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HANSARD

Tuesday, October 12, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall 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

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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 and Gender Equity Directorate

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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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, October 12, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues to help welcome a number of visitors that we have today for the tributes. We have with us Val Pike, who has worked for many, many years on the Run for Mom campaign, and we have Karin Stephens, who has worked with the Paddlers Abreast teams.

We also have Tharian Botting who is the president of All Genders Yukon Society. We have Tiffanie Tasane who is the executive director from the Canadian Mental Health Association, and we have Chris McKee who also works with the Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon Branch. Welcome to you all.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This annual campaign raises awareness about the impact of breast cancer. This year's theme is: "Rise: Rally in screening, supporting, and serving everyone".

Together, we can help uplift women in need of our support. It is estimated that one in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer, and it is now the most common cancer among women and third most common cancer among all Canadians, as well as the leading cause of cancer deaths in women. Those of you who might be as old as I am can remember when that number was one in nine Canadian women.

Almost all of us have been touched by breast cancer in one way or another. Many of us have loved ones in our lives who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, and we know the importance of being vigilant.

In the Yukon, nearly 25 women per year are diagnosed with breast cancer. Those 25 people are asked to put their lives on hold while they undergo treatment. Their families and friends are affected by the diagnosis too; 25 people diagnosed can easily be hundreds of people impacted, as well as our community. That's why support is so important.

I would like to thank all Yukoners who work to support cancer patients. To the family and friends who provide immeasurable support to people diagnosed with breast cancer, I thank you. To the health professionals and volunteers who work timelessly and tirelessly to ensure that we are reducing the impact of breast cancer in our community, thank you. To the families that show support by making Run for Mom one of the parts of their annual Mother's Day celebrations, thank you. To everyone involved in fundraising for Karen's Fund, which provides financial aid to women with breast cancer, thank you. To the volunteers and staff at the Yukon Hospital Foundation who tirelessly work to fundraise for Yukoners cancer care fund, thank you. To the staff at the Yukon Women's Midlife Health Clinic who allow access to information for women to address many of their health needs, thank you.

This issue, Mr. Speaker, touches people deeply. We are so fortunate to live here in the Yukon Territory. Yukoners are caring, supportive, and generous, always willing to help out and make sure that everyone is cared for. Work has been done to increase the rates of detection, and new technology is being employed at Whitehorse General Hospital, which means we are able to diagnose patients earlier and give them new options for care and treatment. Early detection can be life-saving. One important method of detection is a monthly self-exam. Please ensure you do a breast self-exam once a month. Look for any changes in your breasts, such as a change in the size, feeling a lump, dimpling or puckering, or changes to the skin. If you notice any changes, see your health care provider as soon as possible.

As Yukoners, we also have access to screening at Whitehorse General Hospital. Please ask your health care provider about a mammogram. Get the appointment and keep that appointment. It is a scary thought, but early screening and detection is always better and can save your life. Take care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Each year we stand here in the House in tribute, not as a duty, but as an opportunity to reach as many Yukoners as possible.

Breast cancer, while being the cancer with the highest rate of diagnosis, is also one of the easiest types to detect. Both men and women need to be aware of this. Individuals should perform self-checks at home and report any irregularities to a health professional for further diagnosis.

According to the Breast Cancer Society of Canada, one in eight women is likely to develop breast cancer in her lifetime, and that is one in eight of your family members and friends. This number is staggering. It's estimated that 27,400 women and 240 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer every year in Canada. This is representative of 25 percent of all new cancer cases in women.

I would like to thank the Breast Cancer Society of Canada for providing all members of the House with these beautiful lapel ribbons this year.

Yukoners who are recently diagnosed with breast cancer and who receive treatment at Whitehorse General Hospital, or who must travel Outside for care, may be eligible for financial assistance through Karen's Fund. Money raised through donations and fundraising efforts is directly allocated to Yukoners to assist with the financial demands they experience while undergoing treatment.

I want to thank the incredible oncology professionals that we are fortunate to have working here in the Yukon to help Yukoners navigate their health care journeys. To all women and men: Please take the time to check yourself regularly.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is one of the most common and aggressive forms of cancer in women, with one in eight Canadian women being diagnosed every year. Breast cancer and all the treatments that come with it is a hard, painful, and scary experience. It has a way of chipping away at who you are and what makes life joyful and worth living. Today, I want to acknowledge all the efforts made by Yukoners to not only raise awareness but also those who have built a community of support in their own uniquely Yukon way. Twenty years ago, Ava Christl founded Paddlers Abreast, an organization for survivors in the Yukon and northern BC. Every year, this group has been a pillar for folks who have survived breast cancer. Together, they have paddled and participated in the annual Yukon River Quest.

