that. I probably missed the back end of that and I will just ask the member opposite to touch on it and I will get back up and answer it.

Mr. Kent: I apologize if the minister answered this question — but again, that quote that I read into the record from Hansard on Monday was that it's not a full stop and they can resubmit. I'm just curious as to where in the process they would find themselves if they were to resubmit. Do they have to go back to the initial submissions to YESAB and the adequacy and a lot of the work that they put in on the front end already?

The minister is right, I was on the YESAB. It was a while ago, though. I'm not sure if there were changes to the process or how YESAB would handle something like this.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: My understanding is that you can still go back and apply to the process — and I mean based on the environmental assessment that had been previously undertaken — so, not asking folks to go back again now.

What I can do — and I'm extremely cautious on anything on this particular topic after what has been said publicly — is I will ensure that I work with the department. As part of our response to any questions that we haven't fully answered today, we can clarify that. That's really going back and reaching out to the deputy minister and others to go and speak with folks who deal with the permitting side of things. That's what I was alluding to, as I understood it, from my questions on our processes.

Mr. Kent: In this planning area, there are some other claim holders. It's not just ATAC that has claims in there that don't have all-season road access. Obviously, there are claim blocks throughout the territory, as well, that don't currently have road access, but are showing some very promising results from their drilling and exploration programs.

I'll just go back to some of the questions that I have asked the past couple of days in Question Period with respect to other claim holders in that area. Do they have to wait until the sub-regional land use plan is done to get a sense on whether or not their project can proceed? Everybody, obviously, is exploring these areas with the hopes of getting to a point where they can develop a mine. For those who don't have road access, this really jolted them — this decision earlier this week.

They have shareholders to answer to and investors that they're trying to attract. That was one of the questions that I heard from a couple of companies that I have talked to this week. Is there an opportunity, if you have a claim block that doesn't have road access, to get a road into it? Because this decision earlier this week is sending the message to them that it may not be the case, and they are feeling some pressure from their boards and their shareholders and potential investors.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Although that question may seem that it would warrant a simple yes or no, it's broader in the scope of what you have to think about.

First, it would depend on what class of project you have. If you're running a class 1 or a class 3 or more, that's the first piece. Of course, that would define a level of activity that you could do.

I think that what the member opposite is alluding to is that you have had advanced exploration, it has looked promising, you have done feasibility work to understand that there is some real promise there, and you are looking now to move toward the next increments in development.

In all of those cases, it depends. When you think about a class 3 licence — we have been really focused on the conversation this week around the tote road. You would have to go back to find something as substantial as that application — you would have to probably go back to the early 1990s, and you would be probably talking about the road to Kudz Ze Kayah. That was done in a class 3. The Member for Watson Lake probably knows better, but it's 22 kilometres long — something like that — versus 65 kilometres.

So, in the last 30 years, that is sort of the record. That's why there has been some focus or some attention to it, because it has not been the standard.

I would say that folks who are advancing projects should continue to look to do that work.

Probably between the member opposite and me, I think we can have a sense from talking to folks where they are at in the development of their project. I would urge folks to make sure that they reach out to Energy, Mines and Resources to have a good understanding of what the next steps are. Most folks do, or they have good technicians who do. Again, make sure that, wherever you are working, you are sitting down with that First Nation, having a discussion about your project, and continuing to work through building a good relationship there, especially

if your sense is that you are making a long-term commitment to that project, you are there, and you want to continue to get to know the community.

Other than the one kilometre off the road, which was where there was a staking moratorium put in place while this process was underway, that was the only limitation within that area. Now, we continue in some places to have governments respond to us. They want to see further work done. Depending on what you have to do — in some cases, you want to advance your project, so you will apply to us. You might have to go through an environmental assessment process. That might lead to a series of recommendations, of course, and then we have an obligation as well. YESAB would go out and consult. That would feed into their process. Then we would go out and consult, if it is a permit, and if it's a QML, then we are going out to an even bigger consultation and a series of them. Depending on whether there is a water licence required — because, in that area, there is more substantial placer that has happened as well and some bigger operations. There are people who have been there a long, long time and there is exploration as well. There are all kinds of different activities under the terms of minerals, we'll say, that are happening.

Maybe if the member opposite wants to specifically share exactly what type of advanced activity he has in mind, then I could maybe better speak to what it would be. Again, with an overall theme, I think that folks still just need to move through the process as they have previously in this particular area.

