



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 89

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, March 11, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2021 Spring Sitting

**SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North**  
**DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Vacant\***  
**DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North**

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

#### Independent

<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun
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### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

\*On March 8, 2021, Mr. Hutton resigned as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, March 11, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**In remembrance of Archie Lang**

**Speaker:** I would ask the members and the members in the gallery to remain standing.

It is my sad duty to inform the House that a former member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, Archie Lang, has passed away. Archie Lang was first elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in the general election of November 4, 2002. He was re-elected in the general election of October 10, 2006, and served as the Member for Porter Creek Centre until October 10, 2011.

Mr. Lang was a member of Cabinet from November 30, 2002, to November 4, 2011. He was Minister of Highways and Public Works, Minister of Community Services, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and Minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation.

I would like to extend my sincere condolences on behalf of the House to his family and friends on their loss.

We will now observe a moment of silence in his memory.

*Moment of silence observed*

**In recognition of National Day of Observance for COVID-19**

**Speaker:** I also rise today on behalf of the House to commemorate those who have died due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Canada, we have had over 22,000 deaths, and sadly, those counts are still rising. Globally, there have been over 2.6 million deaths, and an estimated 118 million persons have been infected. Here in Yukon, we have had 72 cases and unfortunately one death. We are fortunate, however, in that we have had no deaths in any of our seniors facilities, which have been tragically impacted in other parts of Canada and the world. We presently have no active cases in the Yukon.

Still, even with our relative success at combatting the spread of this disease over the last year, in Yukon, we have still felt the disruption in our lives. Tourism operators, airlines servicing the north, and many other businesses have been significantly negatively impacted by the disruption caused by the pandemic. Families and individuals have seen mental health issues increase and heightened levels of anxiety, and family violence is the cruel collateral outcome of this disease. This disease has also disrupted our medical system and put difficult burdens on our medical staff. Many front-line workers have had to perform their duties in extremely difficult new circumstances. Our schools have been disrupted, with the end of last year's school being by distance learning and this year with an abbreviated daily schedule for older high school

students in Whitehorse. Many of the after-school activities that students attended have been cancelled or have had to move to an online platform.

COVID-19 has disrupted all of our lives, yet approximately one year after the disease took its first Canadian life, we see hope on the horizon. Vaccines have been rolled out in Yukon by our dedicated health workers and logistics staff from various government departments, and our vaccination numbers are rapidly climbing. As of yesterday, 25,674 doses have been administered to Yukoners, with 16,367 having received the first dose and 9,207 Yukon adults now being fully vaccinated. These numbers are rising rapidly, but if you haven't had your shot or booked it, you should know that there are appointments available next week and beyond for your first shot. If you are hesitant about receiving your immunization, then there are a number of reliable resources such as Health Canada, the Centre for Disease Control, or our own yukon.ca webpages dedicated to informing Yukoners about the COVID-19 Moderna vaccine.

We are extremely fortunate in Yukon to have been designated a priority for vaccination by the federal government. As a result, we will very likely have enough vaccines for all adult Yukoners who want them in the near future.

One year after the pandemic began in this country, this is truly a modern scientific miracle. If we can all continue to work together and encourage as many Yukoners to be vaccinated as possible, then soon our lives can return to some semblance of normal.

Today, we honour all of those who have suffered and have perished as a result of this deadly disease. However, clearly, the best way to honour those who have passed is to receive the vaccine and to stop the ongoing transmission of COVID-19 in its tracks. Thank you.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome today to the Legislative Assembly Nicole Morgan, who is our Deputy Minister of Education but, more importantly today, the life partner of Joe Loutchan. She is joined here by her mother, Denise Morgan, her sister Charlene Morgan, and her nephew Gareth Morgan-Lester. Thank you for being here.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In remembrance of Joe Loutchan**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today with a heavy heart to offer my deepest condolences to the family, friends, and all those who are feeling the profound loss of Joe Loutchan, who passed away last month on February 3. Joe Loutchan was born in Pembina Valley near Morden, in southern Manitoba. His life

on the farm fostered his connection to land and place, which later honed his skills in hunting, trapping, and harvesting from his local surroundings.

Joe grew up listening to music performed by his father on accordion, his uncle on harmonica, and his cousin on the fiddle. At age four, Joe received a handcrafted wood fiddle from his grandfather and then, at age 14, Joe convinced his father to buy him a fiddle from the local second-hand store. This new fiddle solidified his lifelong bond to a life of fiddling.

By 17, Joe had completed an apprenticeship in electric motors. He was paid 95 cents an hour for that work. Musicians at the time were paid around \$20 a night. It didn't take long for Joe to follow his musical dreams. After forming a band, his talent was quickly recognized by other musicians and local communities, and he began his own radio show, playing 30 minutes a week at CKSB St. Boniface.

Joe credits Andy de Jarlis, a Métis Manitoban, for helping him to learn his technique. Joe would watch Andy play and learned to push himself musically, expanding his knowledge and craft. Andy asked Joe to join his group, and they travelled to communities throughout Manitoba to share their music. Joe was lured by the mountains, which brought him to us here in the Yukon in the fall of 1962, where he spent the rest of his life.

He was an integral part of our Yukon community, bringing people together through his love of music and his incredible talent — from church halls around Winnipeg to weekly sessions at the '98 Hotel here in Whitehorse, where he played for over 40 years, to performing at music festivals across the continent. His music is internationally renowned and internationally loved.

He would often play his fiddle without breaks late into the hours of the night. Though he himself would never speak of his talent or his life as anything other than a normal life, many called him a legend, and he truly was. When he wasn't playing music, Joe was out on the land experiencing the great outdoors across the north and as an outfitting guide. He became a member of the Yukon voyageur canoe team that would paddle across Canada.

During the summers leading up to 1967, Joe remembers training by paddling out on Marsh Lake and Tagish, saying — and I quote: “Sometimes we would paddle 100 times a day.” His hunting passion continued throughout his life and he tended to his Southern Lakes trapline for over 50 years.

Joe Loutchan's talents took him to places far and wide — performing in Mexico, Alaska, Texas, Seattle, and at Disneyland's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He played on the steps of Parliament Hill, for a Governor General at Fort Selkirk, and for the Prime Minister here in Whitehorse, as well as at numerous music festivals and tours where he was truly a great Yukon ambassador.

Joe was selected Yukon fiddle champion so many times that he retired from competition and was made a judge, although I'm not sure who would want to compete with him as a judge.

Joe leaves behind Nicole Morgan, his life partner of 23 years. Joe and Nicole met in 1998 when Nicole set out to buy a fiddle that Joe had placed on consignment at a local music shop.

Nicole met Joe at the '98 Hotel to complete the sale and was immediately smitten with Joe's musical talent and contagious smile. Joe mentored Nicole as she learned to play the fiddle by ear. In the early years, that meant practising three hours a day and, on weekends, five hours a day. Joe modelled the same commitment and dedication because he knew that this is what it takes to develop a skill.

In their life together, Joe and Nicole enjoyed a partnership rarely found in life. They complemented and supported one another in ways that enabled them to each be grounded as individuals in their own life pursuits: Nicole, in her career as an educator and a civil servant, and Joe in his DIY repair shop.

Together, they shared a passion for music and the peace and solitude that comes from being on the land. This also kept them deeply connected to one another. Nicole ran Joe's trapline with him and learned to set traps and harvest furs — although they did reverse traditional roles, since Nicole preferred to haul water and chop wood, leaving the skinning and stretching of furs to Joe.

Their connection to each other was most evident when they played music together. Whether playing twin fiddles, fiddle and mandolin, or playing rhythm guitar for one another, they seemed one and the same — amazing audiences with their unified talents and love of music.

Over the last decade of his life, Joe had become a mentor to Nicole's nephew, Gareth, who had come to love fiddle music through their family gatherings. Gareth and Joe developed a special bond, and they would spend hours together at Marsh Lake sharing fiddle tunes. Joe learned from Gareth too, and true to his character, Joe would research the YouTube links that Gareth shared with him and learn the tunes so that he would be prepared when Gareth next came to visit.

Rendezvous was not the same this year, not only because of its virtual component and adjustments, but also because of Joe's absence — a gap that will never be filled. He was known by all Yukoners as a man with amazing talent, a playful spirit, and incredible passion for all things musical. Yukon has lost a legend, Mr. Speaker. The profound sorrow that is felt by all Yukoners, Canadians, and fans around the world represents the incredible legacy that he has left behind. We will always remember Joe's adventurous stories and his connection to the expression of music.

In closing, I would like to quote from a friend and a fellow musician, Daniel Lapp, who really says it all when he says — quote: “To see the phenomena that was Joe in the '98, a tale told from coast to coast to coast over decades, I am so grateful for witnessing it first-hand more than once, and honoured to take the turn on your stage playing some good old tunes for folks who had been molded in your hands to enjoy and appreciate the music we love. You really did it, Joe. You lived a good life, a dynamic life. You weren't out to prove anything and yet you proved it all.”

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Today I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP, the Yukon Party, and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun to join the chorus of voices that recognize and celebrate Joe Loutchan's

contributions to the rich musical fabric that is the soundtrack of Yukon and beyond and to celebrate such a beautiful love story.

Words will never properly describe the feeling of being lifted up and carried along when Joe hit that musical sweet spot, and for all of those times, we are truly thankful.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have a legislative return in response to questions from the Leader of the Third Party last week, tabling all of my correspondence back and forth with the Employment Standards Board, including my original request for review, their review from 2018, my letter back to them requesting an order, their order from 2019, and their further review and order for 2020.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I have for tabling a letter dated March 10, 2021, sent to the area school council regarding updates on learning for grades 10 to 12 students in Whitehorse.

**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?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### **Bill No. 21: Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021) — Introduction and First Reading**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I move that the Bill No. 21, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 21, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 21 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Are there any further bills for introduction?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the \$40 million in funding being delivered through the National Housing Co-Investment Fund as part of a northern carve-out specifically created for the Yukon to address housing affordability and availability.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise in this House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to consult with the residents of Haines Junction, Mendenhall, Takhini, Champagne, Destruction Bay, Burwash

Landing, and Beaver Creek about physician services for their communities, including the recruitment of resident physicians and the option for hiring alternative health care professionals such as nurse practitioners.

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

THAT this House congratulates former federal Minister of Health and minister responsible for CanNor, Leona Aglukkaq, for winning Women in Mining Canada's 2021 Indigenous Trailblazer Award.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the government should have provided the Yukon Hospital Corporation with funding to cover the cost of the employee pension plan solvency instead of:

(1) requiring the Yukon Hospital Corporation to commit to paying back millions of dollars to the Government of Yukon; and

(2) charging the Yukon Hospital Corporation \$120,899 in interest for the 2019-20 fiscal year and an undisclosed amount in interest for the current fiscal year.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to inform the Legislative Assembly of:

(1) the interest rate that the Yukon Hospital Corporation is being charged on the multi-million-dollar loan that it owes the Government of Yukon for the employee pension solvency loan; and

(2) the total dollar amount that the Yukon Hospital Corporation will have to pay the Government of Yukon for interest charges in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to postpone the calling of the 2021 territorial election until the Auditor General of Canada has presented the mental health services in rural Yukon report to the Public Accounts Committee on Friday, March 19, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the government to immediately provide for the safety of the patients and staff on the secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital by addressing the six violations of the territory's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* that were identified by Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by minister?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### **Northern housing funding**

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise today to speak about the northern housing carve-out specifically designated for the Yukon — a

new funding agreement with Canada to support new affordable community housing here in the territory. Our government recognizes that stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners.

The National Housing Co-Investment Fund is a key program under the federal government's national housing strategy to meet the goals of every Canadian having a home that meets their needs and that they can afford. My territorial colleagues and I were successful in negotiating additional funding from the co-investment fund to ensure that the housing needs of northern jurisdictions can be met. The result is a \$40 million northern carve-out to address Yukon's housing priorities over the next five years. \$20 million will be used for Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing priorities. This will lead to an increase in options for accessible community housing to meet the needs of Yukoners who want to age in place.

We will be moving forward this year with a shelter for men in Watson Lake and projects in Dawson City, along with many other exciting projects that are being planned and that are at various stages in our communities. The additional \$20 million of funding will be managed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to support Yukon First Nation governments, development corporations, organizations, community housing providers, and private sector housing projects.

We welcome this multi-year commitment to help us increase housing options for Yukoners. It is through partnership and joint funding initiatives that we see housing development flourish here in Yukon to meet the growing demand in our territory. Together with our partners, our government has worked hard to increase housing options for all Yukoners. We have invested in programs and projects that have supported the development of upgrades to over 600 homes to date. As we develop new housing projects under the northern housing carve-out fund, we will be keeping the needs of aging Yukoners and our elders in mind as we ensure that housing options support all Yukoners' needs.

We will work with our First Nation partners to ensure that housing is culturally relevant, meeting the needs that have been identified in the Safe at Home plan and the *Putting People First* report. We will continue to work toward a diverse and, of course, an abundance of housing options to support the health and wellness of Yukoners in all of our communities.

Mahsi' cho'.

**Ms. McLeod:** I must comment that, when the minister first got up to speak regarding this ministerial statement, I thought she had an entirely new document that she was presenting. There was, I think, significant straying from the document that was provided to opposition members.

But in any case, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement and, of course, thank you to the minister for re-announcing this re-announcement of an announcement that has already been announced several times.

Mr. Speaker, you will remember that the Premier announced this last week in his Budget Address, and then the

minister announced it again this morning. Perhaps this is why this government has become known for being unable to get things done because they focus so much on re-announcing the same thing over and over — sort of like yesterday when the Liberals announced their economic recovery plan and it turned out to be only a bunch of re-announcements and nothing new for businesses. So, no new information, no action — but new housing money is welcome news.

I do have some questions about this funding, and I'm hoping that the minister can provide us with some answers today.

The housing wait-list has skyrocketed under this minister's watch. In 2016, the wait-list for housing was 105. Under the Liberals, that had increased to nearly 400 last October.

So, can this minister tell us how much this funding will reduce that wait-list by? How many new units will this funding create? How much of this money will be earmarked for Whitehorse, and how much will be earmarked for the communities? I look forward to the minister's answers on these questions.

**Ms. White:** Every Yukoner deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. This isn't a reality for many folks, and it needs to change. I think about the adult man in Pelly Crossing who lives with his family, who told me that, even though governments keep promising housing — what chance does he have to access it as a single man?

I think about Watson Lake, where a condemned apartment complex sits empty, and there are barely enough couches in the community to go around. I think about Mayo, Dawson City, Beaver Creek, and Old Crow, and every single community in Yukon that worries about their friends, their neighbours, and their community members each and every day because they all know that, without a safe place to call home, there is no hope. You only need to look at the property rental pages on Facebook to know that times are tough; rents are high and units are scarce.

So, we were pleased to have read the announcement this morning that money for housing is on its way from the federal government through the National Housing Co-investment Fund — \$40 million in all — and \$20 million spread across five years to support the construction of new units in Yukon. I am hopeful that the creativity will flow and that this \$4 million a year for five years will go much further than what we have seen in recent times — keeping in mind, of course, that the budget announced for the new 48-unit building on Jeckell Street is \$18 million. As the press release stated, the other \$20 million will go toward the new construction of mixed-income, mixed-tenure, and mixed-use affordable housing, supporting indigenous governments, community housing providers, and private sector projects. Who can argue with that, Mr. Speaker?

So, as we sit here, poised on the eve of an election, looking back at what has and has not been accomplished and what needed to get done but didn't, we are happy to look toward the future because we all know that housing brings hope.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** In response to the comments, I would venture to say that the citizens of Watson Lake would be very happy to know that there are resources being put into their community. First, let's clarify that the carve-out is unique. It is a unique arrangement in the Yukon, something that we have not seen historically.

We are still getting the historical funds that have been designated and allocated to the Yukon. It will provide 75 percent of funding for each project, with a minimum 25-percent cost match by the Government of Yukon. These are new initiatives, Mr. Speaker — something that we need to celebrate. We need to look at the fact that we are going to bring more units to the Yukon. We anticipate building over 70 units with the \$20 million.

We would like to remind all those sitting here of the stark contrast between what our government is doing and what our predecessors had on the table. In June 2014, the minister at the time — the MLA for Lake Laberge — and the Yukon Party pulled the plug on \$13 million of affordable housing programs. Well, if we look at where we were then and where we are now, there are significant increases in affordable housing units in the Yukon.

With respect to First Nations and indigenous communities, let me take a moment to explain to Yukoners that no resources were ever put into indigenous communities to provide for essential and critical housing. I would like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for raising that, because the base funding that was allocated to the indigenous communities through the fiscal transfer agreement — two houses under the base — never had this government or the past government provided services. When we took office, we ensured that we had resources in the budget to support our partners across the Yukon.

What we are doing now in the Yukon is that we are looking at affordability. We were looking at increasing resources to all of the sectors of our society. We are creating partnerships, and we are adding hundreds of units across the housing continuum. With this northern carve-out, we will continue to do that good work.