For Rachelle Zral, who is the organization's current president, the boat is magic. In an interview she said: "The healing only starts when you are done treatment." The intensity of the surgery, chemo, and radiation means you don't have time to process it. However, being around the women in Paddlers Abreast has helped to heal from it.

I often say that being out on the land is its own kind of medicine. The land is a place where we go to find quiet, to find peace, to connect with others and be our most genuine selves. The land and the natural environment give us a sense of connection to our spirituality. It is a place where we can feel our most vulnerable while finding and building our inner strength.

Paddlers Abreast has given this to so many survivors. Even in the face of COVID-19, Paddlers Abreast's resilience has shown through, gathering in whatever ways they could to mark their 20th anniversary. Today, in honour of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I want to celebrate the work that Paddlers Abreast has done. I look forward to many more decades of cheering them on.

Applause

In recognition of World Mental Health Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize World Mental Health Day, which took place this past Sunday, October 10. Mental health is an important component of overall health and well-being and should be a priority for everyone.

This year, as last, our mental wellness has been affected by the pandemic. A major impact on people's mental health has come with our isolation, concern about illness, and new ways of interacting with people, places, work, friends, and family — one more reason for us to be mindful and encourage Yukoners to take the time to care for their mental health. Learning more and more about the need to look after our mental health and wellness is the way of the future. The collective knowledge of the importance of mental health and wellness is becoming a reality rather than a topic to which we have for many years paid lip service. We must recognize that mental health issues are on a wide spectrum.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that Yukoners have access to quality mental health care wherever they live. Expanding mental health services through the mental wellness hubs across the territory has been a priority. Our team at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provides many services for people living with all manner of mental health issues, including counselling services and more targeted, wraparound supports that are often key to helping people manage their illness. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services also provides support and services to those caring for people with severe mental illness.

Here in the territory, through the Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon Division, All Genders Yukon, CAIRS Yukon, and various other counselling and support-oriented organizations, we care for Yukoners. Collectively, these services shine a light through the dark with their counselling services and support groups, and our mental health hubs in the communities ensure that we are meeting Yukoners where they are.

I would like to take the time to thank Yukon's mental health professionals, support workers, and those who continue to advocate for mental health services for their tireless dedication. When leaders in our community, like Montréal Canadiens' star goalie Carey Price, take the courageous steps to get help, we all benefit. Like many of you, I saw his teammates and others across the league speak about the importance of taking care of the human being before any concerns about his job. This shift in attitude is much needed and contributes to a better society. Please take care of yourself. Listen to your body and your mind, and find ways to practise self-care that are meaningful to you.

On October 10, the Department of Health and Social Services launched a campaign called "To Feel Well". It involves asking six Yukoners what they do to feel well. You can see them via short, animated videos at yukon.ca/en/feel-well.

Wellness looks different for everyone, as does the means of coping with life's stresses and more serious issues. I encourage all Yukoners to take care of their mental health and each other. Take a few moments to admire what you are already doing. Think about what else you can do for yourself and others, and I encourage you to take a moment to celebrate yourself. It is a bit like the instructions that we used to get on airplanes, if anyone can remember what those look like; we must look after ourselves first before we can help others. If you

need help, please reach out, ask for help, take care of yourself, and be kind.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize October 10 as World Mental Health Day. The theme this year is “Mental health care for all: let’s make it a reality”. Unfortunately, due to a number of factors over the last number of years, we have seen poor mental well-being on the rise: unemployment, income decline, increased costs, and skyrocketing mortgage and rental costs have all contributed significantly to stress, including increased rates of substance abuse and an overall decline in mental wellness. This has happened and been exacerbated during the pandemic as well.

Yukoners have taken to social media to share stories and experiences of navigating supports and finding help with housing and other necessities. Many of these stories share a common theme: that there is not enough support and that some people are falling through the cracks. For some, costs are too high, housing is not available or not affordable, and there are too few mental health practitioners, no streamlined process for accessing help, and challenges accessing it are increased in rural Yukon. Those working in mental wellness are experiencing a higher than normal volume of clients, and waitlists for supports are increasing.

