



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, May 31, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 31, 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 victims of residential schools

Speaker: If we would all remain standing, please. Before we begin proceedings today, I ask that the House join me in acknowledging the deaths of 215 children whose lives were cut short while attending the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

This disturbing discovery likely won't be the last discovery of this kind in Canada, and it reminds us of the terrible toll that residential schools took on our indigenous communities. These 215 children had their whole lives ahead of them when they were taken from their homes and placed in that school.

We will never know how their lives could have been lived, who they might have fallen in love with, or whether they would have children and grandchildren of their own. All of that has been lost. This is something that should never be repeated and never be forgotten.

I would ask all of you to join me in a moment of silence for these 215 indigenous children and for all those lost to residential schools.

Moment of silence observed

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes to the Order Paper.

The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 24, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

In addition, the following motion was not placed on the Notice Paper as it is out of order: Motion No. 75, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, the Chair would like to introduce Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate; Christopher Tse, who does their systematic analysis and communications; and Julia Milnes and Iris Binger, who are the child advocacy caseworkers.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me today in welcoming a group of very special people here: Adam and his son Lennox are here today to see the tabling of a petition. We

thank you and, of course, your supports who are here with you today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further visitors to be introduced? Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today in recognition of the 5th anniversary of National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon. June 21 is an important holiday for all of us here in the territory. It coincides with the summer solstice — the longest day of the year — which is significant among indigenous people throughout the country and around the world. For Yukoners, it's a time to celebrate indigenous music and dance, stories and art, heritage and history in our respective communities. It is also an opportunity for us to immerse ourselves in the ways of knowing and doing that are woven into the landscape that we call Yukon.

This government properly recognized National Indigenous Peoples Day as an official holiday in 2017. Five years later, we find ourselves engaged in strong relationships with First Nation counterparts. We meet regularly at the Yukon Forum and through its various committees to collaborate on joint issues and priorities. More often than not, we're able to present a united voice to the Government of Canada. Much work definitely lies ahead of us, but we can proudly say that there has been momentum in Yukon's journey toward reconciliation.

Yukon First Nations and transboundary nations play a critical role in the governance, economy, and well-being of Yukon. Together we are improving the lives of Yukoners, creating vibrant, healthy communities built on diversity and inclusion.

I look forward this year to joining Premier Horgan and the Daylu Dena Council in Lower Post, BC for the demolition of the residential school in that community. I spoke this morning with Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling to share in the planning of this historic and profound day coming up. The school has stood as a constant reminder of past trauma for members of the Daylu Dena Council and many others as well. On that day, as we are today, we will be thinking of those affected by the recent tragic and horrific findings at the Kamloops residential school. This is a painful reminder of what indigenous people in Canada have suffered. It is up to all leaders to take initiatives and make meaningful progress in the journey toward reconciliation. Recognizing the unjust treatment that indigenous people in Canada have faced, as well as the challenges experienced today, is a critical step in doing better as a nation.

We are very fortunate to be able to celebrate the countless contributions that indigenous Canadians make to this country each and every day. I hold my hands up to the incredible heritage, language, art, and other aspects of indigenous culture that we have in our daily lives. In this spirit, I encourage all Yukoners to take part in celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, 2021.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Indigenous Peoples Day, celebrated each year on June 21. This is Yukon's 5th anniversary of National Indigenous Peoples Day being officially celebrated as a statutory holiday.

We have long recognized June 21 as a celebration of indigenous culture, tradition, and contributions. This day holds much more significance to those First Nation Inuit, and Métis who can express the importance of reconciliation and community building through cultural celebration. Throughout the country and across the Yukon, celebration of culture, art, music, food, and stories will be shared. It also provides an opportunity for conversation, to be able to tell children and remind adults about the history, customs, and issues that are relevant to the first peoples.

From the forming of our country, the Government of Canada, along with agencies such as the churches, controlled every aspect of Indian lives. The *Indian Act* is still in force today. June 21 is the day that indigenous communities can stand together in strength and resilience. The Yukon Party Official Opposition joins those across the country who are horrified at the discovery of the remains of 215 children that have just been discovered on the traditional territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation near Kamloops, BC.

Our hearts ache for those whose lives were taken much too soon by actions that are nothing less than deplorable. Our thoughts and prayers go to the families of those children who were victimized. We mourn the victims of the heinous actions of abuse — verbal, mental, physical, and sexual — committed at residential schools across the country. These schools operated from the 1920s to 1996, and children were forced to attend; it was not a choice. These were the formative years for the children who had nothing else to compare with. Their birth families even became strangers when they returned. We stand with and support the survivors, and we believe their stories.

There is not one part of our country, Canada, that has not been affected by the residential school system. We cannot hide this history, and we should never gloss over the horrors that happened in them.

The use of power to abuse must always be questioned, and that is our job. We cannot and should not try to erase history, but we must continue to learn and not let a tragedy like residential schools ever happen again.

We thank the Whitehorse citizens who took time yesterday and on Sunday afternoon to mourn the lives lost near Kamloops and to acknowledge the impacts of residential schools on all First Nations. It was powerful and it was moving.

A 24-hour national Indian residential school crisis line is available for former students and those affected. The number is 1-866-925-4419. Locally, support is available by contacting the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools, or CAIRS, in Whitehorse at 1-867-667-2247.

Summer solstice, or the first day of summer, is a day chosen to celebrate, as it is the longest day of the year, especially in the north. In parts of Yukon, we are blessed with light for most of 24 hours or the maximum amount of light of

the whole year. Let us pray that this light will open eyes to the plight of many of our people. Don't judge, as we never know another's story.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP in recognition of the 5th annual holiday of National Indigenous Peoples Day in Yukon. This has been a hard week for our country but an especially hard week for indigenous Canadians who have carried the weight of the residential school system on our shoulders. That weight should not be ours alone.

One of the passages from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report that draws me back time and time again has to do with history and youth. The Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners have said — and I quote: "... we believe that reconciliation is about respect. That includes both self-respect for Aboriginal people and mutual respect among all Canadians."

All young people need to know who they are and from where they come. Aboriginal children and youth searching for their own identities and places of belonging need to know and take pride in their indigenous roots. They need to know the answers to some very basic questions: Who are my people? What is our history? How are we unique? Where do I belong? Where is my homeland? What is my language, and how does it connect me to my nation's spiritual beliefs, cultural practices, and ways of being in the world?

They also need to know why things are the way they are today. That requires an understanding of the history of colonization, including the residential school system and how it has affected their families, communities, their people, and themselves.

The work done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to listen to and honour the experiences of families and survivors laid out a vision for Canada. Getting to the truth was hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder. It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision based on a commitment of mutual respect be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of aboriginal people and the lack of respect that non-aboriginal people have been raised to have for their aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one.

I reflect on the power and strength of all indigenous communities. Despite the federal government policies that were created to eradicate indigenous peoples in Canada through the forced removal of our people from our families, our communities, our culture, our ceremonies, and our language, we are still here.

As indigenous people in this country, we still hold all of what was to be taken from us as a people. Even if that knowledge was sleeping just below the surface of our memories, we still hold what is sacred to who we are.

When you look to our communities, you see great efforts directed at revitalizing who we are. We are waking up those internal memories of our ancestral ways. There is great power and strength that is coming with our new generation of children and youth. They are not afraid to stand up to speak our truth, nor are they afraid to speak our language, sing our songs, or dance our dances.

Our children and youth are encouraging us to build our pride in who we are as indigenous people. They remind us daily that we are accountable to their future. Today we have our culture, our ceremonies, our language, our children, and our way of doing things. Indeed, this is a cause for celebration on National Indigenous Peoples Day in Yukon.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the report by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, entitled *Review on School Attendance in the Yukon: What Is, What Could Be*, dated May 2021.

Are there any further documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling the 2020 Department of Education annual report, which is required under section 5(h) of the *Education Act*.

I also have for tabling the Yukon University annual report for 2019-20 and the audited financial statements for 2019-20, which is required under section 53 of the *Yukon University Act*.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling a legislative return.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling a legislative return that is a response to a question asked by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King back on May 20.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 1

Ms. Tredger: I have for tabling a petition calling on the Government of Yukon to immediately incorporate a climate change lens into all decision-making processes for policies, programs, and projects. This must include greenhouse gas emission numbers — also, in consultation with the promised Yukon climate leadership council launch, the promised information and social marketing campaign so that Yukoners can make informed climate-related decisions to help us meet the Yukon’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent over 2010 levels by 2030.

Petition No. 2

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling a petition that reads:

To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

“The Petition of the undersigned shows;

“That caregivers for a child or children with a disability can include parents, guardians, and other relatives.

“That parents who are caregivers of a child or children with a disability often take significant financial losses to fulfill this role.

“That many parents would prefer to care for their child or children with a disability themselves, rather than outsource a subsidized non-familial caregiver.

“That there is currently a shortage of nurses in Whitehorse, which affects the quality of care provided to a child or children with disabilities.

“That the Yukon Government does not include parents in its policy to provide financial compensation to caregivers of children with a disability.

“Therefore, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to expand the scope of Children’s Disability Services to include equal financial support for parents who are full time caregivers to a child or children with a disability.”

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented? Are there any bills to be introduced?

Notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to recognize that there have been less than seven days of debate on a \$1.8-billion budget and only two departments have concluded debate by taking the following action: introducing a motion to extend this Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to reverse their plans to increase camping fees for Yukon senior citizens.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respond to the recent horrific discovery of 215 children buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential School by:

(1) acknowledging the ongoing harm of genocide faced by indigenous people through residential schools and the ongoing toll that it takes on survivors and their families;

(2) supporting the investigation of residential school sites in the Yukon as directed by First Nation governments;

(3) addressing the need of survivors and their families who have been retraumatized and are struggling due to a lack of services by immediately providing emergency mental health supports in every Yukon community;

(4) acknowledging that the current gap in services to First Nation citizens is one of the ways that colonialism still impacts indigenous people to this day;

(5) implementing each call to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including “closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in a number of health indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal

health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services.”

Speaker: Are there any other notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Old Crow wellness centre contract

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, on February 18, the tender for the \$40-plus-million Old Crow wellness centre closed. Then, just three weeks later, in what seems to be record time for a project of this size, the contract was awarded on March 11. I'm sure that it's just a coincidence that this was just one day before the snap election call.

A March 18 *Yukon News* article states that the company that lost the bid — and I quote: “... alleges that staff with the Department of Highways and Public Works explained during a debrief with the company that they were urged to make a quick decision on the project.”

Last week, we asked the Liberals who urged the public servants to make the quick decision on this \$40-plus-million contract whether or not there was any political involvement. In response, the Minister of Community Services gave a bombastic denial of any political involvement.

Could the current Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm that there was no political involvement in rushing this \$40-plus-million contract out just one day before a snap election call?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I would reiterate my response from Committee of the Whole on Thursday afternoon — that I was not in Cabinet at the time of the decision-making — but I would also note for the record that all members are deemed to be honourable and any inference to the contrary could be deemed to be out of order.

Our government is making investments across the territory to build healthy, vibrant communities. We are building a new health and wellness centre and a tenplex housing unit in Old Crow. Design work is underway, and construction will start this winter. The design/build contract for the centre and housing unit was awarded to Ketz TSL Construction for \$44.8 million. This project was awarded using a value-driven procurement. These types of procurements look at a number of elements beyond price to ensure that there is additional value for the community and the territory.

In this case, the project team awarded points for the schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation. This project will replace the aging health centre, increasing the number of affordable housing units, and create valuable jobs in the community.

Mr. Dixon: We have an e-mail here from public servants stating that on March 10 — just one day before the contract was

awarded on March 11 and just two days before the snap election call — the Liberal Cabinet met and signed off on a new implementation plan for the Old Crow wellness centre. So, it would appear that just two days before the snap election call, the Liberal Cabinet signed off on a quick decision to get a \$40-million contract out the door. It should be noted that this contract was for the community of Old Crow, a riding that the Liberals knew that they were going to have difficulty getting re-elected in. In fact, they ended up losing that seat.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are hoping that the Minister of Community Services can tell us: Why did he say that there was no political involvement in this contract when the Liberal Cabinet met on this exact topic just one day before the contract was awarded and just two days before the snap election was called?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition. I would reiterate the response that I had in my first response, which is that all Members of the Legislative Assembly are deemed to be honourable and inferences to the contrary are out of order. The member opposite will well know that — as per his familiarity with the Standing Orders from his time in the Assembly from 2011 until 2016 and his brief re-entry into the Assembly and with the rules that we govern ourselves by and the submissions that are made and the criticisms that are levelled in this Assembly. He can certainly brush up on the Standing Orders during the summer.

We are working with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on the design of a healing room in the health and wellness centre, as well as gathering other cultural and First Nation input into the overall design. Construction is set to start in the winter of 2021-22 for the thermopile foundation. Building construction will begin in the spring of 2022.

We are very excited to provide this important and valuable infrastructure to the community of Old Crow and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Mr. Dixon: I would remind the Member for Riverdale North that he's the Minister of Highways and Public Works now and not the Speaker anymore.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask him to pay attention to the content of my question.

Here is the timeline. On February 18, the tender closed for this project. On March 10, the Liberal Cabinet met to discuss a new implementation plan for the project. One day later, the contract was awarded. The next day, the Liberals called the snap election. Then, on March 18, the *Yukon News* reported on allegations that public servants said that they were urged to make a quick decision on this \$40-million contract.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works please tell us who urged the public service to make a quick decision on this \$40-million contract? Will the Liberals agree to publicly release the Cabinet documents related to their discussion on this project so that Yukoners can know why this project was rushed out just one day before the snap election?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the final supplementary question from the member opposite.

I'm wondering whether the Leader of the Official Opposition, through his questions today, is indicating that the Yukon Party is not interested in this project — that it somehow is not a valuable piece of future infrastructure for the community of Old Crow and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Highways and Public Works is responsible for the procurement and management of both of the projects — both the health and wellness centre and the tenplex. A combined procurement was used for the two facilities in order to simplify construction and community resource demands, mobilization and demobilization, and to decrease the costs of both projects by realizing the benefits of economies of scale and shared resources. Stantec architecture and engineering has completed the conceptual design and will act as the owner's advisor for Highways and Public Works during the design and construction of both facilities. A land lease has been negotiated with the Vuntut Gwitchin government and was signed this spring.

For the 2021 fiscal year, we have budgeted more than \$19 million for the project. The total estimated project budget is approximately \$52 million. We expect to complete construction of the tenplex in 2022 —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Yukon Resource Gateway project

Mr. Kent: On June 22, 2017, the federal and Yukon governments approved nearly \$470 million in funding for the Resource Gateway project. That was almost four years ago. Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us how much of that \$470 million has actually been spent in the past four years?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will return to the Member for Copperbelt South with the exact amount of funds that have actually been expended on the Gateway project to date.