It is quite astonishing when you think about it — where we were a few years ago to where we are now. There are over 600 units. We will continue to do that good work. I am happy to say to Yukoners that this is not on the eve of an election; this is the hard work of Yukoners and the hard work of our partners. We just announced last week an innovative, creative approach with Northern Vision Development and our partners to ensure that we bring affordable seniors housing into the Yukon. Using the aging-in-place strategy, our housing initiative processes, and, of course, our Safe at Home to end homelessness strategies, we have done the work. We have been given clear direction from Yukoners, and we are fulfilling all of those mandates and all of those obligations.

As you can see, it's simply not good enough for the opposition, but Yukoners are happy; they are excited and ecstatic. I know for a fact that the good citizens of Watson Lake are excited that we are looking at a Housing First initiative in Watson Lake — a Housing First initiative. Never has the

opposition provided resources to that community, let alone to Selkirk First Nation. We provided \$500,000 to Selkirk First Nation to support their initiatives. We will continue to do that good work.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Mental health services

**Mr. Hassard:** So, yesterday evening, the Minister of Health and Social Services was on CBC's program *As It Happens*, and here's an exact quote from the minister: "We have now a psychologist in every community."

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if that is in fact true?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm happy to speak about the mental wellness supports in all of our communities.

What we've seen historically — we've seen two mental wellness counsellors — two, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners need to know that we have well over 22 counsellors in all of our communities. Every one of our communities is supported by psychologists — mental wellness counsellors. Of course, we have clinical psychologists who support all of our communities. In addition, we have youth counsellors. We have critical intervention teams that go into our communities. We provide extensive supports that we have not seen historically.

I want to just say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm really happy to talk about the recognition — the Council of the Federation uses our innovation on mental health and substance use in rural Yukon communities and northern communities as a pillar, as something that should be emulated across the country. We are proud of that because of the good work of our partners in our communities. So, yes, we are providing supports to all of our communities, and we will continue to do that.

**Mr. Hassard:** We're just looking for a very simple yes-or-no answer here. As I said yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services was on CBC's *As It Happens* — as you know, it is a national news program — and on that program, she said — and I'll quote again: "We have now a psychologist in every community."

Again, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if that is in fact true?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** So, we certainly recognize and appreciate that Yukoners are asking for services. We saw that when we came into office — and the stark reality of the day — we did not have services.

We do now. The clinical psychologist — the mental wellness supports in all of our communities are there. We have significant supports and services in all of our communities. We now have the Referred Care Clinic here in the city providing supports, intensive trauma counselling and supports. We have that same service in all of our communities. We established the mental wellness hubs that support all of our communities. I'm really pleased about that.

Is it working to its optimum? Probably not, but we are getting significant feedback to expand services and supports.

We are a government that established services four years ago. Previous to that, we had nothing.

I can say to Yukoners that this government is here to commit and work to the best of our abilities to provide you with the necessary services that you so require and that you desire. We will endeavour to do more; we will endeavour to ensure that we support and enhance your land-based initiatives, which you've asked us to do. We will continue to do that by providing essential services.

**Mr. Hassard:** Now, this minister has been caught sharing false information in the past. This election is going to be about who Yukoners can trust to lead Yukon toward recovery. It's very important for us to know if the Minister of Health and Social Services was telling the truth on national radio yesterday. As I stated, she was on CBC's *As It Happens* where she said — and I'll quote again: "We have now a psychologist in every community."

Mr. Speaker, we know that this isn't true. Why does the Minister of Health and Social Services and this Liberal government have such a hard time sharing actual factual information?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the question and with respect to access to services in the Yukon, we have provided services to Yukoners. We will continue to do that. What we have right now, and what we haven't had historically, is access to psychologists. We haven't had psychologist services in the Yukon historically. We now have those services. We have itinerant supports in our communities. We've expanded the scope of practice to ensure that we meet the complex care needs of Yukoners.

The members opposite may not want to hear that response, but Yukoners want to know. The services are there. The services and supports are there for Yukoners. I'm very pleased to say that we have the mental wellness hubs. We have a social worker in every one of our communities. We have child psychologists in place that we haven't had historically, and we have psychiatric services and supports now that we haven't had.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that where we were coming into office four years ago to where we are now is miles apart. We will continue to work for Yukoners. We will continue to ensure that Yukoners have the services that they desire.

#### **Question re: Consultation with school communities**

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, we are glad to know that the Liberal government has decided that Whitehorse-area high schools will be returning to full-time in-person learning for grades 10 to 12; however, we are concerned that, once again, this is a decision that has been rushed out and announced without a plan and without proper communication with those most affected. We have heard from the Yukon Teachers' Association that teachers found out on the day the announcement was made. It was the same for the affected school councils.

Mr. Speaker, can the Liberals explain why they have made this last-minute decision without any consultation?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. When the recommendations come out from the chief medical officer of health, we get those recommendations out to the public as soon as possible. This has happened throughout every single phase of recovery through our path forward. It will continue as long as we are in charge of this government because this is the most important thing we can do: get the information out for people; communicate with the stakeholders as soon as possible; and not play games with the actual chief medical officer of health's recommendations. That is his responsibility. We update Yukoners every week. I am not going to ask him to delay his recommendations. I am going to make sure that we get those recommendations out as soon as possible so that people can make plans as quickly as possible and so that we are ready for the inevitability of opening up. That's good news for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to use that model of following the recommendations and getting those recommendations out as soon as possible, working with the stakeholders as we work toward the dates that have been declared. Again, the announcement was "within a month". Within a month, the chief medical officer of health has said that we can open up. We are now working with the stakeholders — the Education lead, the minister and her team are working with the stakeholders — to make sure that this happens within the time frame of that recommendation.

**Mr. Kent:** Not working with stakeholders and not consulting has become an unfortunate pattern for this Liberal government and this minister. They forgot to engage affected stakeholders about the school reopening plans in August to go with their current model. They forgot to engage those same stakeholders in November when they made the decision to extend the current model for the entire year. Now they have made an announcement yet again without a plan and without communicating at all with those most affected.

Will teachers and administrators be asked to stay at work over the spring break to plan the transition? Why was this announcement made without first making a plan?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am happy to be able to rise today to talk to Yukoners about these turns of events. The chief medical officer of health, as the Premier has noted, is reconsidering the guidance that has been provided to schools. I think it should be clearly enunciated and set out for Yukoners that, of course, the Department of Education has been working all along with the three affected high schools, with those school councils, and with the chief medical officer of health. We're trying to be prepared so that, in the event that this occurred, we would be ready.

The information came to us late Tuesday that the chief medical officer of health was considering the change to this guideline that would permit the spacing necessary to put grades 10 to 12 back into the three high schools. We have been working on that eventuality over time. Department officials have been working with the principals to consider, if this were to happen, what would occur. I spoke myself to two of the three chairs of the school councils on Wednesday morning immediately when we knew that this was in fact going to come



in Dr. Hanley's recommendations on that day. The officials have been speaking with the department as well as the principals, and the work was well-underway so that, if and when this occurred, we could be ready.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, not even a week ago, last Friday, the *A Path Forward* document was released and it had additional requirements for students to go back into grades 10 to 12. A few short days later, those requirements were changed.

Again, what I asked the minister in the previous question was: Will teachers and administrators be asked to stay at work over spring break to plan the transition? I'm hoping she can answer that as well as another question with respect to the current model that the Liberals have chosen for this school year, which was that grade 8s from F.H. Collins are at Wood Street Centre, which of course lacks many of the normal amenities of a high school.

Can the minister tell us if those students will now be returning to F.H. Collins as part of this broader announcement to return grades 10 to 12 to full time?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education officials will be and have been working with the office of the chief medical officer of health as well as the school administrators and school councils of the three affected Whitehorse secondary schools as well as the Yukon Teachers' Association. May I say that the phone calls that we made to them as soon as this information came us was very well-received — I dare say more well-received than it has been by the opposition.

I can certainly indicate that the additional staff that have been supporting those three high schools will remain in place. I can indicate that the teachers will not be required to work over the March break, which begins after tomorrow's classes, and in fact, the logistics that we are discussing with the teachers and with the school councils are taking that into account, which is why we are talking about April, as well as some timetables that need to be changed and updated, as well as some spacing situations — all of which will be done in partnership in the next few weeks so that the logistics can be worked out to the benefit of our Yukon students.

#### **Question re: Wildlife and habitat protection**

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many times I have asked about species at risk legislation in Question Period or in budget debate or spoken to it in motion debates going back to 2011, but here we are again.

In 2016, the Yukon Conservation Society and CPAWS asked all political parties how they would address the lack of a territory-wide conservation strategy to protect our wildlife. The first thing the Liberal Party said in their response was — and I quote: "One way we will protect wildlife is to enact a Yukon Species at Risk Act." So, it has been more than four years and still no species at risk legislation.

Why did the Premier break this promise?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the Department of Environment has been working on the vision to look at species at risk legislation here in the Yukon. We are governed by the federal legislation and we will continue to

work toward resolving that. We have committed to that and we will continue toward that end.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, it almost sounds like a country song: It has been four long years, and here we are.

Let me read the question asked by the Yukon Conservation Society and CPAWS — and I quote: "The Yukon lacks an active territory wide conservation strategy for protecting wildlife and important natural areas. How would your party address this gap?" In the same response to that same question, the Liberal Party said — and I quote: "... the land use planning process can and will be used to protect important natural areas of the territory." Yet when the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation asked for a staking moratorium while the land use planning process was ongoing, the Premier refused to act.

Why did the Premier break this promise?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** No promise broken. We continue to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as we work through — as the commission does their good work. We have had lots of great meetings, our technicians have met, and we have met politically, as well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we've made commitments that go far beyond what the Yukon Party had made in the land use planning process when it comes to how we can work together, government-to-government, for land use planning.

We also made a commitment — because the federal money for land use planning has been tapped out, and we have many land use plans to go. We need to go hand-in-hand with First Nations — not only just the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, but all First Nations as they contemplate land use planning — together to Ottawa to talk about —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Obviously, the NDP doesn't want to hear the answer, because they talk off-mic as we try to talk.

We will go hand in hand, like we have been doing, with the Yukon First Nations at Yukon Days when we talk to the federal ministers to get the resources in place. We will continue to work with First Nation governments at the Yukon Forum to discuss land use planning.

The member opposite might think that somehow that promise has not been kept when, really, we've ramped up our communications, we've ramped up our obligations, and we've also ramped up our commitments to land use planning.

**Ms. White:** I was here between 2011 and 2016, and I don't think I would brag about being better than the Yukon Party at land use planning, but that's what we just heard from the government.

So, here's another question that the parties were asked — if they would commit to developing a wetlands strategy. Again, this is something that has been brought up in this Assembly on more than one occasion. It has also been raised as a concern by First Nation governments and by Yukoners wanting to protect and preserve our natural resources. The Liberal Party response was — and I quote: "We intend to develop a policy for managing Yukon wetlands, including support for wetland inventory and monitoring..."

Can the government tell us why none of these promises have been fulfilled in more than four years, or can Yukoners

just expect the same answers to similar questions during the next election campaign?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, establishing a wetlands policy that reflects Yukoners' perspectives and ensures the benefits for all the territory — for the wetlands sustainability for all of us — is a priority of our government. This policy will also help us make decisions with respect to the importance of wetlands and the benefits that they provide while also ensuring a diverse and growing economy.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, the NDP speak off-mic because they don't want hear these answers. If they hear the answers, well, then I guess they can — well, anyway, I won't even go with that.

Through individual and internal conversations, feedback and roundtable partnerships, we have anticipated very important insight and we have reflected on efforts. There has been a lot of work on this, Mr. Speaker.

Like the results of the Water Board's hearing on wetlands, we've identified a number of areas in the current draft that require additional work, but the work has been done. We are relying on this expertise and the experts of the roundtable members and the feedback that we receive, and we are working to bring a draft policy to public engagement as soon as we are able to.

Together, we can build a strong, consistent, and united approach to wetlands stewardship that reflects the values and interests of Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with our partners on this. We are establishing a wetlands policy that has never been established before.

#### **Question re: Alcohol-related harm**

**Mr. Hutton:** Today, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with two pandemics: COVID-19, and alcohol and substance abuse. This government continues to ignore one of them. I am a firefighter, and any firefighter can tell you that, if you have multiple fires out there, you have to fight more than one at a time. If you don't, you will find yourself with two raging fires — not one. In 2016, our chief medical officer, Dr. Hanley, said — and I quote: "We see a thousand visits to the emergency departments of Yukon directly related to alcohol use..." He called for more resources and policy changes.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has followed the advice of Dr. Hanley to deal with COVID-19. Why has the Premier ignored him when it comes to alcohol- and drug-related damage to our population?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The situation in Yukon that we find ourselves in didn't start overnight; it has been here a long time. We heard this quite clearly from our communities. That it is not the sole responsibility of this government is what we have also heard. We know that the shouldering of the responsibilities of wellness in Yukon and of ensuring our communities are well and taken care of falls on holistic solutions. The holistic solutions with respect to mental wellness and the whole care of individuals come from our communities. We are working with our communities.

Two years ago, we established land-based wellness strategies and supports in the budget to support our communities. The communities have established their own wellness plans. We are there to support and augment that, and we will continue to do that. It came out in the *Putting People First* report. To suggest that we're not doing anything is absolutely not true. We are doing a lot, and the communities are doing a lot. We have heard really clearly from one of the communities in the member's riding where they are doing a lot themselves, with the support of our partners, by hosting land-based camps for men, land-based camps for women, and working with children. We are there beside them, supporting them, every step of the way.

**Mr. Hutton:** The World Health Organization said in April that rules to protect health and reduce harm caused by alcohol, like restricting access, should be upheld and reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic, but this past June, the government cut alcohol prices, going against public health advice.

There are a million ways to support our small businesses to get through this pandemic, but, Mr. Speaker, this was not the right way. Making it easier for struggling people to get alcohol was not the right thing to do. More than just ignoring this issue, government has poured gas on this fire.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that reducing the price of alcohol in the middle of a pandemic goes against public health advice and was not the right way to support the restaurant and bar industry?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, what I would like to say is that I have worked very closely with the chief medical officer of health. I have worked with him on COVID. I have worked with him on liquor. Actually, he was involved and on the advisory committee as we reviewed the act and rewrote the act and passed it here in this Legislature. Currently, he is assisting in working on the regulations, which are there to reduce the harms of alcohol.

In fact, that was the whole point of that act. We built in, throughout it, social responsibility. In fact, I did ask the member opposite — and I thank him for his contributions to that work.

At the same time, I also talked to the chief medical officer of health about what we should do around reducing the prices. Now, we didn't reduce the prices of alcohol, Mr. Speaker. What we did was that we supported those businesses to keep them going. I talked to them directly. I talked to those businesses, and I said: "If you reduce prices on alcohol, I will drop this right away." They understood that this was to support them as businesses through a pandemic — plain and simple.

Now, I appreciate how hard this is as an issue, and we are working on a bunch of fronts to try to protect Yukoners. But this is not — we're comparing different things here, and I will stand up again and debate it.

**Mr. Hutton:** Mr. Speaker, I'm here because the people in my communities — that I represent — are struggling. Communities are trying to get support. YG is not there for them.

Yesterday, George Skookum, a village councillor in Carmacks, spoke on CBC Radio. He said — and I quote: “It’s easy to buy alcohol, but it’s harder to get into treatment.” You can go to a local bar or liquor store, but when you want to go for treatment, there’s a long lineup.

Right now, many First Nation governments are forced to send people to Victoria at great cost to get the help they need. This is unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, I add my voice to Councillor Skookum’s and ask the Premier to act now to deal with alcohol and substance abuse.

When will the Premier commit to the financial and human resources required to take care of our people?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This pandemic has been tough on all Yukoners. It has been tough on our communities, for sure.

One of the things that was hard for us was that we used to travel all the time to our communities, and I did travel to the community that the member opposite is talking about. It is his community. I invited him to come to that meeting when I spoke with the council there, but he didn’t make it.

I talked with the council that we are talking about, and what I will say is that we discussed how to get those supports to those communities. The Minister of Health and Social Services, out of the review that has taken place — about some of the tragedies in Carmacks. We talked about how we are increasing those supports to those communities. That was a direct conversation that I had with him. It doesn’t mean that there aren’t challenges that we continue to face, but we did go — we are in conversation with Carmacks, with Pelly, with Mayo, with Keno. In those conversations, we are working directly to make sure that those supports are coming to those communities to support them during this hard time and beyond.