Mr. Kent: When it comes to this specific situation now — I know that the minister has referenced here today, and then a couple of times during Question Period on this, the importance of building relationships, First Nation engagement, and showing your commitment to the area and that you're there for the long haul. When it comes to ATAC, I think that their first discovery or initial claim staking was in 2007. They have a 13-year history there. They have an advanced project. Obviously, in the early stages, it was air access and still is. What they were looking for was to put in a single-lane gravel tote road to support their exploration activities — and obviously help with the costs and perhaps get more metres of core in the box.

When other companies that are perhaps newer to the Yukon or aren't in that advanced of a situation then see permits for a tote road denied to this company, I think they wonder what it will mean when they get to that point where they want infrastructure or some sort of infrastructure to support their exploration.

Maybe the minister can expand a little bit on some of his comments today and earlier about engaging with First Nations and showing that you are there for the long term, because I think that a company like ATAC that has been here for 13 years — the expenditure that they've made on that project is over \$100 million during that time. They are obviously serious about the project and what they want to accomplish there.

As I said, other companies that are newer to the Yukon but are seeing some exciting results on their projects — whether it's in that area or other areas of the territory — are legitimately concerned with what they saw happen earlier this week.

I'm curious as to what the minister would have us say to those companies when it comes to what they have seen happen to ATAC with this single-lane tote road into their project.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This week during Question Period when we had discussions and I touched on really — what we would say is essentially information that we would share on protocols for any company. So, I want to make that clear. I probably should have gone down and adjusted the comment, in the sense that — I mean, what I was getting at this week — I think that for anybody who is working, that is what we need to do. I think that the member opposite puts out appropriate facts on this — long, long history with the company working in there. So, I'm not saying that the folks weren't in it for the long haul on this particular case; I am just saying in general that we are talking about all kinds of different companies, and I was really reflecting upon the previous — speaking to the last question. So, I agree.

I have attended events that have been hosted in Mayo by Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the company that we are talking about was present and played a big role in those events, and they have, again, over the years, also been supportive of all the folks up there and that particular project.

So, I think that it is important to identify the fact that I am not getting into — I am not going to speak about the relationship between this particular company and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. I'm privy; I leave that to those parties. I think anybody — and I know the member opposite would say the same thing — when we are talking to folks who are new to the Yukon or who are looking to invest, we are really wanting them to get to know the folks and the areas that they are working in. Some folks do it really, really well, and it makes a big difference in how they build their relationship. Other folks don't put as much time and work into that.

I mean, today, what I reflected upon during Question Period was that the Yukon Chamber of Mines had gone out and done a lot of extensive work on really trying to help industry, and so this is not a topic that I am pulling together that is not a relevant topic. This is a topic across the country that we have talked about — if not the world. In that case, there were some really key things that were laid out by the Yukon Chamber of Mines in that work.

They pulled together a group of technicians, some who had been leaders in the industry, others who are policy people, an Order of Canada recipient, an indigenous leader — and that helped as well. They went through that. It talks a lot about that consistent relationship-building.

That term about building people relationships — that came directly from the Chamber of Mines. I've seen folks really embrace that.

Again, for clarity and for the member opposite, I'm not going to get into a discussion or analyze the relationship with the company that we have talked about today. That relationship is there. For any companies that are coming into the Yukon, in general, I think all of us would say to make sure you get to sit down with people and have a good understanding.

Most First Nations — or a good number of First Nations — have built their own guide that you can go and get, which

will give you a sense of how they want engagement and what engagement should look like. That is also good for companies to reach out to their lands office and get that work.

Part of what we're discussing is we're trying to ensure that — I mean, there is an intent — and I'm sure that, in the later questioning today, we'll switch and talk about it with the Member for Whitehorse Centre — but we're trying to look at the entire regime here and have a very collaborative effort on how we provide governance and put permits out. Really, that's an advantage as we move ahead, because you'll hear the Yukon Mining Alliance — which has really been amplifying this message lately — but also, you're hearing it from the investors that are out there. I touched on it — I didn't do a great job today of getting into it and didn't have a lot of time, but it comes back to this concept of ESG financing.

I was at a mine ministers conference a few years ago, and it was touched upon — the concept — and it was new. At first, it was the minister of the day from British Columbia — Minister Mungall — and she was talking about some meetings that she had just had with global mining finance representatives in London, England, and their real interest with BC was, "Where are you at on ESG? What is happening? Are your environmental processes strong? Are they adequate? On the social side, are you ensuring that companies, when they come in, are providing appropriate opportunities? Are they respecting people from those communities? What does that look like?" What does it look like on the governance side, either from the standpoint of the territorial government or how the territorial government works with the First Nation governments?