Mr. Kent: That project was originally approved as having the private sector contributing over \$108 million of the cost. Can the minister confirm if the private sector is still contributing \$108 million? How much private sector money has been spent on this project to date?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can advise, as I advised the member opposite on Thursday afternoon, that the total potential participation of the private sector of the total funding envelope available is \$108 million. I will return to the member opposite and to the House with the amount of private participation that has occurred to date of that \$108 million, but the total amount is \$108 million.

The Government of Yukon signed a six-project agreement with the affected First Nations under the Yukon Resource Gateway program. Approved projects have an estimated total capital construction cost of \$251.45 million so far. Project agreements are announced when they are approved by Cabinet and signed by all parties.

We worked hard to increase the flexibility of the funding to include additional roads as well as the ability to approach projects in phases. This way, we have more options to focus the available money on the projects that are supported by First Nations and communities.

The Government of Yukon continues to work with First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation to develop projects that have lasting benefits. We continue to pursue additional agreements with Yukon First Nations while implementing the signed project agreements. Road construction projects provide sustainable employment for Yukoners, significant opportunities for Yukon First Nations, and employment training to strengthen our communities.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister if he could return that information he promised today in a letter over the summer rather than us having to wait until the first week in October for the fall session to resume.

In 2020-21, there was \$3.286 million budgeted for this project, yet the government is estimated to be spending only \$736,000 of that money. Can the minister update us on what projects will be worked on this summer as part of the Resource Gateway project? When will that work start? Will the full amount of \$15.5 million that is in this year's budget be spent this year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. I can provide additional detail to the member opposite, as well, in the letter responding to the funding for the private sector.

Yes, the majority of the money that we spent this summer is for the Carmacks bypass project. In the spring of 2019, a project agreement for the Carmacks bypass component was signed with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The project includes construction of a new road and a bridge and has an estimated capital cost of \$26.75 million, I believe, over the course of two years — two construction seasons. Planning, design, and environmental assessment of the Carmacks bypass is underway and nearing completion. The right-of-way clearing has begun, which will support construction of the Carmacks bypass and the Nordenskiöld River bridge.

A request for qualifications for the provision of construction services for the Carmacks bypass kilometre 0 to kilometre 5.1 was tendered in December 2020 and resulted in three qualified contractors. The request for proposals for the construction of the Carmacks bypass will be tendered shortly. Construction is scheduled to begin later in the summer of 2021. We are very excited for this project to proceed this summer, as I know is the community of Carmacks and the —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Wolverine mine reclamation

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years, Yukoners have watched the Wolverine mine go into receivership and now sit virtually abandoned. The mine itself is filled with water and requires full-time water treatment and maintenance to protect the surrounding environment.

Yukoners know this story well. A mine operation goes bankrupt, abandons the site, and the public is left to pick up the tab, but unlike other mines, Wolverine mine was permitted after devolution, and any costs for maintenance or reclamation after the company deposit is spent falls to Yukoners, not on Canada.

Will the minister tell Yukoners: What are the ongoing protective measures at the Wolverine mine, and how long does the Yukon government expect to be responsible for them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We continue to regularly inspect the Wolverine mine site to ensure that it meets existing standards for human safety and the environment, and we are taking action to address elevated water levels within the tailings storage facility by increasing water treatment capacity on-site and allowing the ongoing discharge of clean water to the environment.

I will say that what we are doing right now is that, in April of this year, PricewaterhouseCoopers initiated a court-approved sale process for the mine site. Selection of the successful bidder will occur late in the summer of 2021, and while the transfer of this site is dependent on the issuance of required authorizations, we are hopeful that there will be a successful bidder on the site and the taking over of both — the liabilities and the opportunities of the site.

That is the work that we are doing right now. We are making sure that the mine is safe for now and that the remediation takes place right now. We have put out the mine for sale, and we hope to close that this summer.

Ms. White: Maintaining the environmental safety of this mine site for years and years will be costly. It requires full-time staff to monitor the water treatment plant and a variety of other tasks to protect the environment, and that is just to keep the contamination from spreading. We are not even talking about future remediation costs.

Current care and maintenance and future plans for the mine site remain unclear. Will the minister tell Yukoners what the plan is if the mine is not sold, and at what point will the government consider remediation if no one is willing to resume mining operations because of the environmental liabilities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I will say is that we will, of course, take responsibility for the mine site if the mine is not sold; we will ensure that the site is kept safe environmentally if it is not sold.

I will note that the mine itself does have a liability, but it also has opportunity; there is value there. We anticipate that there will be some interest in the mine. I won't speculate on what happens should the mine not sell, because that work will be ongoing up until that point, but what I will say is that, of course, as a government, we will be responsible for the site.

I will say, as well, that we believe that there were mistakes made previously in collecting security for the site. We believe that the oversight caused the risk that we face today, and we will be responsible to follow up from that, even though it was not under our watch that the security was not retained by the government. It is our responsibility to make sure that the mine is safe for Yukoners.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer.

Most abandoned and contaminated mine sites in the Yukon are a federal responsibility, but Wolverine is different. Since it happened after devolution, it is entirely the Yukon's responsibility.

Without the ability to hold past companies responsible, it will fall to the Yukon government to maintain the mine in its

current condition or to develop a plan to permanently close and reclaim the mine site. Yukoners will be on the hook for the cleaning up of this mess that has been left behind. The security deposit paid by the mine is nearly spent. If the mine does not sell, how much are Yukoners going to have to pay, once the security deposit runs out, to maintain the mine site in its present state and to complete reclamation if no new operator takes over the site?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, again, I am not going to speculate on the amounts because the department has not come to me yet with that fulsome analysis. I think they are working diligently and have put the mine up for sale. I think they have advised me that they believe that there is value in the mine, so that is what we will follow right now.

I have already acknowledged that this mine is the responsibility of the Yukon government. I have acknowledged, as well, that there were, what I believe to be, mistakes made earlier in not securing the full security for this mine. It is a complicated situation going through the courts. I appreciate that.

What I am saying to Yukoners right now is that we will make sure that the mine site is cleaned up. It is our responsibility. The best way to do that is to sell the mine and to sell both its liabilities and its opportunities to an interested mining company, and we will work to do that right now.

Question re: Mental health services in rural communities

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, last week I stood in this House and asked the minister why three mental health nurse positions in rural communities were moved to Whitehorse. The minister could not answer the question. Mental health hubs are understaffed and staff are overworked. Nurses are burned-out, and residents have nowhere else to turn for help. Without the right supports, people are more likely to struggle with their mental health. Mental health is an essential service for all Yukoners.

I would like to ask the minister again: Why were three mental health nurse positions moved from mental wellness hubs in communities to Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. As I indicated last week when I stood to address this issue, that is not the information that I have; it is not accurate. The information I have been given is that no mental health nurse positions have been moved out of communities. Individuals may have moved, intending to get another job in a different location, and that may be the issue, but I am attempting to confirm the details of that, as I promised to do last week. I am fully intending to provide that information to the member opposite. I don't have the same information that she clearly has. I'm urging her to give that information to me so I might figure out where the distinction is.

Community-based mental health services are a priority for this government. Since the creation of the mental wellness hubs, we are now providing mental wellness support workers and counsellors providing services throughout Yukon in Yukon

communities. We continue to provide accessible mental health and substance use supports for Yukoners.

I'm happy to continue when further questions come.

Ms. Blake: The former Member for Mayo-Tatchun, Don Hutton, shared his concerns with this government repeatedly about the rate of addiction and mental health issues in Yukon communities, but his concerns were not heard by this government. After years of being ignored, Mr. Hutton left this government. Without proper staffing in our communities, the government will not address this crisis.

Can the minister tell Yukoners what specific steps have been taken to facilitate the recruitment of mental health workers in Yukon communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government continues to provide accessible mental health and substance use supports to Yukoners for Yukoners. Those services include utilizing positions such as mental health nurses in the most effective and efficient ways. Many clients requiring specialized services provided by mental health nurses travel frequently between Whitehorse and their home communities.

Ideally, a mental health nurse is able to see clients both in the community where they live and in Whitehorse. In doing so, they are able to provide coordinated support for clients as it relates to psychiatric and opioid treatments, follow-up medication monitoring and administration.

Our community-based mental wellness and mental health services are a priority for this government.

Ms. Blake: Mental health in communities is not a new issue at all. The gap in health services for First Nations is rooted in colonialism and low staffing at mental health hubs is just another ripple effect. As a social worker, no matter which position I have worked in and no matter who I was meeting with, I have had the same discussion on making mental health a priority. At every table I have sat at, I have heard the same promises, but Yukoners who live in communities are still struggling.

It is something that was highlighted in the meeting between the three northern Yukon First Nation chiefs who named mental health and substance abuse treatment as a top priority. If the minister won't listen to the advice of her previous colleague, will she listen to the northern chiefs and provide adequate mental health resources to communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to speak about mental health services in communities and the importance of those services being provided throughout the territory. I also appreciate her comments about meeting with the northern chiefs. My colleague and I spent a full day with them last Friday in Dawson. We had extremely fruitful and frank conversations and we touched on many issues that cross both the portfolios for which I am responsible and those of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Prior to the creation of the mental wellness and substance use hubs, mental health nurses had to travel throughout the territory in an effort to have a full caseload. It remains true that mental health nurses — due to the specialized services that they provide — have low caseloads when located just in one

territory. Staffing of mental wellness hubs is an ongoing process, given normal attrition rates, which might be — as I have said — some of the comments made in the first question — community-based mental health services are a priority for this government. Since the creation of the mental wellness hubs, there are now mental wellness support workers and counsellors throughout the Yukon — not something that was the case before the hubs were designed.

Question re: Energy capital project expenditures impact on ratepayers

Ms. Van Bibber: Over the past number of years, Yukoners have been subjected to steadily increasing power rates. The Liberals' decision to rent diesel generators from Alberta or to cancel construction of a planned thermal generation plant have created costs that are making ratepayers suffer. The government has recently announced several new large capital energy projects, including the battery storage project here in Whitehorse.

Can the minister tell us how much that project will cost? How much will be expected to be paid by ratepayers? When does he anticipate the rate application for these costs to come forward?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will work to get the specifics that the member has asked about for the battery project and hopefully provide them when I get back up on my feet.

What I can say is that the battery project is a great project for our baseload power because it will help us to shift the daytime peaks to the evenings. It will make all renewables that we have on the system more effective. One of the things that it will do is it will help to reduce four of the rented diesel generators once that battery is fully in place. It's the largest battery that I know of north of 60 and may be one of the largest battery systems in Canada.

It's a great project and it's why we think it's a mistake to invest in another thermal plant. We think that would be wrong because what we want to do is move toward a renewable energy future broadly. This is a critical step within that.

I will work to get the answers for the member opposite.

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this year, the government stated that the new battery storage project would cost \$31 million. On May 4, the Yukon Energy Corporation appeared before the Yukon Utilities Board to testify on their application to build the new battery. During that hearing, it was revealed that the cost of the new battery could skyrocket as high as \$41 million. If that were to happen, ratepayers could be on the hook for \$25 million to be paid for by massive increases to their electricity bills.

Can the minister tell us how much our power rates would have to increase to pay for this?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think that the battery project is an excellent project. I think that it is very cost-effective and I will — as I said earlier — look to try to see what the assessment is for the impact on rates, but I don't think that we should be talking today in a way that says this is a bad project; I think that it is a great project. I am just a little surprised that the members opposite don't see it as a great project, because I thought —

when they ran in the election — that they adopted the full 10-year plan for Yukon Energy — the renewable energy plan. This was the first piece of that plan, so if they are concerned about it, I am surprised now, because during the election, what I heard them say was that they were all in support of it.

I am in support of the battery project. I think that it is going to be a great project for Yukoners and I will work to get the specific information across. I think that it is fair to say that the battery project is going to help to shift the load from daytime peaks into the evening and that is going to be good for our system across the board.

Ms. Van Bibber: I had asked for the costs of those projects skyrocketing. That information came straight from the May 4 transcript of the Utilities Board hearing on that particular topic.

Another large energy project that is underway is the Mayo-McQuesten power line.

Can the minister tell us how much of the cost of this project will be carried by ratepayers and when that rate increase will come into effect?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, I have not stood up in this Legislature and said that the battery price is going up; that was the member opposite who said that. When I have talked with the Development Corporation, they have not —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I have talked with the Yukon Energy Corporation, they have not flagged to me their concern that the costs are going up exorbitantly or — to use the word from the member opposite — I have not heard anything about costs “skyrocketing”. I am happy to go off and get those costs — also for the McQuesten transmission line. But let’s be clear, Mr. Speaker: What we need to do is to have a renewable energy economy. We need to shift the energy economy to renewable sources and that is through Yukon Energy and our electricity grid. So, these are all positive projects — whether that is for Yukoners or whether that is for Yukon industry — and it is a smart move for the future.

I will happily get across for the members opposite what the individual costs are and what we anticipate to be any change, if any, to rates. We are working hard to use our infrastructure dollars to pay for much of this. I think that one of the members opposite talked about using it like we would invest in roads, in a way in which we build that infrastructure for all Yukoners and not put it on the rate base.

So, I will work to get the details of the answer.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion to rescind the May 17, 2021 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 4 that provides for the House to sit a maximum of 11 sitting days in the 2021 Special Sitting.

Unanimous consent to move without notice a motion to rescind an Order of the House

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion to rescind the May 17, 2021 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 4 that provides for the House to sit a maximum of 11 sitting days in the 2021 Special Sitting.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

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

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

Motion agreed to

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Public Service Commission

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to begin with, I would like to welcome to the Legislature our new Public Service Commissioner, Mr. Paul Moore, and Ms. Loretta Boorse, who is our Acting Director of Finance and Administration. I don’t know if this is her first time here in the Legislature, but it’s her first time with me, so I welcome them both. Thank you for a chance to speak about the Public Service Commission, which, of course, delivers a range of government-wide human resource programs and services.

I just want to start off by acknowledging that, over the past year, the public service has consistently risen to the challenge and ensured that services to Yukoners were maintained while simultaneously managing the response to the pandemic. At the

start of the pandemic, the public service activated its pandemic plan, which aims to ensure the business continuity of government. Under that plan, the Public Service Commission set up the human resource management committee, which is under the emergency measures — the overall full group.

The emergency response had, for example, units that we were more familiar with publicly, like the COVID response unit, but it also had our human resource management committee. This was professionals across the public service who coordinated the quick reassignment of employees so that essential programs and services would not be interrupted and to implement human resource processes and policies to meet the ever-changing needs of the organization.