#### **Question re: Fixed election dates**

**Mr. Cathers:** In 2016, the Liberals committed to a fixed election date. The Premier said that fixed election dates — and I quote: “... strengthen our democracy by being open, fair, and transparent about when the next election will be held.” So, I will give the Premier another opportunity today to live up to his words and tell Yukoners the answer to this simple question: When will the next election be held?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I guess the member opposite decided not to bring any new questions to the Legislative Assembly this semester. It is no secret that this is the last year of our mandate. We have tabled a budget that builds on the work that we have done over the past four years and reflects our vision about the future of the territory. The budget includes funding for new universal childcare programs that will make life more affordable for Yukon families. We are transforming the health care system and making substantial investments in renewable energy and infrastructure to make a more resilient future for the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I probably won’t be the first Premier in the Legislature to announce an election date in the Legislative Assembly. There is a process for that, but it is no secret that this is an election year and I will continue to talk about the budget in the Legislative Assembly. That is what we should be doing.

**Mr. Cathers:** I keep asking the question because the Premier keeps dodging it, and it is a very simple one. The Premier and his colleagues watered down what they promised in the 2016 election and instead brought in rules that apply to everyone except them.

When explaining why the Liberals thought fixed election dates were so important, the Liberal MLA for Porter Creek Centre said — quote: “By eliminating the guesswork at elections, Yukoners will be able to be more engaged and up to speed.”

Will the Premier eliminate the guesswork in elections so that Yukoners can be “more engaged and up to speed” by telling us: When will the next election be?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The member opposite is right. We did do the effort to put in the legislation so that, moving forward, there will be fixed election dates — something that the Yukon Party could have done and didn’t do, but we did.

We’ve talked about this in the Legislative Assembly. I’ve answered this question many times, so I won’t take up too much time and answer it again. We did put that legislation in. The members opposite could have and didn’t. The members opposite never announced an election inside of the Legislative Assembly even though they’re asking me to do that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy is pretty rich.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I’m just reminding the Premier of what he and his colleagues committed to around fixed election dates. Instead, what they actually delivered was rules that apply to everyone except them.

Just a few months ago, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislative Assembly that Yukoners deserved to know when the next election will be held. He said — and I quote: “... one of the things that we’re trying to do with this is to provide clarity and certainty that will allow Yukoners to plan.”

So, will the Premier provide that clarity and certainty his colleague spoke of in allowing Yukoners to plan by answering the simple question and telling them when will the next election be held?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, again, we did change the legislation, which is great news — so, moving forward, set election dates. We’ve also put set dates for the session as well — something that the members opposite refused to do. We’re very proud of that accomplishment. Again, the Yukon Party had options year after year to do that and didn’t, and now they’re basically saying that what we did was just not enough — it was a little bit too — just not enough — whereas they didn’t do anything in that capacity.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I agree. We’ve answered the question as far as why we did it for the next — moving on from here into the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. It’s no secret that we are in the last year of our mandate. We’ll follow the current rules and we will follow those procedures as they are laid out. We have tabled a budget that builds on our work, as mentioned, over the past four years.

We’re very proud of the work that this government has done over the last four years. We’ve built ourselves to a place where we’re getting out four times the amount of capital assets

than the Yukon Party did in their big bang-up election year budget. They had \$150 million of projects that they actually accomplished. We just tabled a budget for \$434 million of capital assets. I could go on about all of the benefits of the budget, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the work that we are doing here in the Legislative Assembly and we would like to continue to be the government into the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly as well.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 207: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Second Reading — adjourned debate**

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 207, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will return to just where I left off the other day. I was indicating that I know that it is hard for us to remember, particularly up here in our little left-hand corner of Canada, where we have been relatively safe and where we have pulled together to keep each other safe and healthy.

Mr. Speaker, not that long ago, the world shut down. Schools sent children home. Air travel and cruise ships stopped. People stopped moving around the world for business and pleasure, businesses closed, concerts were cancelled, sports — professional and local — all ended, and we couldn't get our hair cut or our teeth cleaned. Health care services were seriously restricted. The world as we knew it stopped. We have been living with so much uncertainty and anxiety now for more than a year. All anyone wants is certainty and peace. Yukoners have risen to the challenge together with patience and kindness.

At the best of times, a budget creates conditions that allow individuals to thrive as the economy grows. In times of uncertainty like these, a well-crafted budget can provide the stability needed to steer through the turbulence while charting a course toward calmer times. I think that it's important that Yukoners know how we work to develop the most important document produced by government. We work as a team for months and months, not from a distance, but in a real way. We ask ourselves: What are the priorities of Yukoners? What have they told us in e-mails or on the phone, on the doorsteps, through public engagement, or through our partnerships working with Yukon First Nation governments, municipalities, community groups, and Yukoners?

Governments must understand their responsibility to the people of this territory, and this one does. Some may think that this sounds naïve, but I don't believe it is. I have seen it work. I have seen the Yukon Liberal government do it for the past four and a half years.

One time, several years ago, I was accused in this House of making a decision to benefit one community over another — one community represented by a Liberal MLA over one

represented by an opposition MLA. That was truly shocking to me and reprehensible. It truly says more about the character of the person accusing me than anything else.

We have been elected — all been elected — to work for and represent the people of the Yukon and to make decisions for the whole of the territory to benefit all of our communities. To do otherwise is abdicating our responsibilities as elected members of the Legislative Assembly.

My colleague described it earlier this week as sometimes a difficult place to be. I know she refers to the personal attacks, not opposition criticism, but reducing such criticism to questions of personal integrity. I know this team of people. I spend nearly every day with them, and I know that in every situation we ask ourselves: What is in the best interests of Yukoners? This budget reflects that attitude and approach. It ensures that priorities that exist in every corner of this great territory are addressed. All communities matter. I'm so proud that our government has not only advanced that as a key priority but has worked extensively with each and every community to meet them, to listen to their priorities, and to respond.

This budget shows many of those responses: investments in arenas, medical professionals, schools, mining roads, bridges, housing, residential lots, new legislation, tourism, infrastructure, small businesses, climate change, procurement, fire halls, community centres, health centres, biomass, and community safety — just to name a few.

It's not just about building things; it's about growing vibrant, sustainable communities and supporting Yukoners everywhere. Yukoners are extremely intelligent, innovative, and hard-working. In 2016, when we asked them to put their trust in our team to make their lives better, they agreed and sent us here to work for them. I know that part of their trust in us resulted in our commitment to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments and communities, to respect the intent and scope of modern treaties, and to build prosperity and certainty for our future by building meaningful partnerships with Yukon First Nations for the benefit of us all.

Despite talking about doing so, these relationships with Yukon First Nations were just not working — not a priority for a previous government. We have worked hard on these relationships to build trust, to build a foundation for our work going forward. It is not perfect. Like all complex relationships, there are bumps in the road, but we are on the road and committed to going forward together.

I am so proud of the work that the Department of Justice has been doing and it is my honour to be its minister and Attorney General. Last year, the department developed priorities to guide its work on behalf of Yukoners. They are reconciliation with Yukon First Nations. Firstly, Department of Justice representatives each committed to embracing the spirit of the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, entitled *Honouring the Truth, Reconciliation for the Future* by conducting themselves in a manner that embodies the purpose of reconciliation with our First Nation members in Yukon — unprecedented work.

The second priority for the department is working as a team within the branches and within the department as a whole,

and their work is focused on maintaining the best interests of the department and their approach to their work.

The third priority is identifying and meeting our clients' needs. Department of Justice personnel have a wide variety of responsibilities and an equally diverse clientele, internal and external to government, and we are committed to ensuring that they know that we work for them — the clients — and that we treat them with empathy, inclusion, integrity, respect, and professionalism.

The fourth priority for the department is initiative and innovation. Management is committed to encouraging Department of Justice staff at all levels to think innovatively and to take the initiative to improve the work that we do and the services that we provide to allow for positive change and creativity in the workplace. Management will encourage the Department of Justice personnel to reconsider their approach to the services that the department provides and adapt to the changing environment.

There is a commitment to improved communication — committed to the way that we communicate internally to one another and externally to the public in order to better perform as a Department of Justice team, share information and ideas with each other, dispel negative myths about the department, and ensure that the general public has an appreciation for the excellent work that is done. Leadership, Mr. Speaker, could not even have contemplated such progress and goals for the department without the foundational work done by our government to better serve the people of the Yukon.

Over the past four years, this work has seen the department collaborate with Yukon First Nation governments, with the RCMP, with courts, independent agencies, and all of our communities on a variety of initiatives. During our work together, we have concentrated on three key elements to build a foundation for our justice system moving forward. They are building a foundation of trust with Yukon First Nation governments, modernizing legislation, and prioritizing restorative justice and access to justice services.

Firstly, on building the foundation with Yukon First Nations, a number of initiatives have been followed, and these are only a few.

The Government of Yukon recently approved a new approach to justice-related negotiations with Yukon First Nation governments. It is based on the recognition and respect for the First Nations' jurisdictions, governance, and legal principles. It provides new opportunities for collaboration and partnership, and it promotes incremental and capacity-building initiatives.

Our government is committed to enabling Yukon First Nation governments to fully exercise their authority and jurisdiction for the administration of justice. We hope that our new approach encourages First Nation governments that are not already doing so to consider negotiating an administration of justice agreement with the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada. These initiatives and this mandate are supported by the 2021-22 budget.

We are augmenting and extending the First Nation policing program. We are working with First Nation governments to

initiate and implement community protocols under the *Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act*. We have initiated and are supporting the RCMP's historical cases unit, which investigates historical homicides, historical suspicious deaths, missing person investigations, and cases of unidentified human remains, for which funding continues in this year's budget.

We have committed and declared support for the territory-wide strategy to implement the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' calls to action. Financial support for this incredibly important work is in the 2021-22 budget.

Our department continues to introduce new and amended statutes to respond to the public interest and to codify best practices and procedures. Since the spring of 2017, we have done policy work, drafted, introduced, and debated 43 pieces of legislation. In addition, we have introduced and debated 20 budget bills. These 43 pieces of legislation aren't housekeeping bills; they are substantive work.

Having worked with several pieces of outdated legislation myself over the years, I am very proud of our new *Coroners Act*, *Missing Persons Act*, *ATIPP act*, *Societies Act*, condo act amendments, and various pieces of equality legislation. There were a number of pieces brought in just last fall that will change the face of activity for Yukoners — the land titles act, the new *Wills Act*, and the new enduring powers of attorney act, just to name a few.

The last commitment from the department that I should mention here today is our government's commitment to restorative justice and access to justice. Our government also recently approved the creation of an integrated restorative justice unit, supported by this budget, to improve the government's restorative justice service delivery. This new unit will also increase engagement with First Nation governments and better support community-designed and community-led restorative justice initiatives.

The restorative justice unit will bring existing youth justice and adult justice practitioners together to offer seamless program delivery across the territory. Initiatives to expand services to Yukoners include the sexualized assault response team, the independent legal advice program, project links, and victim services, as well as other services and supports within the territory.

I will speak now to some of the initiatives at the Department of Education. The Department of Education has one focus and one focus only: What is in the best interests of our students? Over the past year, we faced an unprecedented set of challenges due to COVID-19. In order to quickly respond, we prioritized and worked together to adapt operations and to adjust resources to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff while maintaining continuity of learning. As we look toward pandemic recovery, we are focusing efforts to ensure that our education system at all levels provides positive outcomes for students and advances Yukon's social, economic, and community goals.

Yukoners expect us to plan, to think ahead, to do our jobs, even when they are really hard — even when they're affected by a world pandemic. They don't expect us to throw up our hands and to refuse to plan schools just because it's difficult or

just because some people will disagree on the next steps. Mr. Speaker, planning schools is tough work because you can't please all Yukoners all the time. But just because it's tough doesn't mean you avoid it.

Our government and the Department of Education have taken up the challenge of addressing our future school needs. We are building Whistle Bend elementary. The budget has \$10.5 million to begin construction of the first elementary school in Whitehorse in over 25 years. We are building on relationships with the Kluane First Nation and responding to their request made now for more than a generation to build a school with them in their community. We ended an 11-year court battle and built a French first language secondary school. We are working with the community of Ross River to address long-overdue stress of a new school. A total of \$8.7 million is budgeted for new learning spaces and modular classrooms, including \$4 million to add new learning spaces to the Robert Service School in Dawson City.

We have included more than \$2.6 million to improve online and digital learning technologies that will support modernized learning and teaching in all of our schools and a further \$1.9 million for supports to ensure that our students are successful in their learning during and after a pandemic. Our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. To support Yukon families and make their lives more affordable, we are investing more than \$25 million toward early learning initiatives.

Now, I know that there is criticism of this, although it's hard to understand. This is supporting Yukon families. I appreciate that it's criticized on the basis of it being some sort of an election promise. This is not a promise going forward, Mr. Speaker; this is work that's happening now.

It includes \$15 million to support a new universal childcare program for the Yukon and to put more disposable income in the hands of families, saving them up to \$700 per month, per child. This will support Yukon families and, in particular, will help women who have been hit hard by the pandemic.

We will also work with rural Yukon communities to expand full-time kindergarten programming, individually with each community, to support these initiatives and ensure stronger coordination and collaboration across our early learning services. In order to do that, as well, we are moving the Child Care Services unit to the Department of Education. There is a bill before this House to assist with that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment — I'm not sure how much time I have left, but I would like to speak for a second about volunteerism in the territory, particularly because it has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic but also because it is truly the foundation of this community in many, many ways — and I mean the whole territory.

When I think about the last time that we were here, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I think about the Arctic Winter Games. The Arctic Winter Games is truly the epitome of our Yukon volunteer spirit. It's probably really all of our community that is involved in one way or the other in the Arctics. Volunteers who have committed and trained and

always welcome our visitors with such heartfelt hospitality were not able to do so last year. Volunteers, generally, are the backbone of any Yukon sport, cultural, or social event.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank each and every one of Yukon's great volunteers. Their efforts do not go unnoticed. Many of our organizations rely on them, run because of them, and are supported on a daily basis. We know that this has been hard during the pandemic because individuals have been curtailed in some of their activities, but we're hoping that they can do them and continue them, and we are thanking them for that effort and for adjusting.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment also to thank the people of Riverdale South. The honour is mine to have been sent here by them to represent them, to bring forward their concerns, and to help resolve issues that are of interest to them and those that are of interest to all Yukoners. I appreciate that those are the individual Yukoners who have taken the time to express their votes and to participate in our democratic process for the purpose of having a representative here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

I also appreciate that we all come here with a party stripe but are in fact representing all of the individuals in our neighbourhoods, in our ridings, and in our communities. Those who cast their vote for us — or, maybe more importantly, those who didn't cast their vote for us — because it is an opportunity to come here and to do our job on behalf of all Yukoners. That is such an incredible opportunity and honour.

Over the past four years, I've participated in many community outreach events. Some of you may recall the wildly successful pizza parties hosted in Riverdale North and Riverdale South that happened. These were excellent opportunities to hear from Yukoners.

I also worked to set up along the Millennium Trail during the Terry Fox Run and to provide snacks and water during this COVID year to those participating in the important event, and we had a lot of great conversations.

For the past year, Mr. Speaker, I have focused on the seniors in my riding. When COVID became a reality, I put together some COVID safety packs for seniors in Riverdale South. With a local young artist from Riverdale South, I created a beautiful art card and attached locally baked cookies supporting a local bakery and hand-delivered these to all Riverdale South residents around the Christmas holidays. This card included a personal message to stay safe and how they could connect with services if anyone needed support during that unusual time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take just a moment to thank my family and friends for their endless support and understanding. As anyone who has done this job, even for a short period of time, knows, being a member of the government of this House takes a toll on relationships. It is wrong that the demands on your time mean that your family and your friends regularly take a back seat and that they don't have you in the everyday moments of their lives as much as they or you might like. This commitment is one that they make as well when we decide to go down this road.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Yukoners. Their resilience, patience, and kindness during this pandemic has kept us all safe. I know that we've all heard comments across the territory and perhaps even nationally or internationally: "What's going on up there in the Yukon? How is there no COVID? How are there still some restrictions?" The truth of the matter is that we are safe here because Yukoners have abided by those restrictions, have taken them seriously, understand what it means that their actions affect some of their neighbours — all of their neighbours in this situation. As a result, the indication has been a positive one. We have to keep going.

I have the opportunity today, so I will take it, to thank the incredible people who work on this team. Coming into this Legislative Assembly on a daily basis and working for and with our partners on a daily basis throughout the year is just an amazing experience. We have brought forward the opportunity — promises to Yukon, promises to Yukoners — about bringing prosperity, growth, and kindness to every corner of this territory, and every one of these people is committed to that and has done it every day for the last four and a half years. I appreciate so much being a member of this team, and I am honoured to do so.

Lastly, I will take the opportunity to thank Yukoners. They have put their confidence in us. They have abided by the "safe six" plus one. They have taken the time and energy to support their fellow Yukoners, their neighbours, their friends, and their families. They have reached out. There have been just amazing examples — and we all know them — of community support and of Yukoners reaching out to one another to help in times of stress. This has been a time of stress.

Thank you to Yukoners for your confidence in us, for abiding by the rules and regulations — the "safe six" plus one — in relation to COVID. Thank you for your kindness to one another. Thank you for your patience with one another. We have presented a budget here that will take Yukon forward and continue the commitments that we have made on behalf of Yukoners for Yukoners and the commitments that we have been asked to take forward from Yukoners.