We continue to have those discussions with investors and bigger players. As of late, we have been trying to do it every couple of days in a call with folks. All of this is extremely important for anyone who is in this role as we go forward. British Columbia is reaching out to us and talking to us about it as well. They really want to position themselves.

All of those key things and all of the things that we have talked about — the engagement, the environmental assessment process — environmental assessment happens and there are recommendations made. Then you have to sit down and ensure that the recommendations made are then communicated to the folks who need to meet those recommendations if they are part of the process that you go through. All of that is key.

Anyway, I think it's important that we reflect on that. I hope that, in the first part, I touched on it and answered the question from the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: I am going to move on from that topic. I am sure that we are not finished with it before the end of the Fall Sitting, but I will just move on this afternoon in the remaining time that I have left before I turn it over to my colleague from Whitehorse Centre. I have quite a few issues, so I am hoping that Energy, Mines and Resources comes back before we are done this fall.

I have just a quick question on the Dawson regional plan. I am sure that my friends in the New Democratic Party will have more questions about this, but I am curious about the appointee that recently resigned. Has he been replaced? If so,

who has replaced him? If not, when can we expect that individual to be appointed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There have been lots of discussions to date. We have reached out to at least one individual to see if they are interested. We have collected their bio from them. What we have done to date is that we have worked with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to try to identify an individual and then have a discussion with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in about it. Where we are at in the process is that we are confirming that the individual whom we have reached out to is interested. The next step is that we will provide that information to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and then we would look to move to a point. We know that it's important to get that done as quickly as we can here. That's where we're at in the process at this time.

Mr. Kent: I gave the minister a heads-up about this before we started here today, and this is a constituency issue for me. I did send a letter to him on November 24. This was with respect to the Golden Horn development area regulation zoning committee. A number of residents in this area got together and put together a zoning committee. They appointed a spokesperson for the committee and have, with the assistance of the EMR lands branch, sent out questionnaires to members in that part of my riding.

What I was looking for, with respect to this letter to the minister, is whether he would have his officials in the lands branch convene a public meeting to talk about this. I've heard concerns from some citizens out there about the zoning committee, its role, and the questionnaire that was distributed. I think that there has been enough feedback for me, as well as the zoning committee spokesperson, that we both came to the conclusion that the lands branch would be best served by convening a public meeting. As I said, this letter went on November 24. I'm wondering if the minister has an update for me on that and if there will be a favourable response to convening a public meeting for residents out there, whether it's a virtual meeting or perhaps multiple meetings in person.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It's just important to talk about the breadth of what's happening from a local area planning perspective, because our folks in Land Planning have been extremely busy. The Government of Yukon collaborates with First Nations in Yukon communities to create local area plans. I know this is zoning. I'm not going to take too much on this — but just a bit of background on what's happening out there.

Local area plans are to ensure orderly development. We help to resolve competing land use issues and consider broader public interests. We are working on local area plans for Marsh Lake, Alaska Highway west, Fish Lake areas — just to name a few. In development of local area plans, residents are able to participate in decisions about the future use of land in their communities.

Of course, we always want to make sure that people in those communities have a chance to help define what is going to happen and what those activities look like.

We prioritize planning where population growth and land development pressures are greatest, and we are developing plans for areas without planning or development controls and

in areas as required by First Nation and self-government agreements.

In this particular case, I am going to be open to the member opposite: I haven't read the letter yet. I have made note of it for November 24. What normally would happen is that my team — the folks I work with — would, first of all, take a look at that letter and reach out to the department.

I know that, just before starting this afternoon — at lunchtime — I had four or five different letters that I just have to go through and read. It might have already been addressed. If it hasn't been addressed, let me take a look at the letter, let me get a sense from the department of what they know about this zoning group, and I will make a commitment here that we will respectfully look at what is being requested, see how we can sit down — first, I guess, the commitment that I could make is: Let's sit down with the community that has put this time together. We may not get to exactly where they want, or maybe we can support it, but I think that making a commitment to listen to what they are thinking — it seems to me from the member opposite that they have already put a lot of work into this piece and these concerns. We can definitely consider that. The only thing that I would say is that we might do it as a virtual meeting, of course, because of the current situation — but we'll certainly have a chance to reach out to them and understand what they want.