One clear example of this that I had first-hand experience with was our borders, because we needed to have professionals from across our public service who could deal with enforcement and even conflict situations. We pulled from Environment, from the Liquor Corporation, and from Energy, Mines and Resources, and we moved people over. It was this group that did that.

The team played, and continues to play, a key role to support the Yukon's pandemic response.

In terms of our approach to human resource management, the Public Service Commission and the human resource committee continue to be guided by the vision of the *People Plan*. By recruiting and retaining the right people and fostering a culture where employees feel safe, respected, and empowered, the Yukon Public Service will be diverse and engaged and will embrace innovation to deliver positive outcomes for all Yukoners.

In 2021-22, we will continue our work to deliver the services that Yukoners rely on while ensuring that all public servants are safe and supported. Working from home was one of the first and most significant actions taken by the public service to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 back in March of last year. Based on the experience of the organization over the past year, a new remote work policy will be implemented in the months ahead that enables flexible work arrangements where they make sense for the employees' positions and departments.

There has been recent interest across the territory in providing the opportunity for Government of Yukon employees to live and work in Yukon communities outside of Whitehorse where it makes sense for the employer and employee. An updated remote work policy will be one way to facilitate this, and we are committed to exploring this further. I believe that was the subject of a motion here in the Legislature earlier.

The new policy and employee supports will incorporate the changes in technology that enable effective communication and collaboration while keeping employee health and safety front and centre in any remote work arrangement. As the pandemic has demonstrated, psychological health and safety is an important part of well-being at work. To combat feelings of isolation or loneliness when working remotely, we encourage blended work arrangements and support teams to stay in regular communication and occasionally attend training meetings and social activities in the workplace. Health and safety checklists

for remote work have also been created to aid employees and supervisors to assess the remote workplaces for any potential hazards or risks. This checklist includes guidance for checking in regularly and maintaining routines and boundaries to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

The Public Service Commission is also leading some key initiatives to enhance the range of well-being supports available to our employees. Extended health benefits and the employee assistance program have traditionally been government's main well-being supports to employees. The Public Service Commission is expanding available services in the employee and family assistance program to include more proactive support and more workplace-based supports. Positive feedback on the enhanced resiliency workshops offered during COVID-19 and advice from leading research have highlighted a need for more workplace-based team supports and more proactive investments in employee mental fitness.

The Public Service Commission consulted with branches that have exposure to trauma or stressful work, considered input from the Yukon Employees' Union during the last round of collective bargaining, and conducted a survey of employees to understand employee needs and interests.

Moving on, the Public Service Commission's Diversity and Inclusion branch will also continue to implement initiatives under the *Breaking Trail Together*. The Yukon government's plan to develop a representative public service was launched in 2020. This will include the continuation of the 18-month hiring preference pilot where, as an employer, we give preference to indigenous applicants, with a priority for Yukon First Nation candidates on all competitions. That pilot commenced in October of last year and, as we get closer to the end of the period, we will be assessing the effectiveness of it to determine next steps.

In terms of our approach to our work, our department recognizes that people are our government's most important resource and is striving to create a culture across Yukon government where every employee is empowered to contribute to their full potential. The Public Service Commission will work, through ongoing collaboration and building strong relationships, to create a seamlessly integrated human resource community across government, and we will continue to shift toward a solution-focused, adaptive, and principle-based human resources culture.

There is much that I could add about the budget, but I will stop there and respond to questions from members opposite and look forward to the debate today.

Ms. White: I am happy to be here today to talk about the Public Service Commission, something that touches every single Yukon government employee — also to welcome the officials here in their capacity. Of course, Mr. Moore, in his new position — how exciting to have you here.

There is a news article out today, entitled: "Yukon civil servants give mixed reviews to branch set up to help them". It has to do with a recent survey and report that was completed by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing branch looking at Yukon government's system for helping workers with disabilities and

long-term health problems and about where they are in Yukon government.

So, my first question is: Will this completed report that was filled out by more than 300 government employees be made public?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Originally, when we developed the report, we weren't thinking about it in terms of sharing it publicly, but there is no reason for us not to. I will ask the department to look through it. I have not looked through it yet, but I just want to make sure that, when we are dealing with employees' responses, the report is maintaining the privacy of our employees, but I'm happy to table it here in the Legislature so that people can see it.

I'll just make a couple of comments. We carried out the survey proactively, looking to try to deal with what is a very challenging topic and how we can improve on the service that we provide for our employees to support them as they face challenging situations. That was the intent. So, I'm happy to table it. I will ask the department to make sure that it is as open as it can be while maintaining employee privacy.

Ms. White: I guess the challenge I have — so maybe the minister could table it in the fall or maybe just make the link publicly available on the yukon.ca website. The reason why I highlight the challenge is that this is the first line of the CBC news article: "A survey obtained by CBC News reveals numerous complaints about the Yukon government's system for helping workers with disabilities and long-term health problems." The reason I highlight that is that it means that there is a news outlet that has access to information, or a survey that was completed by government, and is talking about the shortcomings, and here I am, an elected person in the House whose responsibility is to look at the Public Service Commission, and I don't have access to that report. I'm just highlighting it. I look forward to having access to that.

There were things included in the news report that were taken from the survey, including challenges. I just wanted to know what concrete steps are being taken to address the issues — and there are many of them — one being navigating the Canada Life benefits provider.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, just to be clear, I have not seen the results of the survey as of yet. I will happily share them, but I just want to acknowledge that, any time we're talking about disabilities, they are naturally stressful for staff, and maybe even for their colleagues, as people try to navigate through a challenging situation. There could be very private or personal information to those staff, and I think it's fair to say that we know that it's a stressful time for our staff and we expect that they could have concerns.

That's why we conducted the survey — it was exactly to find those things out and to try to address them.

We worked with the Yukon Employees' Union. We also worked with our insurer — which is, I think, Canada Life. We worked with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. So, the work was not just us as a department; it was in collaboration with people who are looking to make this system better.

The Leader of the Third Party asked about something concrete that was done. I asked for some of those very things. Here is an example: We worked with our insurer, Canada Life, to have a collaborative approach to some of the early intervention supports. The purpose of this is that, if you can get those supports to our workers early — or the clients of Canada Life — if we can streamline that system so that they can get those supports early, then that may prevent them from needing longer term disability supports. The idea is to reach people as soon as issues are identified in order to achieve better outcomes for everyone. That is an example of one of the steps that came out of the survey.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. The reason why I started with that is that there is a significant number of folks who said that they had a hard time navigating Canada Life, which is the government's benefits provider, and that it is challenging.

Other comments included things like — again, this is from the news article, because I do not have access to the report yet — that often it seemed that the branch was there to help management get people back to work, but they were not interested in knowing how the person was dealing with things. How does the minister plan on making sure that there is a shift of the focus so that the focus is more on the individual and their needs and away from just making sure that management has the ability to get people back to work — making sure that when we are getting people back, they are in the best shape — whether physically or mentally — as they can be as opposed to just checking a box on their forms?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I really have only had very preliminary conversations with the commissioner about this, but what I will say is that my first conversations were really focused on improving outcomes for employees. I think that this is one of those times that naturally also aligns with better outcomes for the public service broadly and thus the public broadly.

I appreciate that there were concerns raised by people. I just want to again acknowledge that it was us, as a public service, who sought this out in order to try to improve the situation. That feedback has come in. My work with the commissioner has been proactive, and I have never heard anything from him about just checking a box. What we're told is that, if people get back to work sooner, they usually have better outcomes — so this is also about those employees.

Now, you don't want to rush things, but you do want to assist people, where possible. Just acknowledging that there were — I think that we had several hundred people who filled out the survey — because we decided to look back over the past several years — the past four years or so — and we have roughly 100 staff each year who work with this branch and unit. At any one time, we might have 40 or 50 people who we are serving. Over time, it's important to get that feedback from people in order to make the program work better for them.

I have nothing concrete that I can say today, except that all the interaction that I've had with the commission to date leads me to believe that they're working constructively and

supportively of our public service, and I don't believe that will change.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. When the minister spoke about the diversity inclusion branch, one of the questions I have is: What kind of training is made available for staff around working with folks with disabilities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will endeavour to get a specific response about the training for colleagues about how we work in support, inclusively, of people who have disabilities. I don't have an answer in front of me today, but I'll work to get that answer.

Ms. White: I appreciate that and it's absolutely okay. It is mostly highlighting the reality that folks in different offices and, of course, across government — both those with disability and those in support, or allies of those folks with disability — it is about learning to make sure that we can do a better job.

I have had a really hard lesson with a friend in a wheelchair — trying to push them around downtown in the middle of winter — to realize that things that were viewed as accessible are actually not that accessible, depending on the situation. So, there are lots of lessons about trying to figure that out, and in some cases, I would say that — for example, having certain government health offices on the top floor of a building where the elevator sometimes goes down is an example of how we are not fully supporting folks with disability. That is not this department.

The question is: How many auxiliary-on-call workers are now included on the books of the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just touch a little bit on the policy framework around disabilities and return-to-work services. There is an accommodation process and we have a policy framework which aligns with the employer obligation defined by the *Human Rights Act* case law and our collective agreements and best practices. It includes a guiding document supporting policies under our *General Administration Manual*, accommodating employees with disabilities, substance use and impairment, and corporate health and safety and guidelines on complex cases, mental disabilities, substance use disorders, and returning to work and accommodation. Again, I don't have the specifics about training for colleagues; I will work to get that.

With respect to the question on auxiliary on call — I believe that the question is: How many employees? What I understand our total to be today is 863. That is generally on a small, downward trajectory. In 2017-18, the total I have was — sorry, pardon me, Madam Chair — I was giving unique employees. Let me just go back and get that number. It is a 902 count, which is 863 unique employees. Going back to 2017-18, the number was 974; 2018-19, the number was 932; in 2019-20, the number was 955; and this past year was 902.

Ms. White: Do those 863 individuals who are auxiliary-on-call workers with the Yukon government have access to paid sick days?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer to that is no. Of course, auxiliary-on-call employees are members of the Yukon Employees' Union, and their terms and conditions of employment are covered under that collective agreement. Some of the terms and conditions of employment are similar to those

for regular employees, while others are different to better fit the unique role of auxiliary-on-call employees and what role they play in the public service.

So, although they're not entitled to paid sick leave, auxiliary-on-call employees do receive additional compensation in lieu of health and welfare benefits and leave entitlements.

The thing to also recognize is that our auxiliary-on-call employees sometimes are people who are seeking to become full-time employees, but some of them are not. Some of them actually choose that type of employment, because it fits better with their lifestyle and interests of work. There is a range of reasons they might have, and they are part of the collective agreement.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, for letting me jump in here. I would like to start by thanking the minister for his opening remarks, but I also wanted to thank the officials for the excellent briefing that I and a few colleagues received — I believe it was two weeks ago. We appreciate the information that was provided there.

At that time, there was a commitment by officials to return with a number of statistics and pieces of information that we had requested then, so I'm sure that will make its way to us in due course. I know it hasn't yet, but I had a number of questions about some of the statistics related to the implementation of the First Nation preferential hire, as well as some of the overall numbers for the territory's public service.

There are a few questions that I have that I would like to ask now of the minister. Over the course of the last number of years, the employee engagement survey has been an important tool for gauging the public service and their engagement with their employer. I believe the last one was in 2018. I would give the minister the opportunity to correct me if I'm wrong about that. When was the last employee engagement survey? When is the next one scheduled?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The last full survey was in 2018. The next one is contemplated for this fall.

Mr. Dixon: Just for clarification, my understanding was that it was to occur every two years. I'm wondering why an employee engagement survey didn't happen in 2020.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm advised that it was largely due to COVID. There were a couple things. I know, for example, when we put out our well-being survey, we did extra work around COVID. We noted that it would be a unique year and it's hard to see it in a pattern of years. It was both, I think, to do with the pressures of COVID itself on the commission as well as with wanting to make sure that the survey would not be an anomaly and that we wouldn't just sort of like point to it and say, well, we're not sure if that's because of COVID or that's because of the broader engagement of the public service. But what I do note is that when we did the survey of well-being, we actually focused on employees as well and their response during COVID as part of that well-being survey.

Mr. Dixon: Moving on to a separate issue, my understanding is that the employee assistance program has a new contractor. I would like to give the minister an opportunity to give us an overview of the transition from one provider to

the next and a little bit about what that transition is going to mean for employees.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: As the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned, supporting employee well-being is a crucial part of our work toward creating an engaging and inclusive workplace experience. The employee and family assistance program offers our employees and their families access to professional health and well-being services to help them respond to the mental and emotional stressors that life and work present.

There was a competitive bid process, and the contract for the program has been awarded to a new provider: LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell. The new contract commenced at the beginning of this month, May 1, 2021. The program will now include some new things: coaching and advisory services for all employees, in addition to the traditional service of psychological counselling.

I can get up and go into a little more detail if the member wishes. I am happy to talk further.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, in particular, my question was related to the procurement of that service. Can the minister tell us when that was tendered and when it was awarded and if the First Nation procurement policy applied to that tender?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I do not know whether the First Nation procurement policy was part of that tender or not. I am asking the department if they can track down that information for me. If I get that information while I am still up on my feet during this session, I will give it afterwards. I will work to get the dates for when the contract was awarded.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that commitment. I appreciate it.

Moving on, last year during the height of the pandemic, the former minister issued a directive regarding stay-at-home work, or having employees work from home. I am wondering if the current minister can tell us if that directive — I believe it was in May or perhaps a little bit earlier — was the only directive issued of that nature or if there have been subsequent directives to public servants regarding work from home, or if that is something that is left to individual deputy ministers to handle for their respective departments.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, we have only issued the one directive, and I think it came out earlier than May. I'm working to get a date. I think it was fairly early; it might have been in March or April. But whenever that directive came out, underneath that directive, we issued — if you like — refinements, or additional guidelines. So, we issued new guidelines in the fall of last year. My understanding is that today is the last day for that directive, and it lapses as of today.

Mr. Dixon: I hadn't realized that the directive lapsed today. So, does that mean that, as of tomorrow, I suppose, all government employees should be working from their places of work, their offices, their desks, or wherever it is, other than their homes?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Pardon me, Madam Chair — I'm standing to correct myself. It is the guidelines that end today, not the directive itself.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to be clear then, there is still a standing directive for all government employees to work from home — is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the answer is no. People are not required — so, I'll just read this out: "The shift to many employees working from home was one of the first and most significant actions taken by the public service to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 back in March of last year."

In December 2020, we issued guidance directing more employees to work from home as a short-term public health measure based on the recommendation of the Yukon's chief medical officer health. This guidance ends on May 31, 2021 — today.