**Mr. Hutton:** It is my pleasure to rise today to speak in reply to this budget. I want to start off by thanking all of the people in my communities. It has been the absolute honour of my life to be trusted by the people of Mayo-Tatchun, to be their voice in this Legislative Assembly.

I would be very surprised if I can get through my reply to this speech without breaking into tears a couple times. It's lost on my colleagues that I have been attending over 30 funerals since 2016. In no less than 10 of them, I was given the honour of being a pallbearer.

I was extremely disappointed when I listened to *As It Happens* last night to hear the Minister of Health and Social Services deliberately attempt to sow division in my communities, to try to accuse me of favouring Mayo over Pelly and Carmacks. Fortunately, the host of the show saw through it, cut her off, and said that is not what Mr. Hutton said.

I would encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly to listen to Mr. Hutton's *As it Happens* interview, followed the next day by the clarification interview from the Minister of Health and Social Services — it clarified much more about the Minister of Health and Social Services than it did about the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun.

It's really disappointing to hear, in this House today, one of my colleagues who can remember one visit to my community where I was unable to attend. My colleagues, who all live in Whitehorse, have the luxury of going home to their loved ones every evening, year-round.

In the last four years, I spent two years sleeping by myself in Whitehorse, not with the woman I married 33 years ago, who has been my support and partner for the past 35 years. So, when I get home after the legislative sitting, I like to spend time, not just in all three of my big communities, but in the two little ones, Keno and Stewart Crossing. Then I love to spend time with my family, because I only get half the time every year to do it that all my colleagues get. So, it's really disappointing to hear that, because I missed one meeting in Mayo, somehow I've failed as the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun.

The failure lies on behalf of my colleagues who have been absolutely tone deaf since 2016 to the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun's issues.

I tried unsuccessfully — I can't even count the times — to get a meeting — a famous one-government approach meeting where I sit down with all my colleagues, and every minister said — in the pure context of one of your communities — that this is what my department can do to help, this is what my department can do to help, and this is what my — I got no meeting. Guess what, Mr. Speaker. My communities didn't get any help.

The Minister of Health and Social Services thinks that mental wellness hubs are some kind of magic magnet that draws these poor, damaged, broken people off the streets of Mayo, Carmacks, and Pelly. I suggested on *As It Happens* that the wellness hubs were a good idea, but for the people in Mayo — these damaged drug addicts and alcoholics who can't afford a vehicle and don't have friends who have vehicles are expected to walk 150 miles to Carmacks to get help. No, they have a choice. They can walk 150 miles to Dawson to get help.

The mental wellness hub is in Dawson City, where they have a brand new, fully operational hospital — fully staffed. In four years, not once did I ever hear the Premier say that there is a huge problem with alcohol, that there is a huge problem with drugs, or that we have a mental illness problem in Dawson. I never heard it, but I can tell you that I spoke those words on behalf of all three of my communities not once but probably 50 times. The mental wellness hub that is in Dawson should have been in Mayo. That is just unacceptable.

I wish this budget was broken down riding by riding, because it would really tell you a different story about where the government's priorities lay. Rural Yukon has had a lot of messages of support from people in my riding and from every community in my riding. I guess perhaps the Premier and Minister of Health and Social Services didn't realize that this is my home. My friends and family live there. I am the same Don

Hutton today who knocked on their door and asked for their vote. My colleagues cannot say the same. They are different people, Mr. Speaker.

Support — amazingly enough — believe it or not, I'm fairly naïve politically. When I got the phone call from *As It Happens* saying that they wanted to talk to me, I thought I was talking to the folks here in Whitehorse. The next thing I know, I'm speaking to an audience of 200,000 Canadians across this country. But they reached out to me, Mr. Speaker; I didn't reach out to them. I got support letters from across this country. I got e-mails. I got Facebook posts. I have one here somewhere, Mr. Speaker. Indulge me, please.

If it's too long, I'll table it when I'm done, but it's really quite brief: "I am a 61 year old piano tuner on Vancouver Island. I just heard your interview on CBC 'As It Happens'. I want to thank you for standing up for your principles. It is important, useful and helpful for a functioning democracy for people across the country to see examples of politicians like yourself. There are too many examples of well meaning individuals to get elected to office, only to become spineless yes-men in short order. Parliamentarians such as yourself are needed to wake up and shake up their dozing colleagues, and more importantly, to remind voters that there are still ethics and morals in the halls where we are represented. I sincerely hope that your constituents somehow find the help that they need from your Legislative Assembly. Godspeed to you, sir! Jurgen Goering, Nanaimo BC".

If I was still sitting on the other side of the House, I would be encouraged to dig out 30 or 40 more of those and read them and then wear my jacket out patting myself on the back, but that's not what I'm here for, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not here to draw attention to myself. I'm here to draw attention to this government's cold-hearted attitude toward the rural ridings that I represent.

The Minister of Health and Social Services, who has spent probably five days in the last four years in my community, to have the audacity to somehow suggest that I care more about Mayo than I do Pelly or Carmacks — pathetic, truly pathetic.

I know that I made the right decision to sit as an Independent MLA because I was sent here by the people of Mayo-Tatchun to be their voice in this House. For four and a half years, my voice was taken away from me. The opportunities to get involved in policy were absolutely few and far between. My good colleague, the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation, is the one minister who allowed me to get involved in actual policy decisions. He actually made the effort, when I was at home in Mayo, to phone me when they had a meeting in Whitehorse so that I could participate. That little bit of effort was all it took to get my involvement in policy.

Now, when they decided that they wanted to have me drive from Mayo to Whitehorse to discuss the *Condominium Act*, I suggested that it might not be the most appropriate use of my time because we don't have any condos in Mayo, Pelly, Carmacks, or Stewart. Funny thing about Stewart — 10 years later — six years after my learned colleague, Mr. Tredger, tried to get one street light for Stewart Crossing — Stewart was lucky. They voted in a Liberal MLA to get something done for

them. There is still no street light in Stewart Crossing — one street light. There are 30 in a government compound. There is not one on this driveway — from a private person's driveway — that attaches to the north Klondike Highway, just before the bridge at Stewart. No less than five pets have been run over there, but my good colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, sent his team out there to do some studies. Lo and behold, there is not enough traffic there to warrant a street light — one street light, Mr. Speaker. I may start a fundraising campaign when I retire — a GoFundMe campaign — to see if we can't get a street light for Stewart Crossing.

I have not asked my government for a lot, but I have asked them to pay attention to my communities. They have been ignored for far too long. I really wish that we could have had a half a day for me to have a conversation with my colleagues about the problems that are faced. In four and a half years, my issues were never important enough to sit down and have a meeting with me. It doesn't make me feel really valuable, Mr. Speaker.

I am not totally surprised. The final question for the Minister of Health and Social Services in her *As It Happens* interview was a fairly simple one. It only needed a yes-or-no answer. The Minister of Health and Social Services was asked, "Are you disappointed to lose the Member for Mayo-Tatchun?" With about this length of a pause, then there was some kind of spin about how wonderful it is to work with her other colleagues. The host let that go on for 15 seconds or so, and then she said that all she wanted was a yes-or-no answer, so she tried again: "Are you disappointed that you lost the Member for Mayo-Tatchun?" It was quite telling that, once again, the Minister of Health and Social Services was lost for an answer. She's not sure if she's disappointed or not that I no longer sit on that side of the House.

The Minister of Health and Social Services actually called *As It Happens* to provide that clarification. I didn't call them; they called me. If you listen to that interview, Mr. Speaker, you would think that this was not a high-level senior member of the Cabinet with four years of experience who answered this question with a communications team of 25 people to support it.

I did my interview in my lovely new office, over the phone, surrounded by myself. I encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly — I encourage everyone in Mayo-Tatchun, every Yukoner — to download that free app from CBC — CBC Listen. Listen to those podcasts, because it's so much more informative about why Mr. Hutton left the Liberal Party.

I'm going to be 65 years old in June, Mr. Speaker. Every day of those 65 years has been spent in this beautiful, wonderful Yukon, except for the two years that I had to go out to Prince George for college because, back in the day, we just didn't have the programs here. Yesterday, I heard my learned friend from Porter Creek Centre talk about the wonderful résumés of the dream team — the university degrees, the letters behind their names, the lawyers. I missed the reference to firefighters. Firefighters apparently have no place in this Legislative Assembly.



Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest honours of my life was to serve the Yukon Wildland Fire Management program for 34 years. I protected people's homes, property, values, and cabins in the wilderness. Over that 34 years, one structure was lost when I was incident commander. It was a trapline cabin that belonged to a fellow named George Nicloux out at Mayo Lake. I had taken him in the chopper out with me to do the initial reconnaissance and look at it. I said, "Here's what we're going to do, George. Your cabin is right beside a creek. We'll get the equipment in here. We'll set up sprinklers. We're going to cut a line around here. We'll set up some pumps." Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, by the time we got back to Mayo, that cabin was gone.

When we got back out to the site with our equipment, the fire was half a mile farther away down the valley. Mr. Nicloux's base camp was gone. It's really difficult to put a value — the way we, with our Eurocentric view of the world, put values on things. A trapline cabin in an isolated location where you have to haul things in during the winter and stuff and you've worked out of there for 25 years — it has a really special meaning to you.

One of my many frustrations over the years, working with the fire program, was that, when we changed our zonation system, we didn't bother to incorporate First Nation values into it. There is no recognition that a hot spring is a sacred place that deserves protection. Because I lived in Mayo my whole life, I understand the value of sacred sites to First Nation people in my riding. When a fire threatened the hot springs at Ddhaw Ghro, it wasn't a high enough value at risk for the Yukon government's Wildland Fire Management program to protect. But, Mr. Speaker, if we would have let the fire go up hot springs creek and destroy that, I could have never lived with myself. I took some action and prevented that fire from going up that creek into that hot spring. The Ddhaw Ghro agreement that everyone was so happy to sign — Ddhaw Ghro, without my action and the action of my crews that day, would have been a charred mess.

The people of Pelly understand that. They know who protected Ddhaw Ghro. They know who fought for Ddhaw Ghro. They do know it was this government that signed the paper, but the many people who worked for 20 years — people like Pat Van Bibber — and put their heart and soul into it — and people like Bob Hayes, the elders in Pelly, and Lizzie Hall — I didn't hear all those names get trumpeted when the agreement was signed.

Very similar with the Peel, Mr. Speaker — our government had the privilege of signing that document.

Hundreds and thousands of Yukoners fought for years for that. They stood in demonstrations and stood in support and solidarity with each other. Elders spent the last seven years of their lives providing input to the consultation plan, and sadly, some of them didn't survive to see that plan get signed. It's not for the government to take credit for anything other than putting the ink on the paper. The real battle was fought for many years before that. My good colleagues from the NDP were a huge part of it. I saw them outside of this Legislative Assembly in support of the Peel. I saw them in Mayo many times. Unfortunately,

they couldn't be there the day that agreement was signed. It would have been a much more complete celebration had the two members of the NDP caucus been there.

It was an absolutely heartwarming, wonderful celebration. The water ceremony left no person untouched. I have never been more proud of my community — the young people in my community — the youth who fought for the Peel. Geri-Lee Buyck and some of the elders from my community, Jimmy Johnny — the face of the Peel — but the Liberal government protected the Peel, not all of those people.

I have heard my colleagues on the other side of the House stand up and say, if once, probably a dozen times: "I never thought we were going to be governing during a pandemic." Well, contrary to popular opinion, Mr. Speaker, when I came to this House in 2016, we were in the middle of a pandemic. Ignoring it for three years makes it no less of a pandemic.

In 2017, I shared information with my colleagues that the World Health Organization had reported 3.3 million deaths globally annually from alcohol-attributable deaths — across the globe, 3.3 million people. This pandemic was going on for at least a decade before we arrived in office. When COVID-19 came along and they called it a "pandemic" and there were photo opportunities galore, this now was a pandemic that we could get our hands on.

My analogy about fighting fire — we chose to fight the COVID-19 fire, but the one that was here first, three years previous — we sat there and watched it get bigger and bigger and bigger. As I said in Question Period this afternoon, rather than helping the situation, we actually made it worse. When you take a 12-percent discount and you add a 13-percent discount to it and it comes to a 25-percent discount, I don't understand how that's not a reduction in cost. Anytime you make booze cheaper, anytime you make it more accessible, consumption goes up. That evidence has been there for 100 years. I'm shocked that my colleagues could recognize one pandemic and not the other, especially when somebody was trying to bring it up, if not on a weekly basis, certainly on a semi- or biweekly basis.

I pleaded — I begged — with my colleagues: "Get me some help for my communities." I don't know how many times I came to Monday morning meetings and my colleagues — "Hi, Don. How are you? How was your weekend?" I would say, Mr. Speaker: "It certainly would have been a lot better if I didn't have to go to a funeral this weekend." "It certainly would have been a lot better if somebody — a young woman — hadn't have gotten her throat slashed in Mayo that weekend." "It certainly would have been a lot better if I didn't have to come back and say, 'Well, now Chief Mervyn has lost his son.'" "It certainly would have been a lot better if I didn't have to come back and say, 'Now another one of my friends that I went to school with from grade 1 to 11 has had her son shot, murdered in front of his wife.'"

There were four murders in four years in three small communities, Mr. Speaker — 500 people in each community. If you want to do the stats the way they do stats on deaths per 100,000 — you can do the math, or perhaps my learned colleague, the Minister of Community Services, could

enlighten us. Four murders for 1,500 people. If that was extrapolated out to how many murders in 100,000, I can only tell you this: My communities of Mayo, Pelly, Carmacks, and Keno — are all grieving. They asked me on *As It Happens*: “What are you hearing from your constituents?” I said, “Sadness and grief and a sense of hopelessness. They don’t think there is a way out of this. The government of Yukon doesn’t care. People in my community are dying and I can’t get a one-day meeting to discuss an all-government approach to help my communities.” How little my voice means to my colleagues, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you one thing: When this election ever gets called, I will return home to my people the same man that I came. I cannot say that for some of my colleagues. Power has been described as an aphrodisiac, as a drug. Perhaps people can get drunk with power. There is an old adage that “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

When the Premier makes a decision to have a small Cabinet with seven people in it, he is guaranteed the tie-breaking vote every single time there is a tie among that Cabinet. That power disappears when you put an eighth person in there. Small Cabinets are much better to ensure that control is there. It benefits Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. Openness, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness — that was the word that got me. I said, boy, I have been waiting my whole life for a government that is going to be open, accountable, transparent, and inclusive. I have never been a big fan of party politics, Mr. Speaker.

One of the broken promises that I hoped was going to be kept was electoral reform. This ridiculous first-past-the-post system does not serve Yukoners well. Forty percent of the vote gets you 11 seats and 39 percent gets you six. That is toilet paper math, Mr. Speaker, where 12 rolls equal 72. Yukoners deserve better. The MLAs in our rural ridings have to have a voice. It has to mean something. My Facebook page got lit up with my constituents saying that the rural communities have been ignored forever. That’s not a surprise to me. I haven’t been here forever, but I am as old as the hospital in Mayo — 64. I know that for a fact, because my brother was born in the old hospital in 1955. I was born in the brand new one a year later.

When my family doctor, Majid Bakri, left, they backfilled his position. The spin on it created a new nurse practitioner position for Mayo. They backfilled the vacant doctor’s position for Mayo. That’s not a creation process; that’s a staffing action. They created nothing for Mayo. They created a nurse practitioner program in the territory and they substituted a nurse practitioner in Mayo for the doctor that was there. That would have been a much more honest, open, accountable, and transparent way to say it.

The mental wellness hubs that I’ve heard mentioned, I think, 3,845 times in the last four years are this — they are the answer to every question. It doesn’t matter what your question is — mental wellness hubs are the answer. They are buildings, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes, without staff in them, they are empty buildings. Even when the staff are in there, if they are not cross-culturally trained and cross-culturally aware, you

wind up with situations like Cynthia Blackjack in Carmacks, who went to white people for help and wound up dying.

A young man, 18 years old, murdered in Pelly Crossing within months after his graduation — a handsome, intelligent, beautiful young man with a sparkle in his eyes and his whole life ahead of him. A drunken fool with a two-by-four took his life away — my friend. I could stand here and start listing off the top of my head the friends I have lost to alcohol and drugs, not just in Mayo — Pelly and Carmacks.

In 2016, I lost my nephew — another handsome, intelligent, hard-working young man. We’re never going to see him again. He was my son’s best friend, my son’s cousin. He’s gone because of alcohol and drugs. I think I told my colleagues his story in 2016. I think that it was the first time I asked for help. I’m tired of asking for help, Mr. Speaker. They say that when an elder dies, the knowledge that is lost is equivalent to a library burning down. How many libraries’ worth of knowledge have we lost in my communities over the last four years?