Mr. Kent: I think that, when the minister gets a chance to take a look at the letter and the response that the department prepares for him, he will get a sense of where they are at in the process. I think that they would be looking for a public meeting. A lot of the groundwork with the committee has been done, and then they are looking for a public meeting and further direction and work by EMR lands branch.

The minister mentioned a couple of local area plans, and I'm hoping he can give us a status update. He mentioned Marsh Lake and Tagish and I believe Alaska Highway west. Marsh Lake goes back quite a few years. I think work had started during the previous mandate, and I think that work started on Tagish during the previous mandate, and then the Alaska Highway west plan was — discussions were started during the previous mandate, but that work was initiated by this minister.

I'm just curious as to where we're at with Marsh Lake and Tagish and then if there's an update on the Alaska Highway west work.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just in preparation to answer that question, I want to make sure that I'm clear. Updates on — I know that there was Marsh Lake that was touched on. I can go through a series of these, but I think that's the question — more just status updates on all of those? Yes?

Mr. Kent: Yes, I'm just kind of looking for a sense of where we're at with Marsh Lake — if it's close to being signed off. I know that work on Tagish is happening concurrent to the work on the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area — I think that is what it's called — and I'm looking for any updates that he can give us there, as well as an update for my colleague, the Member for Kluane, on any work progress with respect to Alaska Highway west.

I will leave it at that for the minister to answer. I thank his officials, and once the response is done, I'll turn it over to my colleague from Whitehorse Centre. As I mentioned, hopefully we will get a chance to have EMR back, because I have a number of other questions about prospecting, placer, regulatory and mineral development strategy, infrastructure, abandoned mines, and other things — there's energy and forestry. I have lots of additional questions, but I thank the minister for his time here today and the officials, and look forward to the answer to that final question.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll start with Marsh Lake. In the summer of 2016, the Marsh Lake local area plan steering committee recommended a plan to the Yukon government and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. At that time, Carcross/Tagish First Nation had some concerns with the plan. I think they wanted to potentially see their settlement lands incorporated. It was a bigger change in scope. The member opposite would probably remember that from his time overseeing that work.

In April 2020, Yukon government, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation signed an addendum to the terms of reference for the planning process that recognized Carcross/Tagish as a party to the plan. We went back and identified those concerns from 2016 and then brought the other nation into it.

The governments are meeting regularly and anticipated an approved plan — so for the member opposite, an approved plan by March 2021. An approval process does include a public consultation on the final draft plan.

I think that part of it too is there is an agreement to ensure that the draft plan — which has been some concern — is consistent with the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan. I know that we've been back and forth a bit on that — just ensuring that those things are consistent.

As well, on the Tagish piece — again, a little background for folks listening to budget debate today. Since 2014, the Government of Yukon and Carcross/Tagish First Nation have worked collaboratively with the steering committee on a local area plan for the Tagish area. This is further to the First Nation self-government agreement.

At this point, the draft plan is currently under review by both governments. There has been — from my memory — quite a bit of public conversations about this and some public consultation. I know that there has been an interest, as well, from the First Nation. They are moving and they want to be able to look at some land development as well. I know they are contemplating that as they look at the plan. There has been — just to make sure — two separate planning processes and they're aiming to achieve a well-balanced and seamless approach to this to these two plans. That's the update on that one.

We also have Mount Lorne and Carcross Road — I just want to answer the questions that were put forward and then have the Member for Whitehorse Centre — but also Teslin, West Dawson, and Sunnydale — there is a tremendous amount of planning — as well as Fox Lake.

Fox Lake was another one where, since April 2012, the Government of Yukon, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Kwanlin Dün have been developing a local area plan. Then, really, between 2012 and 2018, it kind of slowed. Then the steering committee prepared a community visioning report to inform the development of policies in the community and hosted a public meeting on October 4, 2018, to update the community on the process.

The governments met again in 2019 to develop and review land use concepts and policies and the draft local area plan. Then, in the spring of 2020, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council requested that the planning processes for the Fox Lake area be put on hold until further progress was made on Shallow Bay, which we have also touched on here.

There's a small portion of that which falls in the traditional territories of Little Salmon Carmacks as well as Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

For the Member for Kluane — and I think that I have received letters from the Member for Kluane on this. A memorandum of understanding for the planning process was signed — and this is the Alaska Highway west local area plan — in 2017 between the Government of Yukon and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. In 2018, the Government of Yukon and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations reached consensus on a steering committee for the development of the plan.