In the meantime, people are struggling to care for themselves and their families. We have seen more strain put on people throughout Canada, and indeed around the world, during the pandemic.

While we work to rebuild our economy and balance health care and pandemic recommendations, we have also come to realize that there is a silent struggle for many that is getting worse and that we must work to address it as soon as possible.

I would like to take a moment to thank those mental wellness professionals who work daily to support Yukoners. Thank you, as well, to local organizations, support workers, and volunteers for the work that you do to promote mental well-being throughout our communities.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to add our voice to the important topic of mental health.

There are many crises at play in the Yukon right now, from housing shortages to opioid deaths, lack of family doctors, to the pandemic. We are not without our challenges.

Mental health and wellness is not something that was publicly talked about as I was growing up, and I am relieved that this is changing. Talking about mental health is one thing, but making sure that the resources are there when and where they are needed is something else.

Rural communities in the Yukon are struggling under a burden of grief, addiction, and a sense of hopelessness. They are living in a mental health and addiction crisis. I think about the people whom we have lost to addiction or suicide, the lives and the stories of those we love stolen from our communities. It is heart-wrenching.

Right now, we should all be concerned about our men and boys, because they are disproportionately affected by our current mental health crisis. How do we — as a society, as a community, as humans — let our men and boys know that they are valued, that they are seen, and that their absence would be felt by all?

The Yukon NDP is grateful for those on the front lines of this mental health pandemic, and we know that you are doing all that you can, but we also know that you wish that there was more being done. Destigmatizing mental health is important, but so is having access to the supports where and when they are needed. Mental health is supported by a wide variety of supports: poverty reduction, housing security, food security, addictions supports, and more.

If we truly believe in mental health care for all, it is time that we ask communities what they need and that we, as decision-makers, move heaven and earth to make it happen.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the terms of reference for the independent review of the Hidden Valley Elementary School incident response.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 6: *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Justice that Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 6 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that there is a full-time qualified school counsellor in every school in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to recognize the importance of providing communities

with nearby garbage disposal options by listening to Yukon citizens and keeping the Silver City solid-waste transfer facility open.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure direct and accessible access to the Whitehorse vaccine clinic by:

(1) publishing in advance updated hours for the Whitehorse vaccine clinic on all of the clinic's channels, which accurately reflect open times and dates; and

(2) ensuring direct and effective lines of communication between the government and vaccine clinic staff.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Flooding in Yukon

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This year, the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge experienced record high-water levels due in large part to the highest ever recorded snow pack in the upper Yukon River basin, approximately double the average value.

Abnormally heavy snow across the territory resulted in high-water events elsewhere, including Teslin Lake and the Yukon River at Carmacks. Flood responses began in Carmacks and Teslin on June 14, in partnership with the villages of Carmacks and Teslin, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, and the Teslin Tlingit Council.

The Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge incident management team for the flood response mobilized the week of June 22. More than 200 people from across the Yukon government, including flood specialists from Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, and approximately 100 members of the Canadian Armed Forces were actively engaged in flood response and mitigation. Thousands of local residents and volunteers stepped up to help, filling sandbags and building berms for their friends and neighbours. More than 50 local contractors provided heavy equipment, delivering sand and sandbags for flood mitigation and providing engineering support while Yukon First Nations Wildfire assisted on the front lines.

The water peaked on July 10 and 11 when Bennett, Tagish, and Marsh Lake all measured more than 20 centimetres above levels reached during the historic flood event of 2007. Lake Laberge hit more than 40 centimetres higher than the flood peak in 2007. Approximately 120 properties were under evacuation alert and one property received an evacuation order. Thankfully, those residents have since been able to return to their homes and begin the recovery process. Not a single residential property was lost.

Mr. Speaker, this was the largest flood relief effort in the Yukon's history. More than 550,000 sandbags and 2,000 super sandbags were deployed in Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge, including roughly 5.5 kilometres of berm at a height of up to 2.4 metres, in some cases, at Army Beach and M'Clintock.

Without these mitigation measures, flooding in the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge would have been

catastrophic. More than 100 homes could have been flooded and many more may have been lost. In these times, when housing is so important, protecting what we already have is critically important. Our government is now working with technical experts on the development of a flood remediation and recovery plan to assist homeowners with their properties and to help determine next steps for cleanup and long-term mitigation. We are engaging directly with property owners to understand the scope of support needed now that the worst is behind us.