The elders and people who went to Yukon University before there was ever a university here — their university was the land and the water that surrounds them. I had the extreme good fortune when I was a young man to be adopted — not formally, not in the white man’s way, but just taken under the wing of one of the best people I ever met in my life. He had a grade 8 education, Mr. Speaker, much like my father — two of the men I admired most in my life, two of the most intelligent men I have ever met in my life, two men I knew that I could trust. No university degrees.

If I only have two minutes left, they have to go toward my people in Mayo-Tatchun. To everybody in Mayo-Tatchun, my sincerest apology. If I have failed you, I am deeply and truly sorry. I have worked very hard. I spent countless hours away from my family in Mayo. I may have missed one meeting in Mayo. I know that my constituents are not going to judge me on that, Mr. Speaker. I owe my wholehearted thanks to the people of Mayo-Tatchun. They put their trust in me. They gave me the honour of doing this job. I feel like I have tried to serve them with honesty and purpose. I have tried to get help for their communities. The fact that I couldn’t get help for their communities is not my failure alone. Much as I share in the accomplishments of my colleagues, they have to share this burden with me. We all failed my communities.

To the people of Mayo-Tatchun, know this: I am going to retire. I am never going to stop fighting for the people of Mayo-Tatchun. I served you at the end of this term for 42 years, and I am proud to have done that.

**Ms. Hanson:** Well, it is pretty hard to follow on those heartfelt words. Very rarely, Mr. Speaker, do we have words that demonstrate that one of the key attributes of anybody seeking to serve the public should be humility. I thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for that. I thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for his words, and I thank the member from across for pointing out that I should speak up.

As I listened to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, it brought back many memories. One of the ones that came to mind just really quickly was that, just before the Spring Sitting started, I

had a phone call on my cell early one morning. I didn't recognize the number and normally I won't answer it, but I did. On the other end of the line was this voice, and I said, "Oh my god, it's Jimmy Johnny." He said, "How do you know my voice?" I said, "Jimmy Johnny, everybody knows your voice." He just called because — he said, "I just thought I should call you." He wanted to chat, and we talked about our shared love of the wilderness. We talked about the Peel, of course, because, as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun said, Jimmy was the face of the Peel, but he is also the face and the voice of elders across this territory. He expressed his concerns at that time, that morning, about what he saw was happening in the Mayo region with work being done that was ignoring the commitments that governments had made to regional land use planning. He said, "You know, they talk about this Beaver River plan — it's a plan to build a road to mines, and that is not what we agreed to. You know that, Liz." I said, "I know." So, we do need these reminders.

The other thing that Jimmy and I talked about was the time when my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and I joined a rather fun expedition into the Peel and into the Wind River area that had its own stories — some of which will never get told — but the morning that we were leaving, suddenly Jimmy Johnny showed up and he had picked wild strawberries for us. It was just such a nice gesture and a thoughtful gesture.

So, whether it was outside of this Legislative Assembly or in gatherings with the elders or at inter-tribal watershed gatherings, you always knew that there were people like Jimmy Johnny and so many others. As I reflected about what to say as I rise today to speak to — this is my 11<sup>th</sup> budget response since I was elected in December 2010. I thought, well, I'll just go back and see what I was talking about in February 2011, my first opportunity to stand as a Member of the Legislative Assembly representing Whitehorse Centre, to talk about the budget then — so 10 years ago.

So much, as I read through what I said then — it's like history has a way of repeating itself. There are times when you would hope that successive governments wouldn't just assume that nothing ever happened before them or that those who seek political office would have a sense of some of the history of this territory so that they don't repeat some of what's happened in the past.

I was, I am, and I remain proud to have been able to be elected in a riding like Whitehorse Centre — a riding that has a legacy of dedicated New Democratic representation.

I look back, and whether it was Joyce Hayden — Joyce, who, along with a group of women, had been co-founder of the Yukon Women's Mini-Bus Society, which became the Whitehorse transit system, and who actually objected to having this cooperative approach becoming part of the city because she thought there would be a loss of service and the actual engagement with the community — or the former Justice Roger Kimmerly or the first aboriginal woman in Canada to be named a Minister of Justice, Margaret Commodore. She wasn't just a great sportswoman — she isn't just a great sportswoman, because she still is and she's actively engaged in Yukon still. To my predecessor, friend, and respected colleague, Todd

Hardy, who I succeeded as both Leader of the NDP at the time and then as member of this Legislative Assembly — those are big shoulders to stand on and shoes to fill. Each one of those MLAs was bound by a commitment to common principles — principles that I've attempted, over the course of my career as a public servant but as a politician as well, to find ways to deal with — and try to strive toward issues of equality, democracy, community — community above all — sustainability and cooperation — and they're really strained.

I heard the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes yesterday talk about wanting to work collegially and being disappointed at how that doesn't work. I'll talk a little bit more about my experience of that over the last 11 years. I had seen — and one of the things that inspired me before I got involved as the MLA — where in fact, despite the fact that, as much I love to malign, rightly so, for the most part, the Yukon Party — my colleagues to the right — there were opportunities and there were times when that party was willing to engage constructively with the opposition and actually work with them. I know that they are astounded, but it happened. Whether they were issues like getting a concurrence to deal with issues — when I said this to a grade 5 class recently, they were astounded that anybody thought this was an issue. I said that it used to be that you could smoke anywhere; you could smoke anywhere you wanted to.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Ms. Hanson:** Doctor's office — smoked.

But then, at some point, we realized what damage it was doing to us and our health. To have the cooperation from an NDP motion to establish a smoke-free places act — that was cooperation. It wasn't because the government said, "No, we can't agree with that because it's coming from the NDP." It was that it was a good idea and that the time was now, so let's work together.

I heard the Minister of Justice talking today about expanding the scope of the SCANA — the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. I have questions about the fact that there has been no consultation on that. There has been absolutely no consultation on the expansion of the scope of it, but SCANA came out of the specific circumstances of drug dealing happening on Wheeler Street, in the Whitehorse Centre riding. The Leader of the NDP at the time, Todd Hardy, worked with the Yukon Party when he was in opposition to say that we need to do something. They agreed. That legislation is still in place 15 years later. Mind you, neither the Yukon Party or the Liberal governments have seen fit to review it. It is way past time for a review, but it came out of the cooperative efforts. The successive Yukon Party government and this current Liberal government have been unwilling to accept the fact that good ideas that we hear repeatedly can come from everywhere and anywhere. They just won't be listened to, heard, or acted on. That is the unfortunate thing.

There's irony here for my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and leader of the party now. There was actually cooperation between the government and the opposition NDP for a landlord and tenant act review. When my colleague has laboured hard over the last number of years to

address significant omissions that create an unequal playing field for people who live in mobile home parks with respect to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, the wall is there.

Reflecting back to what I was saying then, it's like trying to express — and I will again, as I have over and over again — the fact that it's incredibly humbling to be the representative of the riding of Whitehorse Centre because it's so diverse. If you look at it from the South Access to Two Mile Hill and to Marwell and to the fact that it is home to several levels of government, whether it's the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council office, the City of Whitehorse, or this Legislative Assembly — all of these are within my riding — it's not my riding, but it's the riding I have the privilege of serving and living in.

I think that one of the things we also see in this riding of Whitehorse Centre is that many, if not most, non-governmental and service organization headquarters are in Whitehorse Centre — hard-pressed to find many of them that have their offices outside. But it's really the people in this riding who make it so unique because it is an amalgam of all that is Yukon. I am honoured to represent First Nation people, francophones, long-time residents, recent immigrants, a mosque that wasn't here when I was elected first — it's really a number of communities within a community, and that's become even more so as we've seen the development of condo communities, so aptly represented by Jim Robb's recent painting. I am now a proud owner of one of the prints, which is from the condos — Whiskey Flats to the condos. I can remember Whiskey Flats — I mean, I remember when it was there.

One of the things that I reflected on 10 years ago that has struck me when I reflect on where we're at today — it's a different government, but in so many ways, it's the same government. I'll come to that in a minute.

I came to this calling, I guess you could say, seeking to be elected to represent the people who live in this area of Whitehorse, of Yukon. But I didn't come to it new to the notion of what government was about, because I came to it after a long career as a public servant for provincial, municipal, and federal governments. I said this at the time, and I'll say it again —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Acting Speaker (Mr. Adel):** Quorum — it was the COVID regulations that we agreed we would —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Ms. Hanson:** I said then and I will say it again: that I only make note of this because of the frequency with which the previous Premier and this Premier and his Cabinet colleagues bring the public service into their comments when questioned about the budget or about issues to do with their portfolios. To be quite frank, it's wrong. As Premier, as ministers, the members opposite are accountable and responsible for their department. They are the accountability and the responsibility; the buck stops with them.

Every time I — and I have heard the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission not understand this, and I think you have to start by recognizing that public servants are not in the public sphere, and they should not be dragged into this Assembly as a means of deflecting attention from the fact that political direction comes from the Premier and Cabinet.

The decisions are not made by the public service. The public service must not only be seen to be separate from the political, but it must be allowed to operate at arm's length if it is to be expected to offer quality, objective policy advice — even at times telling the Premier or minister that an idea may be good politics but poor public policy. The public service has to have the freedom to speak truth to power. Unfortunately, it has become clear that, in this government that said that they would do things differently, there is that fear of speaking truth to power within the public service, and that dismays me after 11 years in politics. I didn't expect that this would continue to endure.

I find this a little ironic — the words that I was saying in my first response to a budget, I could be writing them today. I said then that people are quick to recognize the vast amounts of money — insert “Yukon Liberals” — has had to spend. They are glad, and I am glad, that they have done some good things with it. However, money cannot buy respect. Respect is an important element to the relationship between those who are elected to serve the public and those they serve.

When a government tells its citizens that it wants to hear their views and then ignores them, they may find forgiveness, but if it happens once, that's when they'll get forgiveness. But when — as has been the case with this government, sadly — it has been a repeat from the past, it becomes the way of doing business, people notice it and they don't like it. That is unfortunately what we're hearing — what we just heard so passionately spoken from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

You know, at the time, in February 2011 when I was responding to my first budget as the elected member of this Legislature, the issue then was the fact that the Yukon Party had just gone through a process where over 900 people had invested their time and energy to participate in not one but two health care reviews to address the serious issues surrounding sustainability of health care in the Yukon. There was a choice then to move to an acute care model rather than more cost-effective and coordinated care. Unfortunately, then I look at what I see and hear — because, in 2008-09, as a citizen temporarily free and retired after 30 years in the public service, I had been quite encouraged by the engagement and the thoughts that were put forward in those health care reviews.

Similarly, when the panel was put together to look at — okay, fine; it didn't get done 10 years ago; we're going to do it again. When the *Putting People First* report came forward, my colleague and I met, as did other parties and other citizens, with the members of that panel. I have to tell you that we were rough on them, because we were critical and cynical. We thought, “Oh right. We're going to have this again. We've been through this before. We have heard all this before.” But then we were astounded and incredibly appreciative of the vision that was put forward in that *Putting People First* panel report. But unfortunately, what's missing is an express commitment. There's nothing in the Budget Address for this fiscal or from the Minister of Health and Social Services that speaks to the fundamental transformative change that *Putting People First* speaks to.

Part of the reason that the government latched on to doing this health care review was to address some of the questions and issues that have been raised in the Financial Advisory Panel's recommendations. The concern, as we heard in this Legislative Assembly and when we met panel members, was that if the government chooses to take, of those 76 recommendations, a pick here and a pick there, you will be doing exactly the same thing. So, 10 years from now, we will be saying that we are on the fiscal cliff and that we can't sustain health care. Transformative change that the *Putting People First* panel is recommending cannot be nitpicked.

What we have not seen is the infrastructure changes. What we have not seen is the bold commitment to the machinery of government change that was recommended and is fundamental to making this new system work. What we are seeing are little pieces here — privatization of seniors' health care. God knows what other privatization aspects are being put forward. That was not the essence of *Putting People First*. Yukon citizens will not take long to grasp those governments — whether it's the Liberal government or any other government that tries to ignore it after saying, "We support *Putting People First*". It's not just saying it once or that we support part of it but that we embrace it. Unfortunately, that embrace is not reflected in any of the Budget Address or in any of the responses from the Premier — the Finance minister — or the Minister of Health and Social Services. People notice that and people noticed that with the previous government and the choices it made to pick up selective — they got shot down there on a number of things that they tried to do there in terms of privatization, such as diagnostics and others — but we won't go into that.

One of the things that I heard the Minister of Justice — I remember thinking about this — because I hadn't been involved in party politics as a public servant, so when I became involved in politics, I had to do some thinking and talking to people to find out what, in fact, previous NDP governments had done. I had been involved with representatives of NDP governments, Liberals, and Conservatives in the life of my public service but not the politicians. So, I was aware of some of the things in the mandates that they were given as we're negotiating self-government and land claims agreements. I knew there was a big difference between the Conservatives' approach and the NDP's approach. We wouldn't have had land claims and self-government, quite frankly, in the Yukon. We wouldn't have successful agreements unless Tony Penikett and Piers McDonald had agreed. When Tony Penikett is agreeing and willing to take a risk that no other government in Canada would do, which was to engage in full recognition of self-government — I can tell you, caucus members in Ottawa said, "Do they really know what they're getting into? Do they really understand the implications of this — the constitutional and legal framework?" The NDP thought they did — and they did — and they were willing to do that. They were prepared for transformative change. Of course, then there was a hiatus of 20 years between when we signed those agreements and when anything started to happen.

But the minister talked about the fact that they've been so busy doing all this legislation, and I think, "Whoa, that's

interesting." Fundamental pieces of legislation that are the foundation for this territory were established by the New Democratic Party, whether it's the *Health Act*, the *Education Act* that this current government's trying to tinker with by trying to change without changing the act around things like individualized education plans, the *Environment Act* that the previous government tried to tinker with but couldn't because it's actually reflected in terms of the council, the economy, and environment that are reflected in the final agreements so they couldn't change it as much as they would like to, the *Human Rights Act* that was fought tooth and nail in this legislation by the opposition parties when the NDP came in and said that this was the right thing to do at the time, and programs that the NDP established like the mining incentive program or the small business incentive program. They've been renamed now by subsequent governments, but the programs themselves haven't changed — the community development funding.

Foundational institutions like the Ayamdigut Campus of Yukon College — now Yukon University — the Yukon Arts Centre, the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program are all foundations of good government. Those are important. That was all without once having a government deficit. We're not there now. We weren't there under the previous Yukon Party government, but the NDP did that. I would ask you to go back and look at how much money came to the government in those days compared to — like, do it in a current dollar value, and you would see a substantially less amount of transfers from the federal system to here.

I just find, you know, the parallels and it's like — oh, jeez, after 10 years, some of the same issues keep resurfacing over and over again and I am wondering why that is.

One of the things that I had great hopes for was when the first budget was tabled by this government and the government said, "We are going to measure progress in this territory differently because we recognize that the GDP is only one measure, and it is just about basically expenditures." Great, so you can spend a whack of money. We're really good at that and we have seen that being spent like crazy over the last little while. What the government did is they said, "We are actually going to start looking at how well we are spending it and what impact it has on our citizens. We're going to measure those indices of well-being." So, I was looking forward — this is the last budget for this government — I was looking forward to seeing where those indices of well-being were. The front piece of the budget is: GDP is wham; it's big like this. And I'm going, that's it? That's all there is? That is a sad commentary on a neo-Liberal approach to spending without knowing.

So, we are still at the situation where our dependency on our ability to generate own-source revenues has not gone up since I first gave my response to the Budget Address in 2011-12. I love reflecting on the numbers then, but at that time, I believe that the budget was about \$745 million. It is now close to \$2 billion. At that time, I said that, despite a billion plus — because we added everything in — the largest ever was in 2011-12. Now we are at 2021-22 and everybody is going "the largest ever". We are still pretty much at the same level of dependence on the federal government. It used to be that the

previous government would justify that because of the notion that somehow quoting section 36 of the Constitution of Canada justified us assuming that, forever and a day, we have the right to expect that Canada is just going to pump money in here. But what he forgot, and what this Premier and this Finance minister seems to forget, is that section 36(2) actually says that the expectation is that Yukoners should expect reasonably comparable levels of services for reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

Somehow both this minister and that Minister of Finance confused tax effort with budgeting. It's a part of it, but so is effective planning and management of our fiscal resources.

I said at the time that it's time for the Yukon Party — insert "Yukon Liberal government party" — to get a grip, because one of the things about history — I said in 2011-12 — is that history has a tendency to repeat itself. The last time that a federal government — notably a federal Liberal government — was facing a serious deficit, it made arbitrary cuts, not just to indigenous program funding, health care funding, or transfers to provinces.; it made an arbitrary cut of five percent of the gross federal transfer — the TFFA, the territorial formula finance agreement — to the territorial governments. Just like interest going forward — that five percent has a cumulative impact, and it did. People will say: "Well, you can't do that. The government would never do that because that's not fair." I think that I've said this before in this Legislature, that the senior official responsible — when asked by the CBC, "How can you do that? That's not fair" — said, "Who said 'fair'? We have cuts to make, and Yukon gets the same cut."