Part of our challenge was that some of the committee members expressed that they were no longer available to participate in the process, and that always makes things a bit difficult. There have been quite a few applications, and there have been some concerns identified around the Canyon Creek area. That has also been part of the discussions here.

The Government of Yukon is working with CAFN to review and update the MOU and develop a new administrative reserve agreement, which also includes Canyon Creek. That's some of the work that has come out of it — still moving on the first phase of the planning process involving the collection of background information prior to moving ahead with that. Once the steering committee is established with those groups — after some of those individuals have left, a planning consultant will be hired to facilitate the local area plan.

Again, Carcross, as well as Fish Lake — there has been a lot of bilateral communication on that, mostly from Kwanlin Dün First Nation. We have had a number of things happen there. We have worked directly with Kwanlin Dün on individuals who have some structures that maybe were built not exactly where they should be, certain activities — recreational activities, things like that.

Again, we are undertaking it, so there is a lot. Shallow Bay was touched on. It is a tremendous amount of work that those folks are undertaking. I am happy to update, follow up on the letter from November 24, and endeavour to set up a meeting with the folks in Mount Lorne.

I would open things up now to the NDP for questions.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for providing me with the opportunity to ask a few questions. As you can anticipate, when there is half an hour, there are a million questions that need and want to be asked. I will

attempt to work my way through them systematically, but there will perhaps be some overlap with the member preceding me.

At the outset, the minister indicated that there had been a record production year for placer gold. I would appreciate it if he could provide us with the projections for the number of ounces of placer gold that have been produced in Yukon in 2020 and the anticipated return to Yukon for that, as well as the value of the minerals extracted under the *Quartz Mining Act* and what the anticipated revenues to Yukon are for the same.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will start with the placer portion of the question. In 2020, over 82,600 ounces of placer gold were exported from Yukon, with an approximate value of almost \$165.6 million. This represents a 15-percent increase in gold production and a 43-percent increase in value of production, compared to 2019.

I will go back and look. I believe that what the member opposite is referring to is the royalty. I will get that number for the member opposite; I don't have it right now. We have had lots of discussions about this. One of the things that is important is that this particular season of all seasons, what I think about is the dollars that were spent in Dawson City and Mayo — which is a bit of a different story. I would have to clarify this, but I think the companies may have purchased items from there from their grocery stores and others. But more importantly, what we heard in Dawson City this summer is that it would have been a really difficult year because of the elimination of the tourism economy if there wasn't the money being spent from the industry.

We'll probably have a more spirited dialogue around royalty numbers because we're dealing with legislation that's very old. We've heard it from a number of businesses and not just in Dawson City where you're seeing that direct impact of foods being procured or people purchasing fuel or whatever — all the different ancillary impacts that happen, but also in Whitehorse. Companies that are supplying machinery were having very, very significant years. That could be machinery that is being used for either placer or it could be machinery that's being purchased and used on exploration around the quartz side. I will leave it at that concerning it and I will owe a number on the royalty side of what the Yukon received.

When it comes to the quartz mining, we would be looking at the production from two mines — one being Victoria Gold. I don't believe, to date — it might — but I would probably work with Energy, Mines and Resources and the Finance department to take a look at this last year. We may have it. I can give the numbers on ounces.

Since pouring the first gold bar which — we're going to talk about Eagle Gold mine — produced almost 39,000 ounces of gold by the end of June 2020. We're looking at moving to full commercial into the summer — so it's announced. That gives a bit of sense. This last year, they would be doing the analysis of that, and I will make sure that I get that back to you. Alexco is just moving toward this.

Then, on the other number that the member opposite is wanting and I will endeavour to get is what is the production value coming from Minto Mine. I'll see if we have that particular number. From the start-up in October to the end of

December 2019, Minto processed about 104,000 tonnes of ore — 2.27 percent produced copper — so 6,436 tonnes of copper concentrate. It continues to increase from month to month. I have that number. The difference between that one — I will endeavour to get the value on it, because normally, from my understanding, what will happen is that we will identify the value from Minto — the Finance department will calculate the royalty, and then the entire royalty will then be sent to Selkirk First Nation, so it is different. The Yukon government doesn't play a role and because it is category A lands, the entire royalty — as I remember, back when those calculations before are made.