When the guidance ends, the working arrangements during the COVID-19 directive remain in place. Similar to when it was first implemented last June, this directive supports ongoing work-from-home arrangements where it makes sense while also supporting the gradual return of employees to the workplace where required to meet operational needs.

As of two or three weeks ago, 10 percent of the government employee workforce was approved to work from home, either full or part time. It's not required. It is supported, and it's where it works in terms of both us, as the employer, the employee and their situation, and the responsibilities of that position, whether it is public-facing or not.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that explanation. While I was sitting down, I realized that the date of the original directive was March 18. I can save both me and the minister the time of looking that up. I did want to follow up on that, though.

Based on what the minister just said, my understanding is that currently 90 percent of Yukon government employees are working from their place of work and not from home. I just want to have that clarified by the minister.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: That is correct — 90 percent are working at their workplace.

Madam Chair, you have to understand that, with the 10 percent — I met with a branch the other day and I asked to talk to those employees who are working from home, and I just did a really quick straw survey of them. Some of them are working full time at home, some are working half time at home, and some are occasionally at home. So, that 10 percent includes employees who are also working at the office some of the time. I don't have an exact breakdown in hours, but those are the employees — the percentage of employees — who work part time or full time at home.

Mr. Dixon: Just to clarify again then, a directive was issued on March 18 that — a work-from-home directive was issued on March 18. Guidelines were issued later on in the fall. Those guidelines have ceased now. Does the minister anticipate another directive of any kind, either to direct people back to work or any new direction by way of a directive that they're contemplating?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, no we do not anticipate a change, issuing a request to employees to go back to work from home. Now, all of that is predicated on that we continue to move in the direction that we have been moving as a territory — that we continue to see improved health outcomes for the

Yukon. The Yukon is doing very well in our response to COVID-19 and so long as that goes in this positive direction that we have been going in, we don't anticipate new guidance or even a new directive. On the other hand, what we are working toward — and we have been working based on the experience that we have had over the past year — is a remote-work policy. I know that the commission has been working to develop that policy and — as I said in my opening remarks — it talks about how to support people — in particular, not just to work from home but how to support work taking place in our communities. It is one of those policy pieces that we will use and learn from.

There is a technical side to it — for example, how people can work remotely — and I think that our information technology branch with Highways and Public Works has worked to support workers to be able to stay linked up digitally. There was a lot of work at the beginning of the pandemic to support that, so now we have more of that support broadly. Also, the work toward creating redundancy in the fibre network will help to support that and the policies and work plans that are developed by the departments and supported by the Public Service Commission.

So, I don't anticipate us going back to directing our employees to work from home, but I do look at us working to support more remote work and that sort of work of the future.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the minister for that explanation. Briefly, the context of my question is that — I think that it is fairly well understood that the significant number of public servants who attend their work physically by going to their office or their place of work is a significant economic generator for the community. Oftentimes, public servants — particularly in Whitehorse in the downtown core — are shopping, buying lunch, having coffee, et cetera, and their absence during COVID was notable to many in the private sector. Many of those proprietors of hospitality businesses — restaurants, bars, coffee shops, et cetera — that remained open throughout COVID certainly noticed the absence of public servants.

Also, for those who didn't have the opportunity to work from home in the private sector, there was a certain amount of consternation about those working for the public service being able to work from home when they did not have that luxury.

The reason I ask is that we certainly appear to be on the trend of everyone going back to work. In the private sector, people have been back to work in their entirety for some time, and we often field questions about why government employees aren't back to work as well. That's the nature of my question, just so the minister can understand.

That's why I wanted to ask that — whether there was a directive in place to be at the office or going back to work. Perhaps the minister could just respond to that, given the context I provided. Does he anticipate that, going forward, we would see a significant number of Yukon government employees move to working from home, as a way of either saving the cost of having physical office spaces or keeping people removed from the downtown core or the centralized parts of communities around the Yukon?

If he is looking at that — and the minister talked about this being the future of work — I would just sort of caution him — not caution, but I would offer an alternative point of view that public servants are an important lifeblood for our communities and having them circulate around the community and attend places like the downtown core adds some important economic lifeblood to our communities. That's something that I think the minister should consider, going forward. I'll give him a chance to respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I really do appreciate the perspective, and I think it is one that we need to be considering at all times.

I will also note, though, that part of what affected our businesses — like our cafés, coffee shops, restaurants, or licensed establishments — was that people were not wanting to be — it was not just about where they worked; it was also about where people felt safe. I think it is important that we sort of parse out where those effects lay.

If we have people who are working in our communities — you know, effectively, they are working in the towns — even if they are working from their home, that is pretty close to the heart of the community, typically.

In that sense, I think it could be a positive for our communities. Anyway, I think it is a good point. I do not want to belabour it. I just think that we should put it in the context of the situation that we have here. It really has not been about how we save money. What drove it originally was how to keep Yukoners safe, and I know that there were conversations by the Business Advisory Council about how to make sure that public servants were still using their economic power to help support our local businesses, but, of course, under COVID, we saw that some businesses like restaurants were more heavily affected than some businesses like selling outdoor equipment — whether that be motorized or not. Those businesses did very, very well.

COVID has been unfair. I think that we worked — not the Public Service Commission, but now I am referring to us as a government — to encourage Yukoners to support local businesses. I think we do have to make sure that our downtown core here in Whitehorse remains vibrant as well. I think that it is an important piece to look at. I think there can be a balance — how to make sure there is enough support in the Whitehorse downtown while also supporting our communities and spreading that economic power around the territory for all of our businesses.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for sharing the time. I apologize for my quick departure and instantaneous return.

When I was asking about auxiliary-on-call employees and access to paid sick leave, the minister said that there was a percentage that was included in the hourly wage to make up for that. The reason why I was asking the question about auxiliary-on-call employees is that, when the Yukon government came out with the COVID sick pay, it was an ability for employers to access funding from the Yukon government to cover employees without paid sick days.

One of the reasons why I'm highlighting this — although the minister has given an answer of how Yukon government

deals with it — is that, for individuals who sometimes work in longer contracts without it actually being like a term position — so it's not a signed contract — they may work multiple days a week, and it may be on a regular schedule, but they don't have the same privileges as others, which is the ability to be sick. Whether they themselves are sick or whether their family member is sick, if they don't go to work, they don't get paid.

I know that at some point there will be another negotiation with the Yukon Employees' Union, which is also the union representative for these employees. I just want to highlight that — although it might be similar to vacation pay where, in the case of the average employee in the territory, I think it is four percent that is paid for that vacation pay — it doesn't actually address the concern of: if you don't work, you don't get paid.

I think that, if COVID has shown us anything in the last year, it's that if people have a flu or a sickness, we actually don't want them to share that with others. That is, I realize, a statement without a question, but there are reasons why I was asking that. I just wanted to put that on the floor, and I do look forward to having further conversations about that, knowing that the minister feels a lot the same way I do, which is that people get sick and we don't want them at work, and how we make that happen is different. He can always add comments to that.

One of my last questions actually has to do with respectful workplaces. I just want to know how many individuals have logged complaints with this branch? It's hard to say because I can't say for 2021-22 because we're just at the beginning, but if we just look back at — let's say in the last year — how many complaints were lodged with the respectful workplaces?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, to speak just briefly to the auxiliary-on-call question, I completely understand that COVID has presented an unexpected and different perspective on the reality that we all face.

My understanding is that the next collective agreement will be negotiated in the coming year or so. This may well be a topic — and we are happy to entertain it as a topic — of discussion and negotiation. I think we always have done our best to support our employees broadly. I think that, in order to understand, you would have to get right down into the individual departments and how they were working in support of all of their employees, including auxiliaries on call.

With respect to the respectful workplace policy, the note that I have here with colleagues — I don't have the numbers of how many times it was used over the past year for dispute resolution or other concerns that were raised, so I would have to ask the department to dig out a number for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I appreciate that and, to be honest, I probably don't need an exact number. It was mostly the curiosity of how that department and how that branch is being used. I think that it is really important — we all know that, as humans, sometimes conflict arises, and my understanding is that the Respectful Workplace Office is a place that you can take that when you reach kind of the end.

Another question that I have about the same branch is: Is there a breakdown of the types of complaints that are being

made? The reason I'm asking about a breakdown is, if complaints are highlighting systemic problems, either within policies of the Yukon government or different practices, is there the ability of the Respectful Workplace Office to make recommendations to change things — operationally or on a broader scale?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The respectful workplace policy came into effect in 2013, and I know that there was an evaluation that concluded in December 2018 that took a look at the Respectful Workplace Office processes and whether they were effective at addressing workplace conflict and disrespectful conduct while also identifying areas for improvement.

So, the Respectful Workplace Office steering committee accepted these recommendations in the evaluation report and continues to oversee the implementation of restorative processes to address workplace conflict and disrespectful conduct. They developed a three-year work plan that started last year and is running for two more years to follow up on the recommendations.

At the highest level, I see that, yes, there was a feedback mechanism to talk about how to improve. I don't know the answer on a more immediate level, whether someone identifies something. I am sure, informally, that exists, but what I don't know is whether or not there is a process to provide that feedback mechanism.

I will ask the commission to let me know what processes are in place around when something is identified and how it is relayed back to the various departments, or the units or branches, to see if there's something — clearly, sometimes the conflict may not indicate anything that was systemic, but sometimes it might indicate something that is more systemic, in which case I will ask what mechanisms we have in place in order to provide that feedback and look for that continuous improvement cycle.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried

Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the
amount of \$55,618,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures***

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$43,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$55,661,000 agreed to

Public Service Commission agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a five-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Tourism and Culture

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just like to begin by welcoming our officials today. Deputy Minister Val Royle is here with me today, and I would like to especially welcome Kate Olynyk, who is here as our acting director of Finance — first time here. Welcome.

I will just start by sharing some words that were prepared by the department and then we can get into general debate.

Madam Deputy Chair, it is my pleasure to introduce the Department of Tourism and Culture's main estimates for 2021-22 fiscal year.

This department continues to play a key role in advancing the commitments to Yukoners made by our government to support our enduring priorities. At the Premier's direction, this portfolio is tasked with: overseeing the implementation of the seven priority action plans for the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*; developing a strategy that supports Yukon's creative and cultural industries and enhances their role in our economic future; providing leadership to the work of the Yukon Forum in developing a clear process for managing the territory's cultural heritage, including archaeological, palaeontological, and cultural artifacts, and the planning of a heritage resource centre for the conservation and protection of those same artifacts.

I am proud to report that — through the hard work of my predecessor, the Hon. Minister McLean, and department officials — all of these items are either completed or significantly underway.

The department continues to implement the priority actions from the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, and the creative and cultural industry strategy will begin implementation this fiscal year.

We are making progress in our work with the heritage working group in partnership with the Council of Yukon First

Nations, and functional planning for a heritage and arts collections facility is underway.

The Department of Tourism and Culture also continues to play a key role in providing COVID-19 support and relief for the hard-hit tourism and cultural sectors.

Throughout 2020 and in the early days of 2021, Yukon, along with the rest of the world, experienced changes and challenges on a scale we have never encountered before. Those challenges persist today, and while we are all making the best of the situation, I cannot deny that it has been hard and it has taken a toll on everyone.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our economy, our social well-being, and our communities. The Yukon tourism sector has been truly decimated, and the creative and cultural sectors have also been very deeply impacted.

Travel restrictions and gathering limitations have significantly changed the realities of these two areas of our economy and society. The people who work in both tourism and culture are our neighbours and our friends. They are part of our communities and have chosen to make their life here in Yukon and contribute to a thriving, healthy, and diverse society. It is truly heartbreaking to see such amazing businesses, events, individuals, and organizations struggle and lose so much.

The government is committed to doing whatever it can to help these sectors get through this extremely challenging time. I am very proud of the Department of Tourism and Culture for their responsiveness and swift action in reacting to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic — adapting plans, programs, and funding to support our tourism and cultural sectors.

Across government, the requirement to do things differently and be more flexible became our new reality. Although it was a challenging time of uncertainty and constantly changing circumstances, we also celebrated many successes — a great number of which we were in partnership with other governments, departments, organizations, and stakeholders, and I would like to share some of these with you today.

First of all, in our area of culture. To support the cultural sector and other organizations, the government immediately allocated \$1.8 million for temporary support for events funding. Tourism and Culture took over administration of this fund from Economic Development at end of the summer last year. I am pleased to share that the entire amount was expended in support of accommodation and service providers who lost money due to cancelled events.

It was also announced last spring that the department would honour all existing funding agreements for organizations and projects. This applied to museums and cultural centres, as well as arts facilities, individual artists, and non-profit organizations.

Beginning in spring 2020, the Department of Tourism and Culture's funding streams were also enhanced with additional funds, expanded eligibility, and extra intake dates to help offset the effects of COVID-19 across the arts sector. To date, the Government of Yukon has provided \$425,000 in additional arts

funding to help mitigate the situation for this important sector. This includes \$150,000 that was made available through the On Yukon Time program. This program was adapted for 2020-21 to fund art projects which interpreted or responded to the pandemic and its impact on Yukoners. The funding was split between the April and October intakes.

Awards of up to \$2,500 were available for individuals and up to \$5,000 for businesses, not-for-profits, or collectives.

We also doubled the Advanced Artist Award from \$75,000 to \$150,000 in both April and October.

The arts fund was increased to \$625,000, with an additional April intake for \$125,000, and applicants could apply for 100 percent of project costs. We doubled funding to \$60,000 for the annual call for submissions to the Yukon permanent art collection to purchase artwork on behalf of all Yukon.

Tourism and Culture, along with Economic Development, also contributed funding for the “Not Close, but Personal” remote concert series, which featured 23 talented Yukon musicians from April to June 2020. Not only did this provide income for those performing, it provided an amazing experience that brought us together in a time of isolation.

I also want to highlight *Creative Potential, Advancing Yukon’s Creative and Cultural Industries*, Yukon’s first-ever strategy to support and grow these important industries — not only for the positive contribution to the economy but for the integral role in shaping and expressing Yukon’s unique identity.

The department has also been engaging with the sectors since 2019 to develop the plan, and its relevance takes on another level of importance during COVID-19 and post-pandemic recovery planning. We included this strategy in our election platform, and we have included funding in this budget to get implementation underway in this fiscal year.

A key element of this strategy will be some strategic objectives to help the sector rebuild and recover from the pandemic and ultimately reach new heights. I’m excited by the possibilities that the implementation of the strategy will provide for the sector. My colleagues and I will be reviewing the final strategy soon, and I look forward to the public release in the near future.