In 2011-12, I was asking the question: What are we doing to build resiliency in our economy? We looked with hope in 2017 when the Yukon government was given detailed suggestions from an independent panel — a small-conservative panel, I would say — a fiscally conservative panel — looking at ways for Yukon government to start acting like a government, not as a protectorate of Ottawa.

You know, I said then, in 2011 — we only had eight years of being in a situation where we had responsibility, an authority of a province over land and resources — that Yukoners could rightly expect to see a real and lasting return on the access granted to the resource extraction industries, and the Financial Advisory Panel had some brilliant insights into this and really encouraged the Yukon government to take seriously what it should be doing as a province-like entity. It's like this government, as the previous government, has been immobilized and fearful of upsetting the status quo.

I said at that time that the Yukon Party — and I can slash in "Yukon Liberal government" — has put a lot of its political capital into the success of the mining industry. There was work done at that time with federal assistance to modernize the Yukon Geological Survey and to market the territory. That's all good. We know and the world knows that we have valuable resources, but now is the time — this is 10 years ago when I said this in the Legislative Assembly — to set the ground rules for the future, not by dictate, but by thoughtful and open discussion.

In 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, we, as citizens, expect our government to ensure that the benefits of our non-renewable resources flow to the Yukon public, not just to shareholders outside of this territory. We need to decide what those benefits should be. Those should have been the subject of debate and discussion in this Legislative Assembly over the last four and a half years. We need political leadership that is prepared to lead the discussion in a respectful way to avoid the fearmongering that is often attached to any suggestion that the status quo regarding mining is open for question.

It is uncanny and a little disheartening that, after 10 years as a representative in this Legislative Assembly and two successive governments that promised things differently, the same issues keep coming forward. I wasn't alone 10 years ago in saying that we need to assert that we are *maîtres chez nous* and we need to decide on how we modernize the mining regime to ensure that the return on our non-renewable resources is significant and lasting and to determine what portion of any future resource rent is socked away for a rainy day for future generations and not used for day-to-day operations.

It is a surprise to some people that one of my early heroes as a political person — maybe it's just because I grew up in Alberta and there weren't very many socialists of the day — was Peter Lougheed, the Conservative Premier of Alberta, who had the strong view that our non-renewable resources are just that — they're non-renewable. I agree with him that we need to ensure that there is an enduring financial legacy. One of the things that he established was a heritage fund — subsequently pilloried and robbed by his successors, so it has nothing in it.

Look at how Norway modelled its heritage fund. They don't call it a "heritage fund", but its approach to ensuring that the non-renewable resource sector created lasting benefits for that country — which not only can have the measure of GDP for growth of success but can also point to the indices of well-being, which we abandoned in this territory.

There are so many things in that Budget Address that are reflected in what the Yukon advisory panel put forward. It's uncanny to me and sad that, 10 years later, despite the fact that they didn't have to take the suggestions — either government didn't have to take the suggestions — of a lowly opposition member, they paid lots of money to have expert advice provide exactly the same suggestions, and nothing has changed. That part is disheartening.

What is also disheartening is that, in February 2011, I noted that the lack of housing is at a critical stage in this territory. I could be saying this today; I am saying it today. This is exactly the same situation. The Premier boasts daily, I said, of the low unemployment rate and the influx of people into Yukon. The downside, I said, for this — for individuals and for employers alike — is that there is no housing available.

Have we heard this before? Ten years later — in my riding, the many small and medium local employers who face the daily challenge of finding qualified people wanting to move to Yukon. I heard another one today — people coming to work for our municipal government only to turn down the job offer because there is no housing available — seriously. Part of the issue — again, this is what I said at the outset here. It's like this

notion that governments get elected and they assume that nothing has happened before, and it's tabula rasa and they have to start from scratch, and they never look backward and say, "What has been done and how can we build on it?" They don't take action until it is too late, and then they desperately try to play catch-up, and there we are.

I just want to comment on a couple of things. My colleague from Takhini-Kopper King has commented ably over the last number of years and raised significant issues with respect to climate change and the need to take real action there. One of the things that strikes me is that I saw no mention, in terms of climate change, in the Highways and Public Works budget with respect to the progressive thaw slump that we see on the Alaska Highway. We know that, basically, there are published documents that show that the current rate of erosion on that highway is going to remove 50 metres' width of that highway by 2024. Ironically, that is the year that Yukon hosts the International Conference on Permafrost. Wouldn't it be lovely to have that conference here and to have a gap where the Alaska Highway used to exist west of Whitehorse?

I have many things to question and to raise, and we have raised concerns about this government's move to off-load various programs that we saw in terms of the expression of interest that would see, without any consultation, the change of management at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to a non-governmental agency without having dealt with the real and serious issues identified in the community safety plan there. The Minister of Economic Development and other ministers have met with Canadian business representatives and they have done nothing. So, there is that — the notion that government can off-load the programming for people at a transition facility at the jail and do nothing.

### Acting Speaker's statement

**Acting Speaker:** Order, please.

I would just take a moment right now to clarify that Standing Order 3(2) has not been suspended, and should attention be drawn to a lack of quorum, which is 10 members, when the Speaker is in the Chair, it would be required for me to ring the bells for quorum.

Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 207?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I am happy to rise in the Legislative Assembly to speak to the 2021-22 budget. The journey to this year's budget, of course, has been different from years past as we manage the finances of the territory through a pandemic, balancing the health and wellness of Yukoners with the ability to maintain their livelihood. It has been a year that has challenged our resiliency, one that has pushed our boundaries, one that has required us to adapt quickly to changing priorities, and one that has inspired creativity to meet the needs of Yukoners.

This budget continues to fulfill the vision and priorities that our Yukon Liberal government promised to Yukoners when we were elected in 2016. At the same time, it is a budget that shows our government's ability to adapt to the changing circumstances that we find ourselves in.

It has been just over a year since the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games here in Yukon — the first major impact that would be felt as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our government acted swiftly, recognizing the need to support the business community and establish the first of over 40 programs only nine days after the cancellation of the games was announced. The temporary support for event funding programs provided \$1.8 million in compensation to 43 businesses for 31 cancelled events.

Within the same month, the Yukon Liberal government established the Business Advisory Council, consisting of representatives across multiple sectors to provide advice and expertise and to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the local economy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Business Advisory Council. It was a group of very diverse, wide-ranging individuals from many different business backgrounds, political ideologies, and levels of experience who came together with the best of intentions for the Yukon. I want to thank those individuals for putting in their time at the table to give the advice that they did. Folks would have to be aware that, as they provided advice, ideas, and concepts to get through the challenges that we had, they were also, in many cases, balancing that with the challenges that they had running their own businesses and companies they were involved with. I think that Yukoners need to provide some great gratitude for the work that those individuals did at that time.

I think that it showed the best in the ability for the private sector and the public sector to come together. After each meeting, there was a letter drawn up that defined the different strategies that the private sector felt could be deployed to help the business community at that time. In each case, the Department of Economic Development, working with Tourism and Culture and other departments, would review that. Then we would meet to look at options and opportunities to build out programs very quickly. I think that it showed the best of having that collaboration and the best of many unsung heroes. I think that when individuals take on the work of being policy analysts inside the Yukon government — extremely, extremely important work — you have to be very talented to undertake that work.

But understanding that people sacrificed a tremendous amount from their own personal lives when they were under lots of pressure — they were under pressure to understand how the COVID situation was going to affect them, and they were under pressure in their own personal lives trying to balance, in some cases, how to ensure that their children had the right supports or their spouse had the right supports and even how they could ensure that they could work under all these different pressures. At the same time, we asked more than we have ever asked — I think that my colleagues across the way could agree that maybe more than what has been asked of individuals over successive governments. They rose to that occasion.

The result of that was programs that were extremely effective, programs that helped us to support our business leaders and our business community, understanding the amount of effort and sacrifice that each and every one of those individuals put into building their businesses, whether their

businesses were in Whitehorse or in the communities. They came together to ensure that this ecosystem could be in the best possible situation that it could be under the massive pressures.

This budget represents an ability for us to extend those programs. As we have identified, there has been just under \$50 million — \$44.8 million — across all of our programs, whether it was the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program, the business relief program, or the sick leave program. These will continue until September. My hope would be that they will not be required until September. Based on the trends that we're seeing and what is being forecasted — and we signalled that yesterday — we hope that, over the next 60 days, many of our affected businesses will have an opportunity to begin to prepare for what we hope will be an opening quite soon, as Yukoners get out and get vaccinated and as we see other jurisdictions have success as well in their ability to control the spread of COVID.

Within the responsibility that I have, I have the absolute pleasure of working with both Economic Development and Energy, Mines and Resources. I do want to take this opportunity to thank the 53 or so folks at Economic Development again. The work that we provided yesterday — I know that there was a bit of criticism today concerning the road ahead that was launched yesterday. I don't believe that it is accurate to say that it was just an announcement of some expenditures that have happened. I know how much effort individuals put into that work over the last number of months. We waited for the latest economic outlook and then pulled that data into the report that we had. Of course, you really have to look at that document to see its effectiveness. You have to again parallel that with the budget from last week. In turn, what you have is an extremely comprehensive pathway — a blueprint forward — that looks at a number of areas of spending and pulls together a truly holistic approach to dealing with the economy.

If I had sat here yesterday and put out a report that had absolutely no actions, I guess, but a bunch of new program spending, maybe that would catch folks' eyes, but really, it was a common-sense approach and a creative approach with a vision to look at how to shore up areas of our economy, how to expand areas of our economy, and how to diversify the economy of the Yukon. I think that the folks at Economic Development should be very proud of the work over the last number of years.

It hasn't only been job numbers; it has been retail sales, wholesale sales, the value of assets. I think that, as of today, this morning, I saw data that showed the Yukon now not at third- but at second-best median income in the country. I think what we've seen is a strong economy — and areas of the economy that haven't been as robust starting to grow. I see that in the knowledge-based part of our economy as we see start-ups coming and starting to grow. I think that this is going to be an extremely important area for the future of Yukon when we look at individuals seeking a quality of life here in the Yukon that they can find here, but also enjoying the values that Yukoners hold true to their hearts and also understanding that there's so much talent here that can be pulled together to help these companies grow.

Also, Energy, Mines and Resources — there has been so much undertaken. This budget again will focus on the implementation of a tremendous amount of work in each and every branch. It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to have that role. It meant a tremendous amount to be able to work with folks either in agriculture or in the mining sector over the last number of years, as well as forestry. Growing up, you're in a position where you get hauled out to do a few things with your grandfather, whether it's piling some pulpwood or helping him to put his hay in or hearing stories about his mining history in Kirkland Lake, Noranda, Val d'Or, or other places — never understanding that you might have an opportunity later to work and try to help those different industries and meet the amazing individuals who make that work their life's work.

Again, Energy, Mines and Resources folks have been so kind. I've loved the ability to sit and have dialogue with senior members and others within the department. I have to say that I did hear a bit of dialogue in some of the earlier speeches about folks having a fear to speak up.

I think one of the biggest pleasures was creating an atmosphere in those meetings where, in the role I was in, to push to be challenged and for individuals to tell you that you are probably wrong and should be thinking in a different way. They were always kind and polite when they said that — but just trying to create that type of atmosphere where folks felt safe. They gave you the best possible advice. You could get into really challenging debates. I think back on a lot of those exchanges, and they really mean a lot to me to be able to have those types of relationships, whether they were talking about agriculture, forestry, abandoned mines — you name it — land planning — so many different things that they do.

One of our assistant deputy ministers retired just before Christmas — Mr. John Fox. I'm sure he's spending some great time with his grandchildren. I do just want to say to John, thank you. Last spring, getting the exploration industry and the mining industry folks ready to do exploration and getting them into the field — he played a critical, critical role. That's now in the hands of Assistant Deputy Minister Stephen Mead.

I spent many an evening on the phone with the private sector on the mining side and my deputy minister, Paul Moore, in each and every case, trying to ensure that we had folks out in the field and to understand how important it was to them in their projects, but also how important it was to the economy of the Yukon.

We also, of course, have touched upon that. There are lots of supports again this year for work through the Yukon Mining Alliance supporting grassroots exploration and putting money into the ability to build new roads and improved roads to increase opportunities in the resource sector.

I think the budget does a great service when we think about the climate change plan. I also have that opportunity to work with Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation. This budget has very significant dollars in place. First of all, we have continued to support a number of programs — renewable energy programs — across the territories. The group at Yukon Development Corporation have worked hand in hand with them. In each and every case, our approach has



been about supporting self-determination of these communities, whether they be a municipality or a First Nation government, and to be there to support them as they move forward on their dreams and projects in the renewable field.

I think that we have accomplished significant work together — whether it was ATCO, the Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Development Corporation, and the Energy branch at Energy, Mines and Resources — coming together to look at an absolute suite of things. That, of course, is looking at our retrofit programs and at the work that we did on the independent power producers policy. Now we have that ability for all of these projects to come to life and a way to provide them with revenue and for them to provide us with that much-needed clean energy.

I think that this budget reflects a tremendous amount of hard policy work, and now that the work that we're doing to build out these new projects that are important in every community and are part of the overall plan of Yukon Energy — again, the work around the new project in Atlin. It is a very significant project. I appreciate the vision from the Yukon Energy Corporation and their ability to get to the table with the Taku River Tlingit and to unveil a project. This is probably the first time in a decade that we've seen something of this magnitude. I think that it is exciting. Many Yukoners have always felt a deep connection to the community of Atlin. The economic impacts from activities that happen in that community tend to be felt here in the Yukon. As we have seen, the supply chain for many projects there go through Whitehorse and provide us with that great benefit. I think that Yukoners have been wanting to see something of this magnitude, and I'm happy to see the great work by Yukon Energy.

I would like to thank the folks at Yukon Energy. They put a lot of work into an integrated resource plan up until 2016. We asked a lot from them — to take a look and to recalibrate the direction that they were going in and in a very short period of time. We asked that because we needed to have the integrity between the climate change plan and the 10-year electrical plan. We knew that they had to be in sync. If you didn't have the strategy around the corporation and how we were going to produce our future energy needs, we wouldn't have been accountable to Yukoners.

So, again, a lot of work — there is a group of extremely talented individuals there, and Yukoners should sleep well knowing that they are in the positions that they are in and making sure that we are safe and warm — and we can do the things that Yukoners want to do and live the great quality of life that we live.

I do want to take an opportunity, on just a few items, to correct the record. One of the items that has come up in the Assembly is Shallow Bay planning. I want to thank the folks who have undertaken that work. There has been a tremendous amount of criticism. Most of it has come directly from the Member for Lake Laberge. Of course, this local area planning is happening in his riding, but I think that, in some ways, it has been some of the worst politics that I have seen. There are five people from that community — they are all constituents of the Member for Lake Laberge. Three of those individuals were

appointed by the Yukon government; two individuals and a backup were appointed by the First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Those individuals were tasked with coming up with planning around the Shallow Bay area. This is a long, long outstanding item. I think that one of the bigger subdivision requests and applications were put in place back in 2014. I don't speak to this today to fuel any more discord than has been created, but it has been upsetting. What I have watched is a division that has been created through Facebook platforms by the sharing of misinformation, and it really didn't need to happen. There are five people in that community who came together and put some recommendations together. It wasn't the Yukon government that put those recommendations forward, but they supported the individuals to put these ideas together. Those folks had almost 20 different meetings where they came together, and they put that out to the public. I know that there are items within those recommendations that lots of individuals within that community are very uncomfortable with. I know that there are items within those recommendations that citizens of the First Nation are uncomfortable with, but that's what happens when you bring recommendations forward. People have an opportunity to comment on that, and then you mull that over. The group mulls it over, the committee mulls it over, and then, of course, they would bring that back with some final recommendations. Even at that point, you have the obligation for the government to look at those recommendations, and if they decide to accept some or all, there's then another period of consultation that has to happen.

What in turn has happened is that the Member for Lake Laberge has bought a Facebook ad — a posted ad — and what I've had in turn is letters really focusing on the fact that some draft recommendations are going to negatively affect people. I can tell you that — it doesn't matter what corner of the Yukon at this point — where there's some water and some planning left to be done, there are individuals who are being told that their land is going to be taken away or there are going to be negative effects too because of some draft recommendations that take up less than 50 square kilometres in the Yukon.

The hypocrisy of this is that, if you go back and look at the previous local area plans over the last five or 10 years and you look at the items that have been put in place, in many cases, they have been much more drastic than what is being contemplated even in these draft recommendations. I don't think that — it's probably not the best use of time to get into all the minutiae of that. I just think that it's upsetting when I have individuals reaching out to me because their parents are so upset because they've been told that they're going to lose the property that they've lived on for years and years, which is absolutely, categorically false. It's just upsetting. There's money again in this budget to continue to do the good work on that.

I just have to touch on it; it has led to a tremendous amount of discord. I truly don't believe that it was necessary. I think that, in this particular case, the Member for Lake Laberge, having been in the role that I'm in now previously, could easily explain to individuals that these are recommendations and there's another process. The decision has been made not to

provide that information from his previous experience but, in turn, to fire individuals up.