Mr. Speaker, we thank the countless Yukoners who supported the relief efforts, along with many dedicated public servants who contributed to this historic response. This was a great demonstration of how helpful and supportive Yukoners are when their neighbours are in need. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: On behalf of the Official Opposition caucus, I would like to begin by thanking everyone who volunteered to help out with the flood response. Seeing so many Yukoners take the time to help friends, neighbours, and people they had never met was heartwarming and showed true Yukon spirit in action.

We would also like to thank the government staff, private contractors, and military personnel who helped out with the flood response. If it were not for the efforts of these individuals, it is very likely that the effects of the flooding would have been much worse. To see our community come together like that was certainly a good sight to see, and it reminds you that we are all Yukoners and in this together.

I would also like to thank officials from the departments who took time out of their days to brief opposition MLAs and staff, as frequently as weekly during the height of the flooding, so that we could all ask questions and provide information directly to our constituents.

I do appreciate that some ministers also took additional steps to reach out to us personally, setting aside partisan differences, to work together on the process and appreciate the fact that government did make those briefings available, as I mentioned.

Again, thank you to everyone who responded to the flood and who helped to ensure that MLAs and the public were given information throughout.

Mr. Speaker, part of our job as the Official Opposition is also to identify where there is room for improvement, so I would like to provide some constructive advice to the government on how they can improve going forward. One issue that we heard from many constituents was that there was not adequate preparation in advance of the flooding. As we are all aware, we were receiving record snowfalls through the winter, and it was clear that we would likely have record melts as a result. Many constituents who have had their properties affected have indicated frustration with what they see as not properly anticipating the melt and acting quickly enough.

As one Marsh Lake resident mentioned during the government's public Zoom meeting, he and other residents were raising concerns about the potential for flooding in the

winter, and I believe he indicated that it was as early as January. We have also heard from officials who expressed frustration with the snap election call and the delays that resulted in getting government running again afterward, as this contributed to delays in the early days of preparations. As an example, Mr. Speaker, on April 1, government knew that the snow pack feeding into the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge was almost twice the normal level and that, on May 1, it was 210 percent of normal.

Since next year is thought to also pose a risk of flooding, it is very important that we learn both from what was done right and where improvements can be made this year.

Some other suggestions that we have, based on what we heard from residents, include that information should have been provided to at-risk property owners much earlier about how to build berms and protect their own property. Property visits by government staff could start earlier.

Sandbags and plastic should have been ordered sooner to avoid the situation that we had this summer of there being no sandbags available for purchase in the territory as people were rushing to prepare their properties, as occurred at one point in July.

With respect to the Laberge area, the road to homes at Jackfish Bay could have been raised before the water crossed it and could have been done at much lower cost than ended up happening once it was under water. Instead, unfortunately, both the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Highways and Public Works dismissed my request on behalf of constituents and showed a lack of understanding of the situation on the ground there just days before issuing an evacuation alert for 16 properties.

I would also like to note that my colleague, the MLA for Kluane, wrote the Minister of Community Services in June with several suggestions, and three weeks later, he received a reply from the minister that ignored his suggestions. As well, my colleagues and I also heard from owners of six properties that ended up on the Marsh Lake side of the super berm, and one homeowner told me that he felt the situation could have been avoided if ministers had been more willing to listen to him and his neighbours.

In conclusion, since my time is growing short, I want to again express our sincere thanks to all the Yukoners who helped out with this response.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the climate is changing, and this year many Yukoners had a front-row seat to these changes. With record snowfall in 2020, we saw record water levels this past summer. Flooding and flood risks affected those in Teslin, Tagish, Marsh Lake, Carcross, Lake Laberge, the industrial areas in downtown Whitehorse, Carmacks, and down the Yukon River. We saw hundreds of Yukoners faced with the overwhelming task of having to protect their property from the rising waters and thousands more volunteering to help them.

In 2007, 14 years ago, the Yukon experienced a flood that affected many at the same locations, and knowing the speed at which our climate is changing, many are speculating that the next big flood won't be in another 14 years but sooner.