I would also like to highlight efforts to support the tourism sector. The department fast-tracked the establishment of the Yukon tourism advisory board, which has been invaluable in advising both me and my predecessor, Minister McLean, throughout the pandemic response. Our front-line staff at the visitor information centres and the Beringia Interpretive Centre were reassigned to support the COVID-19 border control initiative, bringing their skills and knowledge to help inform and greet those from outside the territory as they transited through.

We have also developed advertising campaigns to encourage Yukon staycations and the safe exploration of our own territory, as well as to attract visitors from the BC, NWT, and Nunavut bubble last summer. We increased the tourism cooperative marketing fund — the TCMF — by a million dollars and expanded the scope of eligible businesses, projects,

and activities to help support Yukon tourism-related businesses promote themselves locally, nationally, and globally.

I’m very pleased to share that the enhanced TCMF was very well-received. To date, we have approved approximately \$1.6 million in funding for 200 applicants and we are pleased to be able to maintain the program at an enhanced level again in 2021-22.

The department was also a partner in funding the Elevate program, which provides mentoring and advice to help businesses respond to COVID and prepare for recovery. Administered by the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, this popular program has had significant uptake from the sector and we will be contributing funding again in 2021-22.

In collaboration with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board and other tourism stakeholders, we developed the tourism relief and recovery plan. This important guiding document comprises 19 actions over the next three years for a \$15-million investment for relief and recovery for the tourism sector. The plan grew from the values and pillars of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, and it’s flexible and responsive to ensure that supports for relief and recovery are meeting the needs of the sector.

Under the *Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan*, in working with our colleagues in Economic Development, we launched two important relief programs as supplements to the existing Yukon business relief. First was the tourism accommodation sector supplement, or TASS, and the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, TNASS. As well, the culture and tourism non-profit organizations sector supplement was established to provide funding relief to non-profit organizations in the tourism and culture sectors, such as museums and arts organizations. This fund was administered by our partners at the Yukon Historical and Museums Association. These relief funds are meant to help the visitor economy remain solvent and to sustain businesses and organizations through the pandemic. This government is committed to supporting the tourism sector for the duration of the pandemic. We recently announced the extension of the TASS and TNASS to September 30, 2021.

When it’s the right time once again to welcome visitors, our goal is to return the territory to 2019 levels of tourism employment and revenue in Yukon within three years, but the reopening of tourist visitation cannot come at the cost of the health and safety of Yukoners and our communities. That is why we are working with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon to support the sector in adopting standardized protocols for the protection of visitors and residents. We continue to follow the guidance and the advice of the chief medical officer of health and the government’s reopening plan as we begin easing restrictions. At the same time, we look forward with great hope and optimism to the further easing of restrictions that can be made possible by the amazing job that Yukoners have done in embracing vaccination. Yukoners’ hard work and our willingness to pull together in the interest of our entire Yukon community will allow us to enjoy a great Yukon summer.

I would now like to provide some details from the 2021-22 budget as we continue to prepare for the road to recovery. For

the main estimates, the Department of Tourism and Culture has identified an estimated budget of \$39.2 million. This is a 25-percent increase over last fiscal year's main estimates. This budget will enable the Department of Tourism and Culture to continue its important work of: overseeing funding resources and supports for the arts, museums, and First Nation cultural centres; the provision of visitor information services across the territory; support for tourism development and the marketing of the territory as a year-round travel destination; archaeology and palaeontology sites and collections, as well as the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre; geographical place names; the management, development, and interpretation of Yukon's heritage and historic sites; and Yukon government's archival programs.

I will begin by first providing an overview of the subsequent details of our operation and maintenance budget, followed by capital.

The operation and maintenance budget estimate for this fiscal year is \$36.1 million, which is the majority of our budget. This is an increase of \$7.4 million from the previous year's estimate, largely due to COVID-19 response and support. This includes almost \$11.73 million in personnel expenditures for the almost 110 full-time equivalent positions, which is an increase of one full-time position in the department.

The programs and services delivered by the knowledgeable, dedicated, and passionate staff of the department contribute to Yukon's economy and also aid in maximizing the social and cultural benefits to Yukoners and visitors. Key changes in O&M this year include \$6,475,000 for COVID-19 response. This is new from the 2020-21 estimates and will go toward implementing the actions in the tourism relief and recovery plan to provide the ongoing COVID relief for tourism businesses, as well as to position Yukon's tourism industry to rebound in the time frame.

As I stated earlier, this plan was developed to be flexible and allows focus to shift back and forth from relief to recovery as circumstances require. In this fiscal year, funds will be allocated toward initiatives such as the creation of a one-window service into Yukon government for tourism businesses, operationalized right now through the funding navigator positions with TIAY to address immediate and priority needs of industry; support for industry adoption of standardized safe travel protocols for the protection of visitors and residents; continuation of the Elevate tourism program; continuation of the COVID-19 adaptive tourism cooperative marketing fund program; enhanced marketing of Yukon as a destination in key markets; and investment in a place brand for Yukon as a whole, known as the "Yukon Story". I think that both opposition parties have also been briefed on that concept.

Madam Deputy Chair, next I would like to mention a \$240,000 net increase to advance three of the department's initiatives in the *Our Clean Future* plan. The Historic Sites unit in the department's Cultural Services branch will undertake several initiatives that support climate change mitigation adaptation: \$50,000 will go toward evaluating potential options for the generation and use of renewable electricity at remote historic sites co-managed by the Government of Yukon and

Yukon First Nations by 2022; \$25,000 is allocated this year to work collaboratively with First Nations and the Inuvialuit to begin to document information from historic sites and culturally important places at risk due to climate change; and \$90,000 is allocated to complete the framework for measuring sustainable tourism and a system to track greenhouse gas emissions from tourism.

This work is being carried out by the industry services unit in the Tourism branch and fulfills one of the goals in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. Work on this initiative is supported by the creation of a new position in the department.

Again, the next key change is the \$300,000 net increase for the implementation for the first year of the new creative and cultural industry strategy. As I mentioned earlier, this will enable first-phase implementation to begin work on actions aimed to support post-pandemic recovery while also contributing to Yukon's broader economic recovery and well-being.

The final strategy document is still under review, and I will be able to share more details in the near future.

Again, a \$137,000 net increase for advancing the work plan and priorities for the heritage working group is included in the 2021-22 main estimates, and the heritage working group was formally established as part of the Yukon Forum process. Its membership comprises representatives from self-governing First Nations who collaborate and work together on shared priorities in this area. In partnership with Council of Yukon First Nations, this funding will be used for a dedicated position to manage work plan implementation.

Again, our capital budget estimates are \$3.1 million for 2021-22. This is an increase of \$451,000 over the previous year's estimates. Among this year's key projects are a number of initiatives to take place at Yukon Archives to help improve Yukon Archives' work of acquiring and preserving Yukon documentary heritage, including Yukon government's records. The projects planned are the installation of new shelving to expand capacity and storage for oversized archival and published materials, which represents an increase to \$700,000, and the completion of the replacement elevator project, which has a budget of \$200,000 this year, representing a net decrease of \$100,000 from the previous year.

Again, we will invest \$500,000 for the regularly scheduled rebuild of the Travel Yukon website. This represents an increase of \$200,000 from last year. The updated site will be especially important for attracting and providing relevant information for post-COVID-19 travel as well, as visitors plan future trips and continue to dream about a vacation to this beautiful territory.

Next, we have \$145,000 for the tourism visitor survey, and the survey is undertaken periodically and will provide updated statistics on Yukon's tourism and visitors, which is invaluable for marketing purposes, understanding, of course, that consumer behaviours and desires are critical as we prepare the tourism industry to rebound and rebuild.

However, given the highly unusual tourism seasons last year and this year, this initiative will look different than in the

past, and I will be able to share some more details about that soon.

At the Yukon Beringia Interpretative Centre, \$90,000 is earmarked for ongoing exhibit renewal work, as well as \$38,000 for the new theatre equipment. As members of the House may recall, the department launched a new Beringia movie produced by local filmmakers this past year. Improved equipment will complement the screening of this wonderful educational program for all centre visitors.

So, this concludes my overview of the Department of Tourism and Culture's 2021-22 budget estimates. I look forward to addressing questions and providing additional detail during the upcoming debate. In closing, I want to state that I, like many of you, are looking forward to a return of what we took for granted as normal everyday life and the freedom to travel. The final stretch of the pandemic, in many ways, may be the most difficult. We have been living through this for more than a year, and the economic, mental, and emotional realities have taken their toll, but I remain hopeful and positive, and I want to stress the importance of continued discipline and patience as we need to continue following guidance and restrictions.

The vaccination of Yukon's population is certainly a major milestone. It provides hope that we are getting closer to the end of COVID-19, but we are not quite there yet. We are still in a pandemic — living, working, and adapting to this instability, which will continue for a bit longer. The work of the department is integral in this, and I want to thank the department staff for their continued efforts, empathy, and dedication during this time. Thank you for the exceptional timing for my first speech from Tourism and Culture.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister for his opening remarks and welcome the staff here as well.

I have just a couple of quick questions on the seasonal tourism staff. Can the minister please confirm whether all seasonal tourism staff were hired back for this 2020-21 season?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, staff were recalled on May 1.

Ms. Van Bibber: During the briefing, it was mentioned that some of the staff were going to be tasked with other duties, aside from their regular roles at the visitor reception centres. Can the minister elaborate on what other duties this would include during this summer?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll touch on three key areas where individuals are either doing training or taking on other duties. First, we do have staff who are going through some bilingual training in French. Some of our VIC staff are dealing with emergency communications, and some of the VIC staff will be helping out some of the private sector operators who are building packages that will be part of the Great Yukon Summer.

There are a number of different — using their expertise to help us out in a number of different areas.

Ms. Van Bibber: The government has been working through the years with the Friends of the Yukon Permanent Art Collection to find a home for that collection. Could the minister give us an update on the progress of that find?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, just to touch on — the Government of Yukon is committed to representing plurality of

the visual art practice in Yukon and to maintain, conserve, exhibit, and interpret the Yukon permanent art collection for the enjoyment of Yukon people. Early on, we touched on — in the preamble to our budget or some of the opening comments — we have just gone through another increase and the importance of acquiring more of that local art.

In 2021, we'll be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Yukon permanent art collection. The Yukon permanent art collection is held in trust by the Yukon government for the people of Yukon. It's an important and growing collection of over 475 works of art that reflect the Yukon's artistic identity.

The Government of Yukon is committed to caring for this valuable collection and ensuring that, at any given time, one-third of the collection is on display in over 30 locations in public and government buildings around the territory. The collection was established in 1981 and represents a survey of art-making in Yukon. The works of art span many artistic media and styles, including a range of beading and carving styles particular to Yukon First Nations.

Each year, the Yukon government provides the Friends of the Yukon Permanent Art Collection with an annual purchasing budget for new acquisitions. Artwork is selected through a call for submissions and an arm's-length jury process.

The annual budget for new acquisitions is \$30,000, but we've just touched on the fact that we doubled that, taking into consideration the impact that the arts community has had because of COVID. In response to the 2021 call for submissions, proposals for 147 works by 68 artists were received. Selections will be announced quite soon.

Particular to the storage need, the department is working on maximizing the existing storage space at the Yukon Arts Centre by modifying it to accommodate a compact 2D artwork storage system with increased capacity. In the meantime, a portion of the 2D artwork from the collection is stored at the Yukon Archives, which has affected access to the collection and impacted the collection rotation program.

The storage requirements for YPAC must meet or exceed the Canadian Conservation Institute's class A guidelines for climate control, inventory, and security. Work to install the compact 2D storage system had been delayed in 2018 due to some water pressure issues. The Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse have been working to resolve this issue; however, further evaluation is still required. If construction again moves this year, it's expected to accommodate a further two years of collection. A long-term storage solution for the collection — we're still looking to address.

The Arts Heritage Centre is in the five-year capital budget. It's a \$25-million project. We have been in discussions. In my previous role, I sat with Minister McLean to look for a potential partnership with First Nation governments to see if there were some synergies that could be applied. We're still endeavouring to have those discussions and look for a spot. It would be fair to say — and to be respectful to the department as a whole — it's not only for the permanent collection that we're coming up with a solution for this, but really there have been challenges for a long time around the collections. I know that the

individuals who work in the department are absolutely so passionate about what they do. We do have world-class collections — not just our permanent art collection, but from anybody who has watched what has happened over the last number of years, really, concerning the ice patches — every year, we're continuing to find some really exceptional items.

Again, part of my goal is going to be to work with the deputy minister and the department to identify the proper infrastructure. That was the good work that was started by Minister McLean. She was extremely passionate at the Management Board table and the Cabinet table around this item and has fiercely looked to get support and has started that process, which I appreciate and want to thank her for.

Again, we will be looking to get this building in place; it is much needed. We have to be respectful of this amazing collection that we have.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister provide an update on the conversation that the department has had with Holland America around the potential plans of the cruise ship traffic resuming, should the Canada-US borders open?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There have been weekly discussions with the department, and that is going to be ongoing. I can report back to the Assembly. I was having discussions as recently as today, this morning, with individuals in the private sector who are extremely impacted by what has happened. We have closely watched the different approaches, whether it be the approach, of course, by the State of Alaska — we have watched, listened, and contributed where we can at the national tourism tables. We had a call last week with the tourism ministers, as well as the federal minister. The Yukon senator, Senator Duncan, has been doing great work in ensuring that, in bilateral discussions — whether it be at the Senate or even in Senate committee meetings — there is an understanding of the uniqueness that we are experiencing now with our high vaccination rates and the impacts that have occurred and, of course, understanding that there has been some work done at the state level in Alaska. I think that folks who have followed this would know that there is normally a need for a cruise ship to stop in a Canadian port, and now there has been this move that has been made to forego that and still have those ships — I guess I could use the word “legally” — enter ports in Alaska.

We're watching that and voicing, where we can, the importance of understanding that the Yukon is in a very unique situation. As well, I think the MP is continuing to do that good work, and we're usually on Friday calls with TIAY.

A series of organizations — the Wilderness Tourism Association and the Outfitters Association — have also been doing extensive work ensuring communication. I know that the Premier, where appropriate, has been working hard on behalf of the Yukon to ensure that folks are safe but also speaking at larger national tables about the reality that we're in right now.

Everybody is appropriately working on this, and with the cruise ships, we're waiting to see. We know that they're taking bookings for later in the summer. Folks today whom I spoke with in the industry said that, if those decisions were made at the federal level and those borders opened, then I think that at least some of our operators are looking to be involved in

delivering the service, but there is a lot that we have to wait to see rolled out.

Again, I give that much detail because I think it's appropriate, and I want the member opposite to know that everybody is truly working very hard to ensure that, when the moment is right — and we see those borders open — folks will be ready to go.