It has caused discord that will be felt long, long after he and I are in this Chamber. Again, for any individuals who are in that area, please reach out to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and to planning if you have any questions about that. Try not to get your information concerning the planning in that neighbourhood from Facebook posts from the Member for Lake Laberge.

The other comments that I would just like to touch on around land planning concern the Dawson land planning process. It was stated here in the budget reply that the process has stalled. There was a former chair who had stepped down, which is causing a tipping point here within the Yukon. It was going to be the same movie, different actors, as was played before. Truly, I have to challenge that. We have continued to do the work that we are tasked to do on the Dawson land use plan. The individual who stepped down has been replaced with a new individual. We have talked to both the First Nation and individuals in the community. There was full support for that appointment. That is the commitment that we made to try to ensure that there was a collaborative effort on the commission.

We have received good feedback from the commission as we have gone through, and that work continues. We are waiting for some significant pieces to be completed as well. I know that the planner who was working there has made a decision to move on, so the land planning council will have to work on replacing that individual. That work has been underway, but we have respectively engaged in that process. I think that anytime you get into regional land planning, things are not always going to be completely aligned. You are going to have a difference, and I think that this is important. It's important to have respect at the table, but it's also important to debate and make sure that many different perspectives are represented in those discussions. Again, this budget supports that.

The planning department has undertaken local area planning, such as Shallow Bay and Fish Lake, and it goes on and on. Of course, there is the Beaver River planning, which was touched on. There is important work that continues on the Beaver River planning process. It goes without saying that we have had almost every self-governing First Nation that has not gone through a regional plan reach out to us and requested us to undertake that work. It is a tremendous amount of work. It takes a tremendous amount of resources, and we continue to work on the Dawson plan and continue to communicate with other communities that have interest in planning — or starting the planning that had previously been underway.

Again, just quickly touching on some of our new energy projects — the Premier spoke to this last week. We have invested \$10 million in our ability to start to build out infrastructure for the new Atlin expansion, but also \$4.5 million for our grid-scale battery. I just want to touch on that because it is a very significant project. It will be the largest battery put in place in northern Canada and one of the largest in the country. What it truly does — when you use different sources of renewable energy, the ability for them to provide energy can be intermittent, depending on if it is solar, of course, or if the

wind is blowing or not blowing. Having a battery of this magnitude is going to be very significant. It is going to give us the ability to maximize the use of those other pieces of infrastructure flowing in.

I believe that when you look at the total picture — the energy portfolio and the work that we have done with the independent power projects and the grid-scale battery, the largest project in the last 10 years, and the upgrades to the existing work and our announcement just the other day around geothermal — all of those items, when you bring them together — then, again, projects in Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Whitehorse, Carcross, Teslin, Pelly Crossing, Dawson, Old Crow, and Mayo, I think it shows that there has been a tremendous amount of work completed and a tremendous amount of work underway.

I want to thank my colleagues, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health and Social Services, for bringing the universal childcare program forward and for bringing it to reality in the Yukon. The one comment that I heard at the door in 2016 and over the last number of years is the challenge that individuals have when it comes to paying for their childcare. Many of us here can think back — probably most of us now in the Legislative Assembly don't have that bill anymore, but it can be significant when you have \$1,500, \$1,600, or \$1,800 that you have to come up with every month.

If you're a single parent or if you're in a position where the caregivers or the parents are both employed or working — to see this really significant work come to light is, I think, one of the most significant economic strategies and programs that we would see. It's not about just ensuring that those parents have the right services, but when we see our growth in our economy — and still the fact that we are moving to have the right housing continuum in place, the fact that we are in a position now to see Yukoners who live here already being able to now take part in the economy is something that's pretty spectacular. There is only one other province where we've seen a program of this type.

If any of us sat down with any of our constituents who have young children who are in daycare — understanding that those parents, after April, can be in a position to have \$1,400 potentially in their hands, depending on what they're paying, is something that is very significant. For many, that will get them to a place to buy a home.

In other cases now, we're going to see individuals who have been at home who want to be part of the workforce. Now, if, instead of paying \$1,800, they're paying a few hundred, that's going to be a life-changer. We believe that this is actually, moving forward, going to be very significant for the overall economy of the Yukon and is going to give a lot of flexibility. I hope that, for many, as they talk to their constituents about some of the greater programs in this budget, it certainly is. I thank my colleagues for bringing that to light.

This budget puts significant dollars toward both our Gateway program and the Dempster fibre program, both programs that my good friends in opposition love to challenge us on. First, the Gateway program — I want to thank the folks at strategic in Energy, Mines and Resources. They have done

an absolutely incredible job over the last number of years reprofiling funds, understanding that priorities change over time, looking at some of the original priorities of that program, and now having an opportunity to put some of those funds into areas where there is more activity. I think that there is still a commitment to elements of the early program, but it has been a lot of work and a lot of conversations and understanding. I am happy to see the Department of Highways and Public Works undertake what they have and put us in a position to finish up those negotiations — there are still one or two pending — and then our ability to start that work.

Again, with the Department of Highways and Public Works and the fibre program, I want to thank those individuals. What we have learned over the last number of years — we looked at a similar line that is being built in the Northwest Territories. What we saw were tremendous cost overruns. I know that the intentions of the project managers in the Department of Highways and Public Works were to ensure that it was the best use of taxpayers' money, that we reduce the risk as much as possible before starting this work. Now we have seen the clearing and now we are going out to the buildout. It is not just significant for the Yukon, but as we have shared in the Assembly, it will be important to all of northern Canada as it will be a backbone to our communications. Of course, it will give us the certainty that we need to continue to build and expand on the digital economy that we are now seeing beginning to flourish here in the Yukon.

Before I finish up, I want to thank the individuals in Porter Creek South who I have the opportunity to represent. I have learned some great lessons from those community leaders over the last couple of years.

Over the last number of months, we have reflected on some of the things that we've been able to work together on — whether it's the Porter Creek Community Association — led solely by a group of very strong-willed mothers who have only the best intentions for their community and the quality of life for their children. It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to work with them to improve their community and the community that we all get to call home. Whether it is looking back on my notes from 2016 where folks said we needed to see a safer community, folks wanted to see safer streets, folks wanted to see improved recreational infrastructure for their children — and the lesson quickly learned is that not one group, one organization, municipal government, or territorial government is going to get that done. That's why for decades many of those priorities were not getting accomplished. What happens when you work with a community, organizers, leaders, municipal government, territorial government, and people coming together — you can make those changes and improvements. That has been such a fulfilling journey to be working with those individuals and learning from them and just to watch the strength and tenacity and power of those mothers coming together each and every month to ensure that their community continues to improve. I want to thank those folks. Again, I know that the Member for Porter Creek North just touched on it, and I agree that there are individuals who are there at those school council meetings — whether it be at the

elementary level or at the high school level — again, giving their time. We've been in meetings together and watched their passion — tough subjects — and truly, again, I want to thank those individuals who put their name forward to do that important work.

Lastly, I just want to just thank my wife and kids for their support over this last year and before — again, having the opportunity to do this work. As every single person in this Assembly knows, I think that all folks come here and want to do the best they can — every one of us. I think that we have differences of opinion and differences on how to get that particular finish line on items, but I know that people do. I appreciate having that opportunity to be here with folks working on those things.

Again, you quickly learn that, at the end of the day, the folks who are closest to you are the ones who are going to be there to support you, talk to you, and put up with your challenges. This last year — especially in the early part of COVID, as for many, the days were spent under a tremendous amount of pressure — lots of conversations every day, every night, pretty much every waking hour — trying to make sure we could understand what the challenges were and what could be done. I want to thank my family for supporting me through that.

I want to thank you folks in the Assembly and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Kent:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the 2021-22 main estimates here today. I'm going to focus on a few different areas, starting with concerns that I've heard in my riding of Copperbelt South and then move on of course to my critic roles. I'll group Energy, Mines and Resources in with the Yukon Development Corporation and the energy side of things there and then of course speak to Education.

Before I get into that, I would like to once again thank the constituents of Copperbelt South for the trust they placed in me in 2016 to be their representative here in the Legislative Assembly. It's truly an honour for me to be here on their behalf and ask questions on their behalf and ask questions on behalf of all Yukoners when it comes to the issues that are important to them.

I know I've said this before, but very few individuals have had the opportunity to serve in this Legislative Assembly as MLAs over the years. For everyone in here, I think that no matter what side of the floor you're on, a thank you is warranted, because as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources just said, there is an awful lot of sacrifices made by MLAs in here and, more importantly, sacrifices made by our families. So, as he did at the end of his remarks, I will at the start of my remarks thank my family for their support over the past — not only this past four and a half years here on the opposition side, but the other terms that I have served on the government benches. It has been incredible. Of course, I will give a shout-out and a special thank you to my wife, Amanda, and my young son, Eli, for everything that they have done for me and for keeping life entertaining as we have moved through

the past four and a half years toward the end of this current mandate.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many opportunities I will get to speak before an election is called. Obviously, we will play that by ear and that is up to the government side and the Premier, but just in case, I would like to recognize a couple of the individuals who have been here for the past while who are leaving. First of all, the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. I know that he has decided to move on and spend more time in his community and spend more time with his family. I thank him for his service to Yukoners. He has done an admirable job and I wish him well going forward. We have always shared a couple laughs as I walk in the building sometimes, so I certainly appreciate that, and I wish you well, sir, wherever your life goes next. So, good luck with all that and enjoy your time with your family.

Also, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, who is not seeking re-election — she and I have been in here together since 2011. We have had some interesting discussions on the floor of the House. We haven't always agreed on things, but I certainly respect the way she represents her constituents and the job that she does on their behalf. Very few people come into the Legislative Assembly as prepared as the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I thank her for her service to Yukoners over the past number of years and for her time and dedication in this Legislative Assembly.

Then, to everybody else, all other members, of course, on both sides of the House — an election coming brings change to these Chambers. Coming out of 2016, I believe, 11 of the 19 members who were here are no longer here through retirement or not retaining their seats, so this place will be a different place after the next election. When it comes to debate and working with one another, we've had agreements and disagreements over the past number of years, but I do respect everyone, no matter what party they decide to put their name forward with for running in elections. Those who were successful, I appreciated working with them over the past number of years.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to just touch on a few of the concerns that have emerged from individuals who live in my riding of Copperbelt South over the past while. Hopefully, we will get a chance to dig into this budget in greater detail when departments are called and we get into Committee of the Whole with ministers and support staff.

Highway safety is certainly something for my riding that comes up time and time again. People are looking to see what type of improvements are scheduled. I know the five-year documents that the government has brought forward do outline significant expenditures for the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway. We'll be interested in getting some answers on what's next. Obviously, the work that's being done this year, I believe, is near Porter Creek, from Rabbit's Foot Canyon through to Crestview. It has hit a few bumps in the road, obviously, with the lack of consultation that we've heard about and that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, has raised with the minister. Hopefully, the Department of Highways and Public Works and the minister were listening to

the concerns of the MLA and the residents in that area and will take the time to get that right.

That said, highway safety issues in my area — many people are choosing to cycle to work or use e-bikes and that type of thing. There is much more traffic on the shoulder of the highway than there used to be and bigger and bigger vehicles travelling in the vehicle lanes. One of the things that has been asked for by a number of people out in my area is a multi-use trail so that people can safely come into town and stay off of the shoulder of the highway so that the vehicles that are there — any accidents — are certainly avoided.

When it comes to safety — not so much last year with how wet it was here, but fire safety continues to be a concern in the riding. Obviously, there's a lot of firesmart work going on, but we will continue to push the government on making sure that the fuel load is as low as possible and that people will have the opportunity to live safely in their homes and be as firesmart themselves as they possibly can.

Just a segue from that into the Wolf Creek campground — I usually send a letter every year to the Minister of Environment asking for supervision and other things around the Wolf Creek campground. It's a beautiful spot but certainly right in the heart of residential areas, so some of the fire issues and some of the other behaviour that would be classified as reckless — obviously, that is a small minority of the individuals who use that campground, but it concerns the residents of Pineridge, Spruce Hill, Wolf Creek, Cowley, Mary Lake, and other subdivisions in that area where people make their homes. They are looking for some supervisors to be stationed at that campground. Again, I will send my annual letter to the Minister of Environment shortly, just asking for her to consider that as well.

Mr. Speaker, my riding has a number of contractors who live there — small contractors right up to some of the larger and more established contractors who have been active in the Yukon for quite a while. Just before Christmas and since then, I have heard an awful lot of concerns from those contractors with respect to the government's First Nation procurement plan and the lack of consultation that took place with industry prior to that plan being announced. That is something that I'm sure the minister has heard from a number of people about.

The Member for Kluane and I were grabbing a sandwich at lunch today, and we heard from one of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' constituents, so this is something that we're hearing about from people not only in our ridings, but in other ridings across the territory. They really feel that there was an unfortunate lack of consultation and, had that consultation taken place, we would be in a much better position right now when it comes to the First Nation procurement policy and how that affects their bottom line and how that affects their business.

I will continue to stand up for them on the issues that are of concern for them. There are other issues with respect to procurement that they continue to raise. I will continue to raise them. I know my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, will raise them as well in his critic role of Highways and Public Works.

When it comes to the tourism industry, obviously, the last year has been devastating for many tourism operators. The COVID-19 pandemic has all but wiped out any tourism traffic that comes to or through the territory. My riding has a couple of RV parks in it. There's a new motorcycle RV park that was just built last year. They all have questions. There are a number of B&Bs and other operators who rely heavily on the tourism industry for their livelihood. They're quite concerned. I think that what they're looking for is some certainty with respect to what this season will look like.

We referenced in the past the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon's most recent letter to the government asking them for that certainty or whether they should tell their members to cut their losses and look for different careers, essentially — to paraphrase that letter. But that's a troubling sign for an industry that has been, for a long time, a long-standing pillar of the private sector here. I think that ensuring that they have the most accurate information to base their business decisions off of is important. It will be something that I'm sure will emerge during the election campaign as the different parties seeking to form government put forward their ideas.

One of the other things — and I know we've talked about it before, but it's also the event cancellations that have taken place over the past year — the many festivals. Larger festivals and events have been cancelled, and it has had significant impacts. But a number of the smaller events as well — small golf tournaments, weddings, and get-togethers have also been cancelled, and that has an effect on the supply-side industry as well that relies on those types of events to take place. I know that there was a temporary fund put in place to support revenue loss and to support individuals who were having difficulty because of those event cancellations.

We asked about it in the Fall Sitting, and I think the Minister of Economic Development at the time just said that, if people were having challenges, to just phone him, but I think what people are looking for is an application process and an idea of what events would be covered as we move into this summer season and what looks like still restricted numbers on larger gatherings, according to the *A Path Forward* document that was introduced last Friday.

Another thing that has come up continuously at the doors for Copperbelt South — and in talking to my colleagues, I'm sure it's the same — is the cost of living in the territory. Over the past four years, the government has brought back, triumphantly, the federal carbon tax, which has added to the cost at the pumps. It has added to the cost of heating fuel, and the cost of freight goes up, so the cost of everything goes up when it comes to introducing that tax. Those costs have to be borne by consumers and individual Yukoners.

Power rates have been increased as well. I think that we're going through the second rate application for this government. That's before the Yukon Utilities Board right now. People certainly notice it on their power bills every month — that these rate increases are taking effect.

Then there is the myriad of fee increases that have taken place over the past number of years. It seems like a long time

ago, but there was the tire tax and the TV and computer tax that the Minister of Community Services introduced. Now we're seeing camping fees increase next year by this Liberal government. There are so many different fees. For individuals — maybe not so much in my riding, but living in the Whitehorse periphery — the dump fees, the landfill fees that have gone up recently as well, all add to the bottom line and are making families have to make tough decisions when it comes to their family finances when sitting around their kitchen table and making the choices that everybody has to make on what can and cannot be done.

I'm going to just move into Energy, Mines and Resources and talk a little bit about some of the issues that I'll raise with the minister if we have a chance to get into his department sometime during this Spring Sitting.

First and foremost, the issue that I want to flag is the ATAC Resources decision that was made on the heels of the Geoscience Forum in 2020, where the permits for the all-season tote road were denied by the Liberal government, causing the CEO of ATAC Resources, in a news release at the time, to actually question whether or not the Yukon was actually open for business. So, of course, that process goes back a number of years to perhaps the start of the Liberal mandate in 2016-17. They went through the YESAA process and received a favourable recommendation for that road to proceed. The government worked on the decision document for a year, and then, in the following March, they came out and said: "We have a new way of doing business. You just have to go through this two-year land use planning process for the Beaver River, and then, once that is done, perhaps there will be an opportunity for you to build the road at that time." So, last March would have been the two-year anniversary; we are coming up on three years since that was done.