So, what have we learned? What did the Yukon government learn from the experience in 2007? Was there a debrief report completed that is publicly available that questioned both those personally affected and those who responded, and did it make recommendations similar to the December 2020 emergency operation centre debrief report that was completed for the Cariboo Regional District?

You may be asking yourself why I focus on a situation from 14 years ago, and that is easy to explain. It is about lessons learned. Was the knowledge gained from the 2007 flooding carried forward to support the government's response in 2021, and did those lessons help us better prepare for the 2021 flood? If not, why not?

I know that there was a lot of confusion on the ground. There weren't clear directions or contact information to request additional resources at sandbagging locations until the end — or near the end — of the effort. We did, however, see great leadership at some of these locations in some communities, and I know that there were a great number of folks who did not have the physical strength to fill and move sandbags but who would have been able to assist in other ways had the Yukon government only asked.

There wasn't an essential place or sign-up sheet at sandbagging locations for homeowners to say where they were located and what support they needed. That meant that some folks who were able to leverage social media effectively had lots of help, whereas those who were unable to share their needs struggled to get timely help. There were no porta potties or bathroom access at sandbagging stations, and this was brought to my attention on more than one occasion.

There was confusion about what the Canadian military was here to do and who would receive their help. I know that there were folks who just kept hoping that the bodies and the response that they saw shared publicly would eventually make it to them, but it never did. Had the Yukon government clearly communicated what the military and other Outside officials were here to do, expectations and hopes wouldn't have been left unanswered. Local decision-making by property owners might have been different.

What has the Yukon government learned after now dealing with both the 2007 and now the 2021 flood events? What will we do between now and the next time? Is the Yukon government completing an analysis that will be publicly available? Looking back, there are many, many things that Yukoners should be proud of, but they also know that there is plenty of room for improvement.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the opposition for their thoughts this afternoon. I will note that even today, as we start deliberations, there is an open house going on in Marsh Lake. It is open until 8:00 p.m. tonight, and it's talking about actions going forward. It is being held by the Department of Community Services, and there will be more meetings held next week. They have already been scheduled and notifications have gone out to the public.

It was important to people living in various flood plains that we worked to save their homes. As I said in the statement,

it was doubly critical to the territory that we did so. We need homes in the territory, Mr. Speaker, and to start 2021 with the loss of 100 or so homes would have been a calamity. Thanks to the efforts of many, we protected what we had successfully. It was a relief that those homes were saved, and to the wider territory as well. I thank everyone who had a hand in that effort.

Our climate is changing, and we are seeing the effects of that every year. Climate scientists are now calling our climate “coastal”. When I arrived in 1989, it was semi-arid. In the last 14 years, we have had two record-setting floods, as my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, mentioned. The first was the worst in 200 years and the second was far worse than that. The fire danger is getting more extreme, and the markers were bad this year. Thankfully, the rain and lightning never aligned to make our lives particularly interesting — more interesting — this summer.

The importance of all this is that the time for sitting on our hands is long past. The Yukon has declared a climate emergency and adopted *Our Clean Future* — our nation-leading plan — to curb CO₂ emissions.

We cannot delay any longer. We must collaboratively take action to curb our greenhouse gas emissions in this territory. Energy retrofits, biomass heating, new hydro, wind, solar, battery storage, geothermal, electric bikes and cars, walking — we all have to recognize the impact that the decisions we make daily have on the planet and to act to mitigate those effects.

Change like this isn't easy, Mr. Speaker. It takes more thought and more work. It's often inconvenient or demands sacrifice. We have to change our ways. Why? Well, we saw first-hand why this summer. We are not that experienced with floods in the territory. Certainly, we're very experienced with wildfires, but not so much with floods. We learned an awful lot this year. We're going to continue to learn. There will be a debrief — there has been a debrief within the department. There is going to be public notification and a report on how we can proceed with flood mitigations in the future and how we can do better.

We learned some lessons this year. We know things that we didn't know in April and May, and it cost us. It cost us money, and we're looking for an additional \$11 million in the supplementary budget, which we will be discussing this afternoon, to handle this year's flood and the cost of dismantling our effort and planning for long-term mitigations.

But it cost us dearly in another way too, Mr. Speaker. At a time when we were already tired from the pandemic, we had to deal with floods and fires. People stepped up and staged an incredible relief effort, but it took a toll on the civil service, on citizens and communities, on contractors and businesses, on our wildland fire and First Nation fire teams.