Part of that is the important work that has been done with TIAY and in making sure we have those standards in place and ensuring that our smaller communities are comfortable and ready, because, as folks know, small communities like Carcross, in a normal year, have about 100,000 individuals coming through their downtown core. So, even if it's a small number this year, it was so important to make sure that we're having a constant dialogue and we're speaking with those municipality and First Nation leaders in our communities.

A couple of other pieces that are important — we have been informed that Holland America will not open the Westmark in Dawson this year, so that's an important signal. Again, we're waiting this month to see what happens at the federal level concerning the US border opening or a potential extension.

Ms. Van Bibber: On to the Great Yukon Summer, the idea to have packaged tourism experiences and rebates — how and when did the government notify businesses? Was it through consultation or surveys? How did businesses become aware of how to hook into the Great Yukon Summer?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is important to know that there has been an ongoing dialogue, and that dialogue started really in March and April of last year. It has been continuous. At an organizational level, we have continued to have conversations with TIAY and our chambers, with our advisory groups — whether it be the Business Advisory Council, which we worked with a large portion of last year and then went back on occasion to have discussions with leaders in that area, mostly who were focused on the tourism side of things. We also were looking to ensure that we understood what the needs are. In each particular case, what we heard going into last year — some of the key points and, I guess, some of the pillars of this were how cash-starved our tourism operators were and how absolutely impacted they were.

We knew, going into this particular summer, how important it was for them to begin to staff up and to get cash flow because, as we know, if we see the federal government make a significant decision with the United States, we want individuals to have as much potential lead time to hire folks and to get ready. But also, it was important for the Yukon government going into Q1 of 2021 — we were watching to see what was happening. The conversation about the variants was flowing, and we were trying to understand when the right time was to do two things: to see what was going to happen in this market — in the Yukon market — and the department appropriately was monitoring other provinces and territories to see how they were spending their external marketing budget. Today we have seen some folks jump out, and that has cost them because they don't have the flexibility, and they spent a lot of dollars in the national market, and even the international

market, marketing their home province or territory, and now they are in a position where it is in lockdown. So, it is really trying to get that right.

The consultations that were done on the Great Yukon Summer were with TIAY, YTAB, the Wilderness Tourism Association, the Yukon Convention Bureau, as well as Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, and the Yukon Heritage and Museums Association as well.

As well, we had a workshop this morning with folks. There were over 50 people in attendance at the workshop. We have packages — 10 more were added on Friday morning, I think.

It is also important to say that the packages — we have operators who are already producing packages as well. The operators who are sort of used to that — and we are trying to encourage, enhance, and support others to do that work as well.

When you look at other sectors — the airline sector — because we had restrictions last year, we probably had less than between 40 and 50 percent of our normal clients coming into the Yukon for the outfitting industry. Because of that reduction, some of the folks who make a lot of their money in the summer flying for tourism outfitting didn't have that opportunity. Part of this is key in that sector. Those individuals, when they are flying people in — say they are going on a multi-day paddling trip — we are supporting them as well. We know that some folks have booked and they have already spoken to these particular companies, and they are going to be able to receive a rebate.

We also know that people are really excited about this opportunity, and they are now seeing more business activity. Folks are being very innovative in their ideas. Again, there is a very extensive list of folks whom we spoke with before the announcement — private sector folks who have already built packages and are moving quickly to add packages. At the workshop this morning, 50 people attended — going back to some of those first questions asking about our human resources, trying to ensure that the human resources of the department are best used at this particular time to enhance this offering that is coming up for the Great Yukon Summer.

Ms. Van Bibber: The minister just said that there were 10 more packages brought forward today. Could he also tell us how many packages have signed up to the program to date? Is there a specific number of packages needed to begin the program, or are you just going to go with what you get for the deadline? Is there a deadline?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to clarify. My comment was that there were 10 more added on Friday, not today. There were over 50 packages that were already available on travelyukon.com before this. We launch on June 4. As we move toward the end of the week, we're going to be taking packages in.

Some of our senior leaders in the department — their mindset was that companies or operators who are quite accustomed to building packages — we let companies put up to seven packages on the site. Some of the early indication is that we could have somewhere around 250 to 300 packages; we'll see. I think that some of those will be unique. I had individuals reaching out to me today, and they have some pretty

neat ideas of things that they can do — not your normal offering. I won't get ahead of their announcements — but just checking and testing out to see what we thought.

Again, I think we're going to see significant opportunities and packages. We'll continue to add them. June 4 is when we're saying we're going live, but if folks, throughout the months of June or July, learn from what they're seeing of other clients or if they can fill a need and they can add a package — we want as many opportunities for the private sector and as many packages of great experiences as possible.

What we're trying to ensure is — the number one key here is that we are trying to ensure that we fast-track a recovery for our tourism operators. They have been dramatically impacted. I call on anybody who is listening in today: Please — if you are in a position financially where you can afford to purchase a package, please do that. If you have family members in the Yukon who you can educate, or friends, please do that.

For all Members of the Legislative Assembly, this is not a partisan issue. This is about — we have all, in this House, stood up. Everybody has understood the impact to this particular sector, and that's something that I might even be calling upon my colleagues and both opposition parties to help me share and educate. I'll be reaching out after the session to see if you're comfortable in a role of just ensuring that this program moves forward this summer and we get as much funds — again, as people go out and they enjoy a much-deserved experience, they're also going to become extraordinary ambassadors of these products and they're going to be able to — as we move forward, that's going to help us with our rebound. They're going to be selling this to their friends, families, and others from across the country and abroad.

Ms. Van Bibber: I believe you answered the next question for me by saying that eligible businesses can submit packages throughout the summer.

I do know that for part of this Great Yukon Summer, consumers with receipts can get a 25-percent rebate. Does the company that offers packages get any rebate? What does the government anticipate the cost of the rebates will be?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The benefit that goes to the business — we don't have a rebate, but what we are offering is marketing supports. We put a \$2,000 price tag per company. We think that there are a couple good benefits from that exercise. For one, some of our local companies — whether they are the marketing or art department in a newspaper or they are a small advertising group, boutique firms — we probably have a half dozen to a dozen organizations. They have also been impacted over the last year.

We're bringing Yukon businesses — that's where we're focused on — these Yukon businesses that are going to be on a preferred vendor list. Then we're looking for anybody who is putting packages on — to provide them with up to \$2,000 to offset their cost of their campaign. So, you know, multiple objectives that we're going to be executing on with that particular — we think that's a great benefit. What we hope is that, through that relationship this summer, there is the potential for that firm or that group or that company to continue to work

with the operator as they move forward. We think that there are some really neat synergies that can be built there.

We're looking at a projected cost of \$1.25 million; that is what we're looking at. Based on our methodology that we've used in-house — which is really about taking a look at the demographic, understanding the price point that we're looking at — but what we've also done is — because the packages that meet the criteria for the rebate are on the Yukon tourism site, part of what it gives us an opportunity to do is that we can then define which companies are providing which packages, which then gives us a more efficient way to identify who to speak with around what the uptake has been on the packages.

My hope is that we go through — I'll be working with Val and Kate — and we'll be understanding, as we get into mid-summer, going back to see what the uptake has been so we can see if we have to revise what our estimates have been. We can see if we have identified an appropriate number in our line item for this.

We think that we are going to have to potentially adapt if we see that but, right now, we're going to monitor — which we have done from the start — our economy to see. Again, the benefit is \$2,000 for design of ads or campaigns, and there is also up to \$15,000 that's available under our TCMF to place ads — so a very significant amount of money. We now provide that here in the Yukon. There has been a lot of work done in the department lately to look at our own market.

The department has budgeted \$200,000 to promote the Great Yukon Summer overall. That's our largest in our destination campaigns that we have done. We think that there are a lot of good pieces. We're going to try to ensure that we're as supportive as possible to folks who are doing this. Inevitably — and it's probably a question that's coming — now that we have this campaign moving out the door — now, the department and the experts in the department are coming, and we're having discussions about when to activate our bigger campaign. We're starting to see some blue sky across the country and internationally. There's a lot going on. We're going to be focused on this, and our hope is that we will dovetail this appropriately, we get this activity, and then mid to late summer, we'll see a larger number of clients — and of course we'll be getting our marketing out with Cossette and Aasman to get that activated.

Ms. Van Bibber: That was my last question, so I will thank the officials again and turn it over to my colleague from the Third Party.

Ms. Blake: Tourism industry leaders at the TIAY noon Zoom meeting on Friday expressed the need for outhouses at rural tourist attractions like Mendenhall. When will the government commit to providing and maintaining this crucial infrastructure for our tourist sites and rest stops on our highways year-round?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the Member for Porter Creek North. I like to speak about tourism and, of course, having questions from somebody with such an extensive background in the tourism sector, so I appreciate the questions.

Yes, it did come up — absolutely. I think the sad truth is that something that seems to be such an easy undertaking — to

put a piece of infrastructure in — has somehow, over many years, become an extremely complex endeavour. What I mean by that is that it seems that there are multiple departments that all have a hand in identifying, ensuring, permitting, and putting an outhouse in place. I can happily say that this morning I met with multiple colleagues on this important topic, and they have committed to work with me and I have committed to work with them. I think it would be really efficient if we could ensure that one department could identify, budget, and make the calls on this. We've had a lot of things happen, specifically in the Southern Lakes, on this topic. When individuals come from Skagway from time to time, they also move through British Columbia and then back into the Yukon, and they sometimes make a stop in British Columbia before they get back into the Yukon, even though that's the traditional territory of Carcross/Tagish First Nation. If there is not the infrastructure in place, they become creative in finding other means to look after things, and when that happens, of course, it's not the appropriate way to deal with things. We've heard that from Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

That is something that I'll be working on this summer. I have to say that I have seen amazing carpenters like Bret Heebink and others who have gone out and done some exceptional stuff. Maybe we can get creative and we can install something that has an artistic flair and solves this very important problem.

The four departments, yes — we normally have to have Environment, Highways and Public Works, Tourism and Culture, and Community Services that are all coming together to figure this out. It is an issue at the deputy ministers of tourism committee. I could say or not say — we think that Highways and Public Works will be a fantastic group to lead this, and we will be conferring with them later this summer.

Ms. Blake: At the TIAY noon meeting, it was also noted that the Great Yukon Summer plan will not succeed in supporting all Yukon businesses that rely on tourism.

What will the government do to support those businesses that are overlooked or not eligible under the Great Yukon Summer plan?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I was on that call, and I know that there was a policy person from the Third Party who was on that call. I don't remember that exact theme, but I would say — I want to be respectful to the question. I think that when you are building public policy, you always try to meet your objective and ensure that it positively impacts as many people as possible. That is not always the case.

When I think about this sector, what we have tried to do is have a multi-pronged approach, using a series of tools. So, you're right — when we think about this sector, we think about accommodation, but we also have to think about the hospitality sector as well as some of the other operators. I think that you are absolutely correct. This is one of a multitude of undertakings.

Again, we identified \$15 million last year. The majority of that was in last year's budget and this year's budget — there is about \$2.5 million in next year's budget. Really, those are things — I want to be quick so that we can get to the next

question. Again, providing tourism sector leadership, rebuilding confidence and our capability within the sector — recovery for the tourism industry operators — so many things, 19 key initiatives. We saw last week that we had that ability to open up seating in our bars and restaurants, so we think that this is positive. They are going to be at full capacity.

I don't want to underscore the impact that this industry has had, but I have to say that, as a person who has spent lots of time understanding that model — working and in ownership situations — I have to say that I am very pleased to see — and I think that folks can see for themselves that a lot of the hospitality, at least in Whitehorse — now that the session is concluding, I will have more time in a series of communities, seeing what's playing out as well.

I am sure that there is more impact there, but we are seeing good support by Yukoners for our restaurants. You're going by, and you're seeing lineups. We have a new restaurant that just opened. It was six weeks to get a reservation in a restaurant in Whitehorse. That's, yes, maybe limited seating compared to others, but that's something you would hear in Vancouver, New York, or Toronto or something like that.

We have seen multiple restaurants open in 2021, and that says something. They're opening and they're doing well, so I think that part of the sector is in good shape or moving toward good shape — not to say that there aren't some that are still impacted.

But whether it's continuing to work with those folks who may not be touched by this, on the Elevate process — we have seen companies do some pretty extraordinary things on their way to adapt to what has happened.

We didn't get to touch on it, but we're very excited about the events. So, as the member opposite stated, some of those folks should be caught up in a positive way by the events. We had 42 events that were already being undertaken this year and supported financially. We have gone back with \$250,000 to say, "Would you like to expand?"

Today, people are reaching out, ready to do events. Those could be cultural events. Please, in your own ridings and communities, whether it be in Old Crow or other spots, let the individuals in those ridings — if there are businesses or organizations that want to host things, let us know. We have up to \$15,000 per organization that we can do.

When you have events downtown or you have events in a community, all of that has those ancillary benefits that go to some of those other organizations.

I share that with you because I want Yukoners to know that we are taking a very comprehensive view of this sector, and we are trying to do our very best to understand the plight of those folks and the challenges but also the pathways that will provide them with a full recovery and, in the future, an expansion of their business model.

Ms. Blake: With schools being finished in two weeks and families trying to find further summer holidays, I just have a question regarding the packages that you mentioned earlier. When will the information — and if it is posted on the website, I apologize — be provided on the website for families?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On June 4 — the information is very substantial for Yukoners to make an informed decision on a multitude of opportunities that they can undertake on their own or with friends or with their families as they start to do their planning.

Again, we know that there has been some flexibility applied to our restrictions to Yukoners, but please — whatever your decision is for the summer, I plead with you: At some point this summer, make sure — if you are in a financial position to do it — that you spend some money with our operators. They are in dire need of that cashflow. They enhance our quality of life here so much. Those are folks who go to the local grocery store, who volunteer their time or contribute financially to our sports programs and our entire ecosystem here, which becomes a very healthy positive community. Please take that opportunity. I appreciate the member opposite touching on the fact that people are just concluding their school year and parents are making their decisions on spending. This is a great place to spend some of those funds on summer activity.

Ms. Blake: As other provinces and territories begin accepting international tourists who have one vaccine dose, will our government consider doing the same thing? Also, how are we going to verify their vaccination status?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Of course, I cannot speak about some of these potential situations at this point. What I can share is that the Yukon was out of the gates ahead of other jurisdictions last week. I am happy to report — from what I have been informed of by my Cabinet colleagues and the technical briefings — that it went quite smoothly. For anybody this weekend who had an opportunity — there are two destinations that sort of compete when you think about the per capita percentage of our economy that goes to tourism, and the other one that was right on our heels was Prince Edward Island. I know that the Premier there announced that they are using a similar system. They are looking at what we are doing. I know that the Premier has done a great job of not only informing the table of premiers and First Ministers — and he has worked with the Council of the Federation — but he has also been there — Premier King — to reach out to him if they needed to look at the model.