I will come back and get the royalties that would come from placer, as well as the royalties that would be going to the Yukon and any other one. I also will have to look to see — I think, early stage, when there is a new project or new mine being built — I don't know the period of time; I have to go back — I don't have the calculation, the methodology, here because I think some of the initial investment is there, and then they start to move through to the royalty piece. So, a bit of information there, but still, I will have to get the other.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. There are a couple of points that I will make in response, but I'm sure that the minister is aware that the federal government passed the *Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act* in 2015. It was certainly the subject of a lot of conversations at various Roundups that I was at.

The purpose of that act was to: "... implement Canada's international commitments to participate in the fight against corruption through the implementation of measures applicable to the extractive sector, including measures that enhance transparency and measures that impose reporting obligations with respect to payments made by entities. Those measures are designed to deter and detect corruption..."

I raise this only in terms of what it does do, because under ESTMA — whatever they call it — it's actually pronounced with this acronym — it is only most recently that I have been aware of them publishing the amounts and figures. So, there are figures available for Yukon. For illustrative purposes, to come back to the point that I wanted to make, here are the reports for Victoria Gold from January 1, 2019, to end of December 2019: royalties, zero. They paid money to the Yukon Energy Corporation for their power-purchase agreement — so they have to disclose all this — and they paid money to the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun for exploration access fees and environmental position fees. This is all disclosed.

In the previous year, from March 2017 to February 2018, they paid zero in royalties and paid a much smaller amount for a power-purchase agreement and a small amount to the Yukon for the bridge replacement that we have all been across.

Then, the Minto mine reports — in 2019, that year, they indicate that they paid almost \$2 million in royalties to Selkirk First Nation and some taxes to the Yukon government. In 2018, they paid some taxes to the Yukon government. They paid the Yukon government, according to their reporting — and this is why I think it's interesting, because I understand clearly that it's settlement A land and I understand that the royalties flow

to them, but I point this out for illustrative purposes only. I'm sure that they will correct their reporting to ESTMA, but they indicate that they provided \$4.285 million to the Yukon government for royalties and \$1.7 million to Selkirk First Nation for royalties, in addition to which there were some fees for the Yukon and some fees in excess of \$100,000 to Selkirk. Then, in 2017, they indicate that they paid \$16 million of royalties to the Yukon government and \$2,700,000 in royalties to Selkirk First Nation.

My point in raising those numbers is that, regardless of the fact that they're flowing through to Selkirk First Nation, more power to them. We have been undergoing — I don't know how many times, how many years, we have had this conversation. I love the fact that the yukon.ca website finally says that royalties are not a tax and that they are a return to the Yukon citizens. They are actually quoting the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel on just the fact that this is a right to the Yukon citizens to get some return on their non-renewable resources.

When I first came here, I can remember being a social worker, wandering around Dawson City in 1978 — 42 years ago. Gold then was \$35 an ounce; the royalty fee was 37.5 cents an ounce. Today, when I get that calculation back, it's still going to be based on that 37.5 cents, and I have heard repeatedly in this Legislative Assembly and around that one of the reasons why we can't increase it — and I almost heard the minister going there right now — is that it is the equivalent of the family farm. Well, I can tell you that most farmers across this country are paying a lot more taxes than they were in 1906.

I guess my question to the minister is: How long do we wait before we begin to get a return on our non-renewable resources that is commensurate with the value?

So, a 43-percent increase in the value of the placer gold taken out — and the costs did not go up 43 percent. When gold is valued at \$700, you are making money. When gold was valued a couple of years ago at \$1,000 — \$1,500 to \$1,900 US this summer — how much is lost income?

The other part of the question is — again, when you wander around as a young, naïve newcomer, there is always the insinuation at the Pit or someplace that there is the official exported amount and the real amount. Does the minister have a sense of what the actual value is of what is produced? How does he ascertain that? How does he confirm what is actually extracted of these non-renewable placer gold resources? How is that determined?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are some points within the question that I can answer; others would be more difficult. There are some technical pieces that I am going to reach out to the department to get.

First, I would say that I appreciate the comments from the member opposite. I think that the bigger question, which is a perspective, is around — you have seen this increase in value. This year was a particularly good year. Again, I am very pleased with the fact that we had the ability to have that placer activity. It really did, in many ways — for the local business folks and when you talk to the grocery store owners directly in Dawson and others — have a positive impact.