For that sacrifice which saved people's homes and possessions and staved off a worsening of the territory's housing crisis, I thank you all.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Mr. Dixon: Last week, the Minister of Education told Yukoners that she did not learn about the issues related to sexual abuse of students by an educational assistant at Hidden Valley school until she heard about them in local media in July. The Minister of Education stated clearly that this issue was not something that she was briefed on either during transition or at any point before July 16 when the CBC story was published.

This means that, for two days, no one made her aware of the major lawsuit against her department that was filed on July 14, and it also means that, for over two months, no one made her aware of these serious charges and allegations that took place in a school that she is responsible for.

Can the Minister of Education offer any explanation as to why she was left out of the loop by her department, her deputy minister, and the former minister on this issue?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I stated last week that that is in fact when I found out about the incidents that were involving the Hidden Valley Elementary School — very serious incidents. I want to reiterate what I said last week: that there is nothing more important than the well-being and safety of our children, especially when they are in our care. At the heart of this, children have been harmed, which is why we have launched — we want the answers that folks are looking for, which is why we have launched the independent review. I tabled those terms of reference today.

What is important are the steps that we are taking to address the situation. The independent review will help provide answers to these questions. The independent review will look at our internal and our interdepartmental processes in 2019 when allegations of this very serious child abuse were brought forward to Department of Education staff. I am committed to walking through this journey with family members, with the school community, and with Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If what the minister has told us is indeed true, then I actually have a bit of sympathy for her, because the minister's role is to provide oversight and direction to her department. The principle of ministerial accountability holds that the minister is responsible for all of the actions of their department. So, it is difficult to hold the minister accountable if she didn't even know what was going on in her own department.

So, I will ask again: Can the Minister of Education explain to Yukoners why she was kept in the dark by her department about this pressing issue facing the Yukon government?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue to talk to Yukoners about what happened in 2019. I have launched an independent review into what happened at the Hidden Valley school in 2019. This is a commitment that I made to the parents at Hidden Valley school. The independent review will look into our internal and interdepartmental processes in 2019 when allegations of child sexual abuse were brought forward to Department of Education staff. It will include a broad and comprehensive review of established government policies and

procedures around operations, reporting, and especially communications to address serious incidents in Yukon schools.

This will include reviewing how the Department of Education, Health and Social Services, and Justice work together to respond to serious incidents in schools and also their interaction with the RCMP, and parents, families, and guardians of Hidden Valley Elementary School will be involved in this review, along with partner organizations and agencies, including the RCMP. This is, again, a commitment that I stand by, and I look forward to further questions.

Mr. Dixon: While I appreciate all the information that the minister just read, that is not what I asked. What I asked was how she can possibly explain why she, as minister, was not informed of this by her department and by her colleagues. As a former minister, it is difficult to understand why a department would keep this sort of pressing information from a minister. It would seem that this is the type of issue that would come up in the transition briefings that all ministers are provided, when they are appointed, to get up to speed with their departments. It would help us to get to the bottom of this if the Minister of Education would simply release the transition binder that she received upon taking the role of Minister of Education.

So, Mr. Speaker, will she do that? Will she release the transition binder that shows that the department did indeed keep her in the dark about this issue?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I have stated a couple of times today, we have launched — I have launched — an independent review into all of the matters that I have tabled today — terms of reference that give Amanda Rogers the go-ahead to start this review. It is starting immediately and will look into all of the processes within government and what happened specifically in this incident — and the relationship and communication especially. I think that is definitely a question that I know parents have — I know that the school community has and Yukoners have. I am committed to ensuring that we explore everything that happened, and I've also committed to releasing this report, this independent review, to Yukoners.

I released today the terms of reference, before I tabled them in the Legislative Assembly today, to the school community. I think that one of the things that is really important is that, at the time of these incidents, immediate actions were taken. The individual who harmed the children was immediately removed. I think that is something that we need to — that good steps were taken.

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Mr. Dixon: With all due respect to the minister, I appreciate the information that she's providing, but it's not answering the question that I am asking, which is: Why was she was not informed about this by her department?

The principle of ministerial accountability is that the minister is responsible for the actions of her department, and so the question that I asked — and the question that I am asking now in this question — is: Why was the minister not informed of this, and how can we hold her to account for the actions of the department when she did not even know that was going on?