We believe that we're going to continue to see more opportunity for an appropriate exchange of information. We know that, at the federal level, we're seeing the early sign of a system at the national level and then for international travellers. What we're hearing is that we'll get an update at the Tourism ministers' table in a couple weeks. We think that's going to be a really significant piece of information that we're going to be able to understand to make some decisions on.

Again, I apologize to the member opposite — feeling that I'm holding back — but these are hypothetical scenarios that may happen, so we're going to hold off on jumping into that foray. But at this particular time, we think that our system is working well. We're watching where the federal government is on their international borders and, all the while, voices from the Yukon are there. We're amplifying what we're hearing from the sector. The sector is saying, "Please, when it's time and it's

safe, we need to get that border open, because it means so much to us.”

Ms. Blake: Yukon is a great destination for travelling families. However, children below the age of 12 are not being vaccinated against COVID-19. Will we allow families with vaccinated parents and unvaccinated young children to visit the Yukon without quarantining and bring money into the pockets of our tourism industry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: At this time, we’re staying by the restrictions that are in place — the current restrictions — which, as the member opposite has touched upon, would exclude those younger travellers. The Minister of Health and Social Services has been in a consistent dialogue with the chief medical officer of health. I know that they are taking a look at the data that’s coming in around youth travellers.

Will we see some flexibility around the corner? We’re hoping so, but that’s going to depend on the data and what’s being said at the national table of chief medical officers and with the national officer. We think that it could be a possibility, but we’re going to have to hold off for now on any further information on that.

Ms. Blake: My next question is: What is the situation with Condor Air from Germany to Yukon? Will we see the service that brought many tourists to Yukon on a weekly basis return?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry, can I just have the question repeated?

Ms. Blake: My question was: What is the situation with Condor Air from Germany to Yukon? Will we see the service that brought many tourists to Yukon on a weekly basis return back to providing service?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As of this time — and I am sure that one of the things that has led to conversations around it is that Condor — I think that they have been pretty open, even last year, toward trying to take bookings. Certainly, they are taking bookings for 2021, but they are offering refunds if borders don’t open.

Again, we are waiting to see what is going to happen with the international borders. I know that the department is reaching out to Condor so that the deputy minister and I can have a discussion with their chief executive officer just to get a sense from them of where they are going to go. We should have more information — but, again, they are booking. The perspective I am getting, from watching what they are doing — because I am not going to speak on behalf of Condor — is that they are contemplating flights at the latter part of the summer or later in this year.

We are hoping to see some of those restrictions reduced and we think that, in the Yukon, with the vaccination rates the way they are, people now have that opportunity to sign up their children. I urge anybody who has that opportunity for children to do that. I did that today, over lunch — to make sure that there are lots of openings, even for the first couple of days that are available. Again, that is what we are waiting to see, but our sense is that Condor — as soon as those borders are open, they seem like they are ready to make the move to fly back into the Yukon.

Ms. Blake: In the Liberal platform, was there support for the mountain music festival to take place in fall 2021, with MacBride Museum?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I know that the organization at this time is concluding a report. They received some funding in the last fiscal year to undergo some of that work.

We’re also waiting for them to conclude that. We know that there are other organizations across the Yukon too that can be supportive in this.

There are a couple things that I would like to share. There have been some questions around that partnership, and I think that it’s important that this concept — there have been a number of individuals who have been behind that, and they came to government a number of years ago with an unsolicited proposal with a really good concept and an idea. The easiest way to speak to the model is to look at some of the stuff that happens in other jurisdictions where they have these shoulder-season festivals that really spread out the tourism season and hit some of our smaller communities. So, that is the concept, and we’re waiting to see what this report is going to provide us with — insight and understanding of costs and operations.

Again, I have had a number of organizations either reach out through a surrogate or directly to me that want to be at the table and have some discussions about this.

So, today, Arts in the Park has now kicked off. We had planned to do a tribute today because that is another significant piece. I see that Music Yukon is working with the MacBride Museum on the delivery of that. So, you’re seeing MacBride Museum now do a bit more work there. But just today — based on what the feelings were over the weekend — and I think how all of us were impacted about some of the news out of British Columbia — we just felt that it was better to speak to and celebrate Arts in the Park at another time — not today. But you’ll see that MacBride Museum is also working with them.

I am more than happy to share more information. We’re excited about this undertaking. We think that it can grow year over year, and there are a lot of great organizations in their home communities — whether that is Dawson City, Haines Junction, or Watson Lake — and, over time, we can have something where there is some really significant amount of activity happening.

I know that, even in the early stages, Air North, Yukon’s airline — I’m hearing that they are pretty excited about bringing in packages, even as early as this fall — and hotels, as well, coming together. So, we think that there is a really good opportunity there, and we’re looking forward to the leadership that we’re seeing already from MacBride Museum — and then partnering as well with other organizations that have great expertise in this area.

Ms. Blake: My next question is if the department is supporting other music festivals in Yukon, like the Dawson City Music Festival or the Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Haines Junction, with similar funding.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, the member opposite gives me a great opportunity to say that, if you have a festival or a concept that you’re looking at, we actually have funding this year. We have up to \$15,000 for funding of these events. We

also have 42 events that we are funding. To answer that question, we are providing funding that's really significant and, in many cases, much greater. We haven't identified in this year's budget a dollar figure yet toward the fall undertaking; that's important.

I think the question was: Are you providing similar funding to others? We don't have a number yet, but I will say that we have: \$30,000, the permanent collection; the Dawson City Arts Society, \$425,000; Dawson City Arts Society Culture Quest, \$157,000; Northern Cultural Expressions, \$345,000; Yukon Arts Society, \$82,000; and Yukon Arts Centre, \$891,000.

We also have money for the Old Fire Hall and also the obligations around the wharf, \$175,000; All-City Band Society, \$25,000; Association franco-yukonnaise, \$20,000; Blue Feather, \$27,000; Whitehorse Community Choir, \$30,000; Dawson City Music Festival Association, almost \$60,000; Guild Hall Society, \$100,000; Gwaandak Theatre Society, \$64,000; Heart of Riverdale, \$50,000; Jazz Yukon, \$33,000; Junction Arts & Music Society, \$32,000; Longest Night Society, \$18,000; Nakai Theatre Ensemble, \$62,000; Northern Lights School of Dance Society, \$28,000; Rotary Club of Whitehorse, \$10,000; Village of Mayo, \$8,000; Whitehorse Concerts, just over \$39,000; Yukon Bluegrass Music Society, \$28,000; and Yukon Film Society, \$89,000. We do have a very strong record of providing contributions to many different musical associations.

My hope is that, through the planning process, we really want to lean on the folks in Dawson City because we want this to be a territory-wide undertaking, and we also really want to gain support, hopefully, from folks in Haines Junction. Those existing organizations that have a phenomenal track record over the years — we want to be working with them.

So, again, our starting point was to look at a concept which was a territory-wide undertaking, and we're building off of that unsolicited proposal that we had a number of years ago with some great ideas. Again, we are looking to expand our shoulder season.

It's not an easy undertaking because I can tell you — from working in the private sector and trying to build events — it can be difficult. I've had that opportunity. We have always been looking for it in the Yukon. We know that we can have exceptional northern lights at that time of year. It's a beautiful time of year to travel our highways. We know that north Yukon — in your traditional territory — is just exquisite at that time of year. So, how do we get some people to stay a little bit longer, how do we get people in our communities, and how do we celebrate all of the talents — and also ensure that those positive impacts to our artists continue — not just for the summer or winter but that they actually have some great opportunities in the fall as well?

Ms. Blake: For a number of years, the MacBride Museum was looking for property tax relief from the City of Whitehorse. Discussions also took place with Tourism. Can the minister update us on what support and remedies the Tourism branch is considering for the MacBride Museum?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: While the situation between the MacBride Museum and the City of Whitehorse regarding

property taxes was not the responsibility of the Government of Yukon, we want the museum to succeed. MacBride Museum is a venerated Yukon museum, housing important artifacts and offering valued community programming. We have worked with MacBride Museum on an agreement for services that meets the value of the tax payments. The outstanding tax bill of \$217,407 was paid in late February, concurrent with a signed agreement. Services by MacBride Museum over a three-year period include: additional free-entry days for Yukoners; heritage video vignettes for display at government facilities, such as our visitor information centres; new art showing and sales opportunities for Yukon artists; and winter- and shoulder-season tourism experiences. Again, I think that those are some key points.

I know that on June 28, 2020, Minister McLean had sent a letter to MacBride Museum suggesting arrangements. We are quite happy that there is an opportunity to remedy what was a pretty sensitive situation. We have this very amazing new upgrade to MacBride. Again, I'm happy that we could come to an agreement and to be provided with that value back so that we can continue to expand the good work of the department.

Ms. Blake: So, my next question is: What will happen after the three-year timeline?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are a number of pieces that are going to come together to have a sustainable path forward. The first is that we're looking at working with MacBride to provide a winter experience. There have been times when they have stayed open. My understanding is they're one of the only museums that does that and provides that opportunity for folks for an experience. We're seeing our winter tourism begin to expand. That was the trend that we were seeing before last year. We know that is an important part of the sector's potential for expansion. We're looking at having a TPA in place — an agreement in place — to cover that on it forward. Then there are grants that are available, I think, through the City of Whitehorse that they'll be looking to apply for to be able to offset that. That's a two-pronged approach going forward.

Ms. Blake: With respect to time, I'm going to ask two questions. My first question is: Will the Tourism department pay to cover these outstanding taxes? Will the Tourism department continue to cover the future property taxes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to clarify, the balance that was there, we have. We have covered that existing balance and we are in a position where there is a series of services in value that we will be recouping for paying that tax bill.

Moving forward, we want to continue to see pieces from the sector — museums such as MacBride, which is just an absolutely exquisite building and beautiful space — it can be very important toward our winter delivery. With that, we are looking at a potential agreement for that continued and expanded winter service. That is \$50,000 per year. Of course, we are looking to ensure that MacBride will apply for the community grant from the City of Whitehorse for the other amount of tax relief — which I think is up to \$50,000.

We believe that, moving forward, there is a good remedy in place. What I would say for individuals who are out there — we have an obligation to the taxpayer to ensure that we are

receiving value, because the department stepped into the space to remedy the situation. It is not normally their responsibility. I think what we have seen is an eloquent solution to a challenging and sensitive situation. I think that they have done a really good job of looking forward to having more services provided, which falls into the department's bailiwick — but also supporting MacBride to leverage grants that many organizations throughout Whitehorse use.

Ms. Blake: Madam Deputy Chair, I just had a question in regard to the advertisement campaign for the territory. I haven't seen it yet, but I just had a question. Does the advertisement include highlighting local First Nation tourism businesses in the communities?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I believe we are talking about the overall campaign we have. We are looking at when we are going to activate our bigger campaign. You are seeing some things on Facebook. There are some very strong ads there that are really, I would say, pretty macro in theme. Some of the ones I have shared are talking about getting out and paddling this summer or making sure that you get out and support our local tourism operators.

We work with the Yukon First Nations tourism team. This week, to give an example, Haines Junction will be the location of our first festival — and so, basically, as we go into this new reality that begins on Friday, I know that our department has reached out to support where we can. It is not so much that we have identified particular operators, but our sense is that, from a thematic perspective, it also would support those folks. I can tell you that one of my dream trips is to go to Old Crow. I don't know if it is going to happen this year, but I want to go down the river with Paul and I want to support that organization — what an amazing bucket-list trip to be able to go down the river. Hopefully, the US border is open at the time and we can go see family and friends in Fort Yukon, but I think overall what we are talking about is really ensuring that we — in a broader sense, we are talking about all of our tourism operators.

We do fund our First Nation partners at the First Nations Culture and Tourism Association — \$300,000 to work with them on indigenous, domestic — in Canada — and international advertising. It is a pillar, and you have probably heard my colleague, Minister McLean, talk about that a lot. We are absolutely going to continue to be supportive there.

On our call last week, British Columbia is really seeing uptake in interest with their First Nation products that their companies are putting out — their First Nation tourism products. I know that in Ontario, Minister MacLeod, as soon as possible, is doing a tour of it. So, we know how important it is — even at a national level — and commend those people, like Harold and Meta Johnson out there, who are so far ahead of the curve, or folks like Chuck Hume — you name it. Years ago, we were doing this, so we'll continue to support the new operations, as well as those existing operations, and make sure that we are continuing to provide the support to the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association so that they do have the opportunity to make sure they bolster the products that their members are providing.

As well, the deputy minister has just mentioned that Megan Jensen — there is a short film about Carcross/Tagish First Nation territory and more things that we are trying to support so that people know about those extremely unique experiences that they can have in the Yukon.

Ms. Blake: My last question — I was just curious if there are any training opportunities in place for our youth, considering that high school is coming to an end and we have young people finishing off their post-secondary for the summer. Is there training programming in place to attract youth to the tourism industry? If so, what training opportunities are available? How many youth can you hire?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To give appropriate information for this answer, I do want to come back to the member opposite, because I know of certain undertakings by the Department of Education. They have some great initiatives that they're undertaking in supporting a wage subsidy that then, in turn, is benefitting local youth. But I want to be able to make sure that I have that in a fulsome answer that's not just one or two examples. What I will do is I will work with advanced education, the Minister of Education, to see which of the current agreements in place are specific to tourism and how many youth are being provided that opportunity. If there are other things, we'll try to do a quick scan across government to see if there are others.

For us, I would like to thank our STEP students who are at the department. I know that they're already on-site doing really important work. I know, for at least one or two of those individuals, they're undertaking work that is absolutely aligned with their post-secondary area of study and have passion. I know that the department is providing those opportunities to Yukon youth, but we'll make sure that we get a broader sense of what all the opportunities are.

Again, thank you for your questions. I do look forward to hopefully having an opportunity to go to Old Crow and to go down the Porcupine with local entrepreneurs from the community that you represent.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture?

Seeing none, we'll proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$36,084,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$3,080,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$39,164,000 agreed to

Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the officials. I want to thank the director of finance, Ms. Kate Olynyk, who is here today, as well as the deputy minister, for coming in and providing support. Thank you for very much — and for all the work that they have undertaken this spring. They have been extremely busy. We have asked a lot, and they have risen to the occasion, so I want to thank them.

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a five-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: The matter before Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Justice

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just welcoming our director of finance, Luda Ayzenberg, and John Phelps, our Deputy Minister of Justice, who are joining me here today. Thank you to them for their support here today but also for getting to this place with the Department of Justice budget.