Unfortunately, we learned last week that ATAC Resources is now — and I have to say that they are a stalwart of the exploration industry here. They have been active in that area. The parent company — everyone knows, of course, Archer Cathro and their over 50 years of responsible exploration here in the territory. So, for ATAC Resources to say last week that they are leaving the territory and going to Nevada is a huge blow to not only what this season will look like as far as exploration goes, but to the overall investment climate. Then, when it comes to the Beaver River land use plan, there is still no end in sight.

I was on yukon.ca earlier this week, looking at some of the documents there — March 2021 is still on their timeline to have a final draft plan ready for that, but it was back in October or November, I think, that this document was put on the website. Then, the most recent document is a "what we heard" from some fall meetings. It doesn't look to me like we are any closer to getting that land use plan done, and perhaps now that ATAC has moved out of the Yukon, unfortunately, there is less urgency for the government to move on that, but it is certainly something that I want to dig into with the minister on, if we get the chance during this Spring Sitting.

One of the things that we hear from the mining industry and the individuals who are active in it is with respect to the

permitting side. Almost four years ago, the Premier made a promise to the mining industry that he would develop a collaborative framework to deal with timelines and reassessments. Here we are four years later, and there has been little to no action on that commitment that the Premier made to the mining industry. He will be answering, I am sure, for that when he or his colleagues are knocking on doors of people who are active in the industry and took him at his word four years ago that he would develop that collaborative framework when it comes to timelines and reassessments. How disappointed those individuals are. I get e-mails — even this afternoon — from mining companies that are disappointed with the Liberal performance when it comes to that industry and what is happening.

Another issue that has been in place throughout almost all of the Liberal mandate is the southeast Yukon staking ban. When they came into office, obviously, the staking ban was in place in the Ross River area, but added to that is the Liard First Nation area. Again, we have asked questions about it, but there has been very little progress when it comes to getting those staking bans lifted in those areas and getting more activity when it comes to those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I will be interested as well — obviously, the Yukon mineral development draft strategy came out, I think, on the day after Boxing Day — between Christmas and New Year's Day, they put that out — and there were some consultations with individuals. I have seen a number of submissions on that. I understand that a final recommended strategy will be due sometime in the next couple of months, so we will be anxious to see what that looks like and get a sense for where the government intends to go on that again, if we're still in here and not at the doorsteps for an election.

One of the other things too — and I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources talked about it in his remarks — is the Gateway project. We all remember the Premier, the Prime Minister, and our Member of Parliament at the overlook of Miles Canyon proudly announcing it. It has obviously gone through a number of changes since then. We asked in the fall, with all of these changes and the moving parts, about the private sector commitment of just over \$100 million. That's something that we'll be interested to see — where that private sector money is coming from — because I don't recall seeing it in any of the announcements that have been made. Whether it's on the Campbell Highway or the Nahanni Range Road or the Silver Trail or the Carmacks bypass — any of these projects like that — I don't see the private sector component. It will be interesting to get a sense from either the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or the Minister of Highways and Public Works on where that money is.

I just quickly want to talk about forestry for a second. I have a small mill operator who lives in my riding and he's struggling to get access to timber. He's not a fuel-wood individual. He does linear lumber for a couple of local businesses here in town and he's struggling to find access to lumber. I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I have both been engaged with him on this and his struggles continue. I think that getting some sort of certainty

around the Whitehorse and the Southern Lakes forestry plan will be important. I know there was one First Nation that hadn't signed when I raised this issue in the fall, so I hope to get a chance to follow up with the minister on that at some point.

The other forestry issue is with respect to the southeast Yukon and the forestry planning down there. I know that my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake — her constituents speak often to us about the lack of forestry opportunities down there and what it was like in that town when there was a significant forestry industry going on. I think that's something that's extremely important and is hopefully a focus of the next government, no matter the political stripe, to take a look at that because we have the issues down there. We have fuel-wood contracts with campgrounds in Dawson City and the fuel wood is coming from British Columbia or northern British Columbia just down Highway 37. So, there are some real challenges with how we're managing our fuel wood and how we're managing any smaller scale — there's no large-scale forestry operations here — but even in some of the smaller mills that are looking for some fibre for feed.

I'm just going to touch briefly on a couple of energy issues — sort of EMR-related but also Yukon Development Corporation. The minister did a ministerial statement earlier this week with respect to the Atlin hydro. I'm hoping that — obviously, we asked some questions, but that format often doesn't allow for an exchange. So, if he's in here with his officials, I would like to dig a little bit on some of the details on the costing around that, on improvements to the ATCO-owned powerline from Jakes Corner to Whitehorse and how much that's going to cost. I talked to some individuals in my riding recently about the power output and what was eight megawatts — is that peak power in the summer when the creeks are full? Is there a seasonal difference? I would be interested to learn about that as well from the minister and his officials when we get a chance to talk a little bit more about Atlin hydro.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move on to Education and take the time to thank the officials from Education who provided us with a briefing yesterday morning on the budget and what's in there. In my critic experience over the past number of years, Education is always top of the class as far as getting us as much information as possible and doing a great job of explaining that to us. Again, I would like to thank those officials and, I guess, for tomorrow morning, the EMR officials who will be briefing us on their budget as well.

A few questions I'm hoping to get into with the minister this Sitting are with respect to capital planning. At the start of this mandate, perhaps the fall of 2017, the minister said that she was working on a 10-year capital plan for school replacement and refurbishment. Since that time, we've seen nothing in that regard. There has been no long-term vision document. The five-year documents have bounced around. The very first one I saw had Christ the King Elementary and Holy Family School in it. That's long gone. Kluane Lake School seems to have \$500,000 in the first year of their plan every year that they bring the plan forward for planning —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Kent:** Oh, it was \$50,000? My colleague from Klwane reminded me it was only \$50,000 for the first while. We'll see exactly what gets spent with that.

I don't think that it is any secret that our side of the House is very sceptical of these five-year documents that the government changes, because like the *A Path Forward* document that came forward last Friday, these things are subject to rapid change when it comes to hitting the floor of the House or comparing year over year. So, again, we will be looking for some information with respect to a longer-term capital plan — like a 10-year plan — as was promised by the minister in 2017, over three years ago.

Obviously, the return to school issue — last year at this time, it was spring break. Students were going away with their families and the pandemic was just beginning to emerge here in the Yukon and what the ramifications of it would be. I am sure that very few of them realized that they wouldn't be coming back to school at all last year, so it was a real challenge for parents, but everybody did a stellar job of trying to make the best of it and to make the best of what happened after spring break last year.

Now we fast-forward to this year, and we are heading into another spring break, and after the Whitehorse high school grades 10, 11, and 12 students have been half-time, in-person since the start of the school year in August and an announcement was made which was contrary to the *A Path Forward* document — again, that isn't even a week old. But that said, the announcement was made, but again, there was a lack of engagement and consultation. My phone has been — I have been getting texts from teachers here this afternoon who are worried about their own health. One of the things they brought up to me, which I think is important, is why weren't teachers moved to the front of the line with other essential workers at the start of this and then perhaps some of them would feel a little bit more comfortable? Many of them are obviously in the Whitehorse area and have had the one vaccine but haven't had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated. We will ask the minister some of those questions and around the lack of consultation on the plan. We will go back to the lack of consultation in August and the lack of consultation in November, as I raised earlier in Question Period today.

I just want to briefly touch on the Selkirk Elementary School parking lot, which is part of this budget. There have been an awful lot of concerns raised through social media and e-mails to me, my colleagues, and others with respect to that project going through YESAA. I know that my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King asked some questions about this yesterday at the briefing. Again, it comes back to the consultation side of things and the lack of engagement that this government does with individuals on projects like that — projects like the Porter Creek highway work and other projects throughout the territory. Again, these are capital projects, and I look forward to talking to the minister about them at some point in the next number of weeks.

One of the things that came out of the briefing that we had yesterday — I wanted to flag it in my second reading speech because it will warrant some additional questions for the

minister when we get into her department. By my calculation from the document that they gave us that talked about an increase of FTEs, it looks to me like there is a 53-FTE increase in Education. The department has promised us that they will come back to us with the organization chart so that we can see that. So, five additional FTEs in human resources was one of the flags that was raised. There are 16 FTEs in schools and student services and 13.5 FTEs in policy and partnership. It's 13.5 but 14 with a decrease, so it's a 14-FTE increase for universal childcare and early learning.

Department officials said that some of those — about half — are coming over from Health and Social Services, but we will want to get a sense of what the other half are assigned to. There is no FTE change for First Nation initiatives. COVID-19 response — there is an increase of 17 FTEs. We are kind of curious if those are temporary employees. It's custodial staff and teachers. Are they temporary, or will they come on permanently beyond the current pandemic? That's a question that I will look to getting into with the minister.

Then there's an increase of two FTEs, I think, on the capital side of things here as well — an increase of two FTEs in schools and student services. But yes, it is capital. It's to hire two-year terms for school-based IT. These numbers — obviously, what I see on the page here is one thing, but we'll look forward to digging in a little bit deeper with the minister and getting a sense for how many of these are permanent FTEs, how many are temporary, and which ones are internal transfers of the department or from other departments and which are new hires.

Just before I wrap up my remarks, the other thing that I wanted to touch on briefly was the Yukon University. There's a small capital allotment for them of — it looks like \$500,000 for some signage, I think, or something like that — a \$100,000 increase for Yukon University transition signage. It's up to \$500,000 in here, so I'm assuming that they've bumped that up by \$400,000.

But when you look at their O&M, their larger contribution is only reflective of the increase for the wage increase — the collective bargaining increase. The other areas that are for the Yukon University, like the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, the Northern Institute of Social Justice — areas like that which are funded — and the LPN program — they've been frozen for a number of years. I'm curious about why that is, so I look forward to getting into those discussions with the minister. Obviously, there was a lot of fanfare when Yukon College transitioned into Yukon University. We weren't able to get together and celebrate that as best as we could last year due to the pandemic, but there doesn't seem to be any further attention being paid by the government to the university when it comes to providing additional funding to them. I'll be quite interested to see it.

From an O&M point of view, for instance, the O&M change for Yukon University is an increase of 1.5 percent. I mean, when you look at other aspects in the department, they've certainly gone up substantially more than what is being contributed to Yukon University.

I would have hoped for more from the government when they bring forward their spending priorities — that Yukon University would have perhaps been a little bit higher on where they want to be as far as supporting that institution and resourcing it properly so that they can expand their programming. I'll dig into that more with the minister when we get to that.

I'm going to wrap up my remarks. I thank you, and I thank the Clerk staff and the folks in Hansard and security who keep us in line here. It will be interesting, as we don't know when the election will be called, but I guess it has to be this year. At some point this year, we'll have that opportunity to go to the polls and put our ideas to Yukoners and then return to these chambers at some point. Some of us will come back and some won't, but again, we'll return to these chambers to talk about Yukon's business once again.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I would like to thank all of my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly for their budget response, second reading speeches, comments, and criticisms. I want to start, as well, with my closing remarks here today by thanking my constituents for voting me into this position.

As the MLA for Klondike, 2016, it has been my absolute privilege to serve them for the last 4.5 years. Thank you very much. I'm very proud to have the work that our government has accomplished in that time. I want to also thank my colleagues who have worked tirelessly over the last several months putting this, our fifth budget, together.

I also want to thank the staff at the Department of Finance for their work and the staff at the Department of Highways and Public Works on the capital side of the equation and also the five-year capital plan as well.

Mr. Speaker, the 2021-22 budget shows a government that is committed to investing in the health and well-being of Yukoners in response to COVID-19 and beyond that, while supporting families and Yukon's green economy as well. The budget also demonstrates this government's commitment to making strategic investments in Yukon's infrastructure to make Yukoners' lives more affordable.

The 2021-22 main estimates forecast a deficit of \$12.7 million. This is a result of our government's continued economic and public health responses to support Yukoners through the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This budget shows our government leveraging every dollar that we can to deliver on key commitments made throughout our mandate, investing in our territory's future, and supporting Yukoners in order to quickly rebound once the global pandemic ends.

The previous government wanted to leave those infrastructure dollars on the table and not spend them. They have also been clear that this would have been their approach going forward. Our government believes in maximizing the value of these dollars to build strong, resilient communities in our territory.

Over the past four budgets, we have laid a strong fiscal and economic foundation, allowing for us to mitigate some of the effects of COVID-19 in our territory and set ourselves up for

continued economic and social success moving forward. Forecasted O&M expenditures total \$1.35 billion, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$100.4 million.

O&M spending also includes \$15 million for a universal childcare program. This is the largest single investment in childcare in the territory's history. It is very disappointing to see opposition parties set to vote against this investment. We will be sure to let parents know who is in favour of this spending.

There is also more than \$50 million for initiatives to support the *Our Clean Future* strategy and over \$70 million for social supports, mental wellness, and substance use programs. It was very disappointing to hear the Member for Mayo-Tatchun minimizing this work done across the territory with respect to addictions and substance use. His criticisms of the work being done, and led by First Nation governments in his communities as well, has not been well-received by leaders whom I have spoken to. They feel very disrespected.

Mr. Speaker, the O&M spending is also driven by \$48.9 million for public health and economic responses to COVID-19. This includes \$15 million set aside to account for changing circumstances amid the ongoing pandemic.

Capital expenditures, representing a record \$434.3 million, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$159.4 million. Revenues, including the recoveries of expenditures, total \$1.37 billion; \$1.18 billion is transferred from Canada, which has increased by six percent over the previous 2020-21 main estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to expand on the five-year capital plan. The plan for 2021-22 builds on the government's commitment to communicate our capital spending intentions to Yukoners, municipalities, the private sector, and First Nation governments and provides greater certainty as we promote a strategic approach to forecasting.

Mr. Speaker, over the last four years, we have laid a strong fiscal and economic foundation. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yukon was on target to be in a surplus position for 2020-21 and beyond. The deficit, as I noted, was a result of additional economic and social supports due to COVID; however, revenue growth and assumptions of a decrease in required COVID-19 supports are forecasted to help Yukoners return to a surplus in 2022-23.

Our economy looks good moving forward: rising income; strong customer spending; housing market activity has remained robust; overall construction activity for 2021 is to be supported by residential investments and government investments; and mining sector performance remains a key driver on the medium term GDP outlook.

We do know that tourism was hit hard in 2020. Widespread border restrictions, reductions in the number and frequency of flights, and the requirements for visitors to quarantine definitely made travel to the territory impossible for most. The current outlook assumes that tourism activity for 2021 will improve marginally from 2020, with growth in visitation supported by the lifting and loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, as well as pent-up demand. Stronger gains are



expected in the future and we will continue to be there for the tourism industry and for the business industry as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the budget that we tabled last Thursday and I urge all members to support the financial plan that we have laid out. The future is bright, Mr. Speaker. We are already leading the country in vaccination rates, and we are only one of two jurisdictions in Canada that will see positive growth of our GDP in 2020.

The 2021-22 budget builds on the strong foundation that we have developed over the last four years and continues us on the path forward to a brighter future in Yukon. Since taking office, we have been listening to Yukoners and taking action on matters and issues that matter to them. Yukoners asked for a more people-centred approach to wellness. Our government dramatically expanded access to mental health supports throughout the territory and we are implementing the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report to help Yukoners thrive.

Yukoners asked for investments to build healthier, more vibrant and sustainable communities for our children and families to live in. We've increased supports and funding for childcare operators for the first time in a decade and also introduced universal affordable childcare to support Yukon families and put more money back into their pockets.

We've made historic investments in land development and supported over 600 new homes to increase housing options across the territory. We've also made significant investments in community and recreational infrastructure in all communities to help support healthy, active living.

Yukoners asked for an end of the divisive practices in the past that led to increased legal battles with Yukon First Nations. Our government revitalized the Yukon Forum and built strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations on the basis of respect, cooperation, and partnerships. We have changed the character of the territory by establishing a National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday, finalized the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*, and are working with partners across the territory to develop a Yukon-wide strategy in response to a final report to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Under our leadership, the Yukon has earned a reputation across the country as a leader in reconciliation. This has benefited every single Yukoner.

Yukoners asked for good jobs and a diverse growing economy. Our territory has the lowest unemployment rate in the country in addition to continuous GDP growth throughout our mandate. We have developed an ambitious 10-year strategy in partnering with municipal and First Nation governments to tackle climate change while building a resilient economy powered by renewable energy. We have made historic investments to modernize infrastructure and transportation networks to stimulate economic growth throughout the territory while reducing the tax burden on businesses to help Yukon companies and entrepreneurs thrive as our economy continues to grow.

Mr. Speaker, the past 12 months have brought us into a clear focus of what's important and what's at stake as we look

forward to the future. By listening to Yukoners and delivering on the commitments that we have made for them, our government has embarked on a path toward a stronger future for all Yukoners.

This budget and its investments position the territory to move confidently and steadily toward an even brighter future for everyone.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's keep it going.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Disagree.

**Mr. Kent:** Disagree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Disagree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Disagree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Disagree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, eight nay.

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

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 207 agreed to*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Seeing the time today, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.*

**The following legislative return was tabled March 11, 2021:**

34-3-99

Response to oral question from Ms. White re: minimum wage (Streicker)