With that, Mr. Speaker, we have asked for her transition binder to be released in full. As it happens, we have requested the minister's transition binder and spring session binder through access to information and received copies. The only problem is that a significant portion of these binders are heavily redacted.

Will the minister release the full, unredacted version of her May 2021 transition binder, as well as her spring session binder?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated a few times today, I have launched an independent review of Government of Yukon's response to the situation at Hidden Valley. Documents will be reviewed throughout that independent review, which is why we have a person of independence — I have tabled the terms of reference today, which give this individual access to and permission to go where the investigation needs to go. We are committed to that, Mr. Speaker, with the point being that I want to work toward transparency in this. That is exactly what we will endeavour to do in this investigation.

I want to reiterate the commitment that we made to the Hidden Valley Elementary School and to the parents especially. I want to assure Yukoners that we are taking the necessary steps to get to the bottom of what has happened here, including the lines of communication. All of those documents will be reviewed in this independent review.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so committed to openness and transparency, why doesn't she just release the transition binder that will corroborate her point of view and her recollection of events here? If the minister simply releases an unredacted copy of these binders, it will corroborate what she has told us, and we can move on to other aspects of this issue. Unfortunately, the copies that we have received through ATIPP have significant portions redacted. Not only are the notes themselves redacted, but even the items and titles of the briefing notes in the table of contents are redacted.

So, if the minister is as committed to transparency as she says she is, will she simply release an unredacted copy of the transition binder that she received in May and her 2021 spring session binder, which corroborates her version of events here, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, today I tabled the terms of reference for the independent review of these matters. In item 4, at the conclusion of the review process, I will submit in detail a timely report to the Department of Education, which will include findings of fact related to responses of the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education, and the Department of Justice in the incidents of 2019 at the Hidden Valley Elementary School. This will include a timeline, Mr. Speaker, of communications and recommendations and further goes on to another point, which is a recommendation for improving government-wide policies and procedures to better support Yukon school communities.

I have committed to releasing this report once it is complete. The target date, I would like to add, is January 31, 2022. At that time, I will be releasing the findings. In the meantime, we are working with the school community

around support and ensuring that they have what they need as we go through this very difficult time.

Mr. Dixon: With all due respect to the minister, I am not asking about the independent report; I am not asking about the independent investigation. She has indicated that the independent investigation is set to look at the events that happened in 2019. What I am asking about is what happened with this minister in 2020 and how she could possibly have not learned about this pressing issue facing her department from her own staff, her own department, or the former minister — her colleague.

If she wants to be open and transparent, it would be very simple for her just to release these binders that include the unredacted versions of the notes and table of contents, which would corroborate her version of events in this. Mr. Speaker, these pieces of information are very important because they give Yukoners a sense of when the minister learned — and what she learned. They shouldn't have to wait another year for an independent investigation.

Will the minister release these binders and be open and transparent with Yukoners about what she knew and when she learned it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think that it's clear. My answer to these questions today is that we have — I have launched an independent review. I will ensure that Yukoners get the answers that they are looking for but particularly, Mr. Speaker, the families and the school community. That is my commitment. I made that commitment directly to the families. I will ensure that we have a full accounting of what has happened, and I will ensure that the report is released to Yukoners.

Again, I just want to say that at the heart of this are our children. There's nothing more important than the safety and well-being of our children. At the heart of this, children were harmed. That is something that I keep in mind each and every day. I will ensure that the answers are there for them and that I will continue to walk with the school community through this and do whatever I can, as the Minister of Education, to support them.

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Ms. White: I think it's important to note that children are at the heart of these questions, because no one wants to be here asking these questions.

Since July, our office has been talking and listening to parents whose children attend Hidden Valley school. They are angry about how the situation was handled. They are angry that information was held back by officials at the highest level, and they are angry that they had to wait years and then again months before hearing any real communication from the government.

But this issue goes beyond students and families directly involved in the Hidden Valley situation. All parents in the Yukon are angry, and all parents in the Yukon are concerned and wondering what other incidents or investigations haven't been disclosed by the Department of Education.

What concrete steps is this government taking to ensure that all schools in the Yukon are following the safe at school

plan? What protocols have been put in place to ensure that parents will be informed in a timely manner should a similar situation occur?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I do want to be speaking about the well-being of our children. I know that at the Hidden Valley school, with respect to safety and working with students after the 2019 events happened, the principal immediately implemented a practice where staff text to notify others when they need to be alone with a student. That was an immediate measure that they took directly right at the school.