I will take an opportunity to note some of the key financial implications of the Department of Justice's main operation and maintenance and capital budget for 2021-22 fiscal year. I will take the opportunity to do that this afternoon because I think it is important for Yukoners to know the numbered items that are in that particular document and the opportunity to highlight those expenditures.

I also note, in the event — I am looking at the time; there is not terribly much time for questions. I encourage colleagues to provide those questions to me, and I will be happy to answer them and have the department provide the information that they may seek.

I will highlight some budget items that support our innovative approach, Madam Deputy Chair, with negotiations to access to justice agreements, the establishment of the new restorative justice unit in the Department of Justice, our efforts for improving services and supports for those in contact with the justice system, our approach to quality and responsive policing services, and for some infrastructure and IT

investments. The estimates outlined in the 2021-22 budget consist of capital investments of just under \$2.7 million and operation and maintenance expenditures of \$77.7 million.

Over the last year, I have had the pleasure of collaborating in this role with our government, Yukon First Nation governments, the RCMP, independent agencies, and Yukon communities on really a variety of initiatives that are making our territory a safer and healthier place to live and our justice system more accessible and easier to navigate.

Our strategic investments enable us to continue to build relationships with our partners to support good governance, encourage innovation, foster safe communities, and support culturally relevant services. The Government of Yukon recently approved a new approach and a new mandate for negotiations with Yukon First Nation governments on justice-related matters.

I'm taking some time to note this because I think it's an incredibly important change in approach. This new approach is based on the recognition and respect for First Nation jurisdiction, governance, and legal principles. It provides new opportunities for collaboration and partnership and it promotes incremental and capacity-building initiatives.

In August 2020, the Department of Justice established a new negotiations, collaborations, and partnerships branch within Legal Services. This new branch has corporate responsibility to negotiate administration of justice matters with First Nation governments and to develop the corporate strategy for justice-related matters with First Nation governments. We have earmarked an ongoing increase of \$654,000 for the 2021-22 fiscal year to resource the Government of Yukon's participation in administration of justice agreements and justice-related negotiations with First Nation governments and the Government of Canada.

This new mandate is our commitment 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.

It is a shift that we hope will allow Yukon First Nation governments to come to the table, either seeking the negotiation of a complete administration of justice agreement or even particular issues that might come under that umbrella, depending on their interests and capacity and their plan forward for their own governments.

Additionally, our government recently approved the creation of an integrated restorative justice unit in order to improve restorative justice service delivery, increase engagement with Yukon First Nation governments, and better support community-designed and community-led restorative justice initiatives.

Again, this is a new unit and priority work for the department that I'm very proud of. I know that the people at the Department of Justice are equally proud to see this work proceed.

This new unit, created in November 2020, combines youth justice from the Department of Health and Social Services and adult justice resources from the Department of Justice to provide seamless program delivery across the territory.

We have directed an ongoing increase of \$451,000 for the consolidation of restorative justice services within the Department of Justice in a two-year pilot project that will support the development of a restorative justice strategy and action plan with Yukon First Nation governments. This funding supports a one-government approach to restorative justice service delivery, improves front-line service delivery, and builds capacity for restorative justice services within communities and with communities.

Yukoners have the right to live in safe and healthy communities and it is our goal to protect Yukoners and respond to the needs of victims. We know that experiencing sexualized violence has serious traumatic and long-lasting impacts on victims, families, and communities. We want Yukoners to be safe and to feel safe. We want victims to feel supported. We knew, to achieve this, that we would need to address the barriers that have historically made victims feel that they do not have options.

The sexualized assault response team — also known as SART — is a comprehensive, multi-agency response to the issue of sexualized violence in the Yukon. I know that perhaps some critics in this Legislative Assembly would say that we have heard about this before, but it is a continued priority for our government and it's incredibly important that it is a long-term initiative for the Government of Yukon and that it be properly funded.

SART is a victim-centred, low-barrier model of support that incorporates the components that we know are needed. Work and implementation of the SART required many components across four broad areas: victim services, clinical or medical services, mental health services, and support in navigating the legal system. Our department will be contributing \$250,000 in 2021-22 from the operation and maintenance budget toward this important work.

Hosted with Victim Services, and the importance of Victim Services work within the Department of Justice, is included the Family Information Liaison unit. It is known across Canada as FILU. It works to provide a centralized, coordinated mechanism for family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people to access information related to their loved one's case from governments and agencies such as the coroner, the police, and medical services. We have a time-limited increase of \$285,000 that has been given to this unit in this budget. It is recoverable from the federal government.

I would like to turn our attention to Court Services. The department continues to invest in technology and training that improves how people participate in court matters. A total of \$35,000 is earmarked for the full replacement of the holding cell surveillance system in the existing law courts cellblock, including relocation of the system's control unit.

An increase of \$70,000 has been directed to support the purchase of specialized equipment to enhance the quality and

reliability of the audio, video, and recording systems in the court rooms. This initiative will enhance access to justice, particularly for vulnerable witnesses, remote witnesses, and observers. We have certainly learned that, during COVID-19, remote appearances are an integral part of the court's plan and hopefully operations into the future.

The Department of Justice strategically collaborates with the RCMP to ensure a professional, efficient, and effective territorial policing service. Through open dialogue and a strong relationship, we continue to address emerging policing needs. We are very sensitive to the pressures on the RCMP and other service providers. Several years ago, we worked closely with the RCMP and created a full-time, three-person historical homicide unit for a three-year pilot project. A one-year extension of \$442,000 for the territorial policing services budget is included in the operation and maintenance budget to support the work of this unit into 2022. We want families who have lost their loved ones to be able to find closure and those responsible to be held accountable.

An ongoing increase of \$226,000 has been directed to fund the RCMP to meet increasing mobile radio system costs. The RCMP's use of the mobile radio system is essential for public and police officer safety. Since the RCMP are the contracted territorial police service, the Government of Yukon funds 70 percent of all territorial policing costs and 48 percent of the RCMP costs related to the First Nation policing program, which includes 17 officers. An ongoing increase of \$93,000 has been earmarked in this budget for the updated First Nation policing agreement.

The RCMP and the Department of Justice are undertaking a careful analysis of policing infrastructure in order to ensure that the investment in detachment facilities is guided by the best evidence available. The evidence includes up-to-date reporting on building conditions, assessing policing demands, and looking at the best means of advancing capital construction opportunities. We need to ensure that smart, strategic capital investments are paired with operational priorities and realities.

In anticipation of future work, the capital budget has \$2.27 million earmarked for the expenses associated with detachment facilities. Through the territorial police service agreement with Canada, the governments of Yukon and Canada cost share the operation of the territorial police service at 70 percent from the Government of Yukon and 30 percent from the Government of Canada. The Department of Justice will continue to work closely with the RCMP to make sure that the policing facilities are meeting the demands of the RCMP. This is work that is ongoing and continuing.

Moving on, a few of the other expenditures included in this year's budget are a department-wide increase for the collective agreement of \$369,000. We have also earmarked an increase of \$766,000 for pandemic management support across the department and courts. We have also directed an increase of \$125,000 for the *Our Clean Future* project. *Our Clean Future* prioritizes work in a number of areas that meet up with the Department of Justice, including a review of the *Public Utilities Act*. This increase in funding will provide policy support and resourcing for the completion of this work.

Also included in the 2021-22 budget is an increase of \$158,000 in time-limited funding for initiatives under the federally funded countering gun and gang violence action fund. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, the Department of Justice started a five-year agreement with Public Safety Canada to make \$2,250,735 of funding available to the Government of Yukon under the countering gun and gang violence action fund. This funding is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada. This five-year agreement enables the Department of Justice to augment policy support, increase investigative and intelligence capacity for the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit — also known as the SCAN unit — and offer support to community-based service providers to help prevent, deter, or divert citizen involvement with organized crime.

The Department of Justice has earmarked a number of small expenditures related to IT projects and building our infrastructure in that way. The budget allocates \$50,000 in funds to renew the system for optimal performance to ensure the required level of building safety and security at the Law Centre.

The second IT project is to update and replace video surveillance equipment at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which is now at the end of its lifecycle. An increase of \$50,000 earmarked for this capital budget will be used to fund a project manager to begin work on scoping the upgrade process to ensure operational impacts are mitigated in preparation for the scheduled 2022-23 budget system upgrade. The video surveillance system is a key security requirement of the facility to ensure the safety of staff and inmates. Failure of this equipment would result in a lockdown of the facility. In 2022-23, in that fiscal year budget, there is \$250,000 budgeted to upgrade the system.

This capital budget also includes an increase of \$35,000 for the replacement of multi-function copiers at the Department of Justice, which are beyond their life. Finally, an increase of \$45,000 is allocated in this budget to replace the end-of-life equipment and purchase new security, kitchen, dental and medical unit equipment at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. It is required for day-to-day operations to be safe and up to date. These capital investments are key to our operations.

In closing, I would like to thank the Legislative Assembly for the opportunity to speak to the main operation and maintenance and the capital budget for the Department of Justice and the important work that the staff and public servants do. Many members of the public, we hope, never come into contact with the justice system, but if and when they do, I am pleased to say — and proud of the work that has been done under the direction of the leadership of the department —

Deputy Chair: Order, please.

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

Deputy Chair: The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 11th sitting day of the 2021 Special Sitting.

Pursuant to Motion No. 4, adopted on May 17, 2021, the provisions of Chapter 14 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon

Legislative Assembly shall apply to the 2021 Special Sitting in the same manner as if it were a Spring or Fall Sitting.

Standing Order 76(1) states: “On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, if the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole at the time, shall interrupt proceedings at 5:00 p.m. and, with respect to each Government Bill before Committee that the Government House Leader directs to be called, shall:

“(a) put the question on any amendment then before the Committee;

“(b) put the question, without debate or amendment, on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill, including all clauses, schedules, title and preamble, be deemed to be read and carried;

“(c) put the question on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill be reported to the Assembly; and

“(d) when all bills have been dealt with, recall the Speaker to the Chair to report on the proceedings of the Committee.”

It is the duty of the Chair to now conduct the business of Committee of the Whole in the manner directed by Standing Order 76(1). The Chair will now ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the government bill now before Committee of the Whole should be called.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The government directs that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be called at this time.

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

The Chair will now recognize Mr. Silver for the purpose of moving a motion pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be deemed read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be deemed read and carried. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Count

Deputy Chair: The Chair will ring the bells and conduct a count.

Bells

Deputy Chair: All those in favour of the motion please rise.

Members rise

Deputy Chair: Would all members opposed to the motion please rise.

Members rise

The results are nine yea, eight nay. The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that you report Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Premier that the Chair report Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: I think the yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,357,100 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$434,298 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,791,398 agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Schedules A, B and C agreed to

Title agreed to

Deputy Chair: As the government bill identified by the Government House Leader has now been decided upon, it is my duty to rise and report to the House.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(2)

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Pursuant to Motion No. 4 adopted on May 17, 2021, the provisions of Chapter 14 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly shall apply to the 2021 Special Sitting in the same manner as if it were a Spring or Fall Sitting.

Standing Order 76(2)(d) states: "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Speaker of the Assembly, when recalled to the Chair after the House has been in the Committee of the Whole, shall:

"(d) with respect to each Government Bill standing on the Order Paper for Third Reading and designated to be called by the Government House Leader,

"(i) receive a motion for Third Reading and passage of the bill, and

"(ii) put the question, without debate or amendment, on that motion."

I shall therefore ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the government bills now standing on the Order Paper for third reading should be called.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the government directs that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be called for third reading at this time.

Bill No. 201: First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a third time and do pass. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question to the House. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 201 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21; Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021); First Appropriation Act 2021-22.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as numerated by the Clerk.

Thank you for your work this Sitting. I hope that you can get some rest after a busy spring. I hope to see some of you at events this summer. It looks like it is going to be more face to face, which, I am proud to say, I am looking forward to.

I invite you to visit Taylor House to see our exhibits on our second floor, and also, you are welcome to join us on August 14 in Dawson City for the Commissioner's picnic for some food, games of bocce and croquet, and reading from the Yukon Story Laureate.

Thank you again for your work and enjoy our Yukon summer.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Before I adjourn the Special Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have a few brief comments.

I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole, and on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly, to Clerk Dan Cable, Deputy Clerk Linda Kolody, Clerk of Committees Allison Lloyd, Director of Administration, Finance, and Systems Helen Fitzsimmons, Operations Manager Brenda McCain-Armour, Finance and Operations Clerk Lyndsey Amundson, as well as Sergeant-at-Arms Karina Watson and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Joe Mewett, who all provided invaluable support to all MLAs and their staff in order for us to continue to do the important work that we are sent here to do on behalf of all Yukoners.

As well, I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the team at Hansard for their timely and accurate service and all the other background staff and contractors who kept this operation going. I would also commend the hard-working civil servants who deliver service to Yukoners and support to all of us as members in our work. I wish Members of the Legislative Assembly all the best for the coming summer.

This has been a particularly hard year for Yukoners because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are now experiencing the beginning of the end of the restrictions that the pandemic has forced us all to endure.

I hope that all of us can look forward to a more normal rest of the year as we begin vaccinations for our older children and wait patiently for vaccinations to be approved for our younger children. I hope that you all spend time with your loved ones, with extended family and friends, and with your constituents this summer.

On a more personal note, I would like to give my deepest thanks to all the members of the House for being patient with me in my role and to the colleagues for providing me with support in carrying out the duties of the Speaker of the House.

Over the summer, I will be enjoying spending time with my constituents in the Mayo-Tatchun riding and then, in the fall, I will look forward to getting back with all of you to continue the very important work that we have ahead of us. Thank you very much.

As the House has, pursuant to Motion No. 4, reached the maximum number of sitting days permitted for this Special Sitting, it is the duty of the Chair to declare that the House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled May 31, 2021:

35-1-6

Review on School Attendance in the Yukon: What Is, What Could Be — Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office — May 2021 (Speaker Harper)

35-1-7

Department of Education Annual Report 2020 (McLean)

35-1-8

2019-2020 Annual Report — Yukon University (as of May 2020) Yukon College and audited financial statements (McLean)

The following legislative returns were tabled May 31, 2021:

35-1-6

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 201, First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — third party rental list (Clarke, N.)

35-1-7

Response to oral question from Ms. White re: fetal alcohol spectrum disorder action plan (McPhee)

The following written questions were tabled May 31, 2021:

Written Question No. 8

Re: compensation for placer and quartz mining claim holders (Kent)

Written Question No. 9

Re: successor resource legislation (Kent)

Written Question No. 10

Re: land withdrawals and staking bans (Kent)

Written Question No. 11

Re: individualized education plans (Kent)

Written Question No. 12

Re: Yukon Resource Gateway project (Kent)