When it comes to the question as it was voiced here — and I'm not going to say that I agree or disagree. In the role that I am in here, looking after the department and having the responsibility to be the regulator, I am just going to say that I think the bigger conversation about how you're going to deal with a return to Yukoners from the extraction of a non-renewable resource is a great question. That is why we undertook a mineral development strategy. I have my views, and the member opposite has hers. We all have our views about this, but it was really important to try to get the biggest conversation that we have had the opportunity to have with Yukoners.

Going to each one of those communities, whether it's Beaver Creek, Dawson City, Mayo, Watson Lake, or you name it — let's get that first-hand understanding about what positive things are coming from the industry for them. Are there particular impacts that we are not aware of? Are those positive or negative impacts?

I think that the work that we're doing right now — and for the member opposite, I think that we're going to see some really clear messages through that work, and we have a "what we heard" document. Everybody's views are melded down in that. It could have been a lot longer, and I think that they tried to just keep it in themes. That is where I think they went.

What we have coming very quickly here is a first draft from an independent panel. I think that the members opposite who have had an opportunity to meet with those folks know that they have been extremely aware of the importance of the work that they're doing, and they know that they need to keep the work very transparent to be accountable to all Yukoners.

On some of those bigger questions, we're going to get some direction, and we're going to get it from Yukoners. That's what I think is going to be really important.

I feel that we're going to have some sense in the new year about what happens around these conversations — as the member opposite said about the royalty structures, what people are getting back, and what people want to see in communities.

When it comes down to the technical part of it — I want to have a deeper conversation with the department — how do you identify and come up with that number in the placer sector of what is being extracted and then exported? When it's exported, the concept is that this is where it's monetized, as I understand it. I'll come back with that one.

I can't speak to the other pieces of declared or undeclared. I won't get into that piece, but what I will say is that we'll come back with how we calculate our numbers. I do think that the mineral development strategy is a place where we're going to get a lot of perspectives, but I am really looking to and trusting those individuals to bring to us a sense of what Yukoners are thinking. There will be all kinds of different perspectives, but some of the big themes about what the majority of Yukoners — how they feel about specific areas and points within the mineral sector.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's comments. I really do hope that there are a number of strategies and processes underway at the moment, and I hope that this is not one of the ones that just slides right through and we have

another mandate where we haven't made the substantive changes that Yukoners deserve.

Last weekend, I watched some of the hearings of the Water Board on the Indian River wetlands. I think that it was on the Tuesday, the afternoon session, which was largely devoted to presentations by Yukon government officials. It was begun at the outset — set the stage — by a senior government official — closed at the end.

I guess I was kind of surprised. Preceding the Yukon government's presentation, there were presentations made by a number of First Nations — in particular, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, which has made repeated requests. We were looking at the YESAB site a number of weeks ago. There were a number of applications for placer mining in the Indian River wetlands. One example was a 2016 letter from Chief Joseph basically saying, "Don't — we do not want to see additional mining going on in the Indian River wetlands. It should not be allowed."

I was surprised that, after the quite graphic descriptions of the level of activity — graphic in the sense that, if you look at the photos that were presented by government representatives — at the end of it, when they were asked what changes they anticipate — or any changes that they anticipate — in terms of government policy, the answer was that there were none. The government representatives indicated that they had no plan to utilize section 32 of the *Waters Act*, which would allow them to direct the Water Board to hold off on issuing licences until an evaluation of planning is carried out. It was just like this notion that, even though there were going to be a number of days of hearings by this Water Board, Yukon government's here, but we're really not here, so it's the opposite of the engagement process that we hear repeatedly from the Yukon government. We hear you, we engage with you, but we're not doing anything. That's not what I heard the government saying that they intended to do when they got elected.

Why would Yukon government be present at the Water Board hearing and say that they have no intention of making changes to the policies or recommending those changes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm going to start by just touching on some conversation about the management of the wetlands in the Indian River watershed. The reality of the comments that were made and the interventions that were made by folks — a very broad group. The Government of Yukon, behind the scenes — we have been working with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the placer mining industry on the revised policy and guidelines for protection and reclamation.

I think it's fair to say that the officials were there and were giving interventions — and as witnesses — but we have put a tremendous amount of time — human and financial resources — to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. That started very early on in our mandate. So, the member opposite is correct — you said that you were going to move to work through these things. That resolve has never subsided. We have always, from the early points — to work on — we ended up working on a final policy, which is underway. The Government of Yukon established an interim approach for mining and reclamation in the Indian River wetlands. We sat down.

I'm going to be respectful of the question. There were comments made there. What I will share is that, early on — I have to go back and look through my calendar and notes — at the time, a very well-respected legal mind in the Yukon, Mr. Dave Joe, I believe, sat in my office. Our Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — we worked directly with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. There was an agreement that was put in place, or an MOU, early on to work between both governments on something that was extremely sensitive. Over a period of time, we continued to work together on that interim approach, which is important for us to talk about. All parties were moved in good faith to do that work. We had put some funding in place. I can go back and take a look, but it was a fairly substantial amount, and that was structured where our team and their legal teams talked about how we could work together.

It was in January 2017. It was weeks into this responsibility, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Government of Yukon signed a memorandum of understanding to work collaboratively to resolve the Indian River wetlands issues. This includes our commitment for the two governments to develop reclamation guidelines for placer mining in the Indian River.

In November 2018, we discussed an interim approach for the protection and reclamation of the Indian River wetlands. I was there this summer. We were there at a number of different locations, taking a look at what reclamations had happened and at other areas that still needed them. Part of that was continuing to collaborate on wetlands research by undertaking a multi-year study of our wetland water function — the value of the Indian River wetlands — to inform future policy management decisions and develop a single wetland reclamation guide. Then our options for interim protection were discussed. We did not get to an agreement, but there was a tremendous amount of work and research done on that.

Again, we went back and continued to do the outreach, and then the interim approach came into effect on January 15, 2020. That included the following components: avoiding mining wetlands wherever possible; no mining in bogs; and looking to leave 40 percent of our fens intact. That was our interim approach. The requirement is for a wetland protection and reclamation plan that is approved by a regulator, following a consultation with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other affected First Nations.

That is the work that we have done. Those are some of the key pieces that we brought together. I feel that the folks did a very good job across government to identify and go through that.

I will touch on — I don't know if I will do justice to it — the question about the wetlands. That is what led up to it.

We went into the Yukon Water Board's public hearing piece. That, again, was on the issue of placer mining wetlands, which is important and complex. It is complex because, when you take into consideration the percentage of production that was coming from the Indian River, which is very significant compared to all production — when you look at this as a complex issue, which it is, it doesn't matter what your perspective is, there is so much on the line from all parties and

their views on this. Again, we provided information on how we could continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to develop and refine our approach to managing the impacts.

So, we have all that work that was done, sitting with the technical teams from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — and then looking to tweak, if necessary. Our approach has been at the multi-pronged, broadest level. The forthcoming Yukon wetlands policy will provide an umbrella framework on how we can make stewardship decisions with respect to the importance of the wetlands, and that's the bigger piece of work through the Department of Environment.

I'm going to leave it at that because, before we finish, I want to give it back to the member opposite. I probably didn't get as deep into that as she would've liked, but it was a bit of background.

Ms. Hanson: It is unfortunate that we don't have more time to discuss this because it is a really important and serious issue.

So, there's a forthcoming wetlands policy — great. Hopefully, it happens before the whole of the wetlands has been mined. I'm wondering if the minister can juxtapose the policy approach that his government is taking to the passage today by the federal government of legislation that mirrors a private members' bill that was introduced a few years ago by Romeo Saganash, which was basically to give recognition to UNDRIP.

I understand that, on November 12, there were federal-provincial-territorial conversations about that, including First Nation and aboriginal leaders.

If you are talking about recognizing all of the principles in UNDRIP, then I'm finding it difficult to marry that with a process that says, "Well, come to the table and we're going to keep you occupied, but in the meantime, we're just going to continue doing our business as usual. We haven't changed our mode of operation. We're not going to change any of our policies." How does that fit?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will leave the latter part for now.

Concerning UNDRIP, I saw, early this morning, the tabling of the legislation. We've seen some work done on that in British Columbia.

I think that, seeing the time, I will move that you report progress.

Before that, I think that it will take a few coffees with the Member for Whitehorse Centre, if she'll be open to that, before I'll get into a discussion about UNDRIP and how that will apply to this. This is a very significant piece, and I have a lot to understand and look into before I'm able to answer the question that was posed today.

I want to thank the folks who were here today, Deputy Minister Moore and Assistant Deputy Minister Abercrombie. Thank you, as always, for your good work, and maybe we'll be back here together before the end.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow, Friday, December 4, 2020, pursuant to the Order of the House adopted on November 9, 2020.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled December 3, 2020:

34-3-58

Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report — for the year ended March 31, 2020 (Frost)