The principal also implemented no alone zones where staff would not be alone with students. If someone suspects or sees an adult with a child alone in one of these areas, there is a duty to inquire further. Many other supports were put in place and the supports are intentionally dynamic. All children and families are unique in how they react to various experiences. We listened to the concerns to respond in an appropriate manner with the best direct supports to address the concerns. Supports have been available to families and staff, including on-site support, coordinating via a school community consultant through a trained social worker. I will answer more questions as we go forward.

Ms. White: It is hard to imagine the stress and anxiety that families, students, and staff are experiencing because of this government's mishandling of the Hidden Valley situation. The decisions made by the Department of Education left students without the supports that they deserved for 21 months. Parents are angry and rightfully so. They send their children to school, trusting that they will be safe, and that trust has been broken.

What concrete steps have been taken to support students and their parents right now? Do parents and children finally have access to counselling, and what other steps will be taken to help them through this awful time?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, at the heart of this is the well-being of our children, and nothing is more important than, when they are in our care, that they are safe and that their well-being is protected.

I want to just say clearly that, as soon as the school was aware of allegations in 2019, the individual was immediately removed from Hidden Valley school and no longer worked with students or in Yukon schools. The individual is no longer an employee of the Government of Yukon, of course. I would like to also point out that the RCMP said that, in terms of the investigation that happened — because the matter was turned over immediately to the RCMP — they have admitted that mistakes were made in 2019 in terms of follow-up with other students. There is also a review happening as a result of this as well.

In terms of supports for students — again, it is intentionally dynamic because the community is so different. I am assured by the school that the necessary supports are being put in place and that we are working on a one-to-one, individual basis as well.

Ms. White: Schools are supposed to be safe places for children to learn and grow. It is painfully obvious that the

government failed to do this. This government needs to be held responsible and to make sure that this never happens again. Parents and caregivers can't wait for a report to be published in January 2022 for the government to act. We need schools to have open and safe layouts that provide a clear line of sight so that children are safe. We need windows on doors, we need locks on closets, and we need actual physical changes to school spaces.

When is the government going to make concrete changes to all Yukon schools to ensure the physical safety of all students?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I have stated, some of those changes that the member opposite has laid out have been made. I am assured that the families are being worked with on a one-to-one basis. The school administration and student support services have and will continue to work closely with staff and families to address their individual needs, including providing health and wellness resources and education supports on important topics, including sexual health and reporting sexualized abuse. As part of the physical and health education curriculum, there are topics as well in the school that help to teach children about these matters and ways to deal with them if they come up.

Again, I attended a closed meeting with the families on September 22. I heard them and I am committed to a restorative process and working with them to rebuild that trust and relationship. This is a very difficult matter. I want to hold up the administration and staff at Hidden Valley. They have a really beautiful school. It is devastating that it has been impacted in this way.

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school, Child and Youth Advocate review of

Mr. Dixon: My question is — earlier I asked the Minister of Education if she would release her transition binder from earlier this year. The reason I ask that, Mr. Speaker, is that we have, through ATIPP, requested a copy of that binder and received a document that includes significant redactions. Some of the issues that are notable to us are that the issues that are redacted relate to, one, critical issues, and several fall under the heading of “educational assistants”. It is pretty clear to us, Mr. Speaker, that this information is relevant.

What we're asking is if the minister will release those transition binders unredacted so that we can see how those matters affect this issue.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, thank you for the question. I have launched an independent review. Amanda Rogers has been hired to do a review of the incidents at Hidden Valley in 2019. It will include a full review of all necessary documents and will result in a comprehensive report of fact finding and recommendations to the Department of Education and Government of Yukon. I have committed to releasing that fully to the public.

I also want to speak about the Child and Youth Advocate's review. We are working and supporting the child advocate's review as well, which is happening at the same time. There are further reviews of the RCMP's investigation.

Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am committed to ensuring that Yukoners get the answers that they need. I will be happy to continue to answer questions.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that this investigation and the independent investigation by the lawyer that the minister has hired will look at these things, but the minister doesn't need to wait. The minister can release this information now. In all likelihood, this binder is sitting in her office right now upstairs; she could go up and get it and release it. It includes important issues related to educational assistants and what the department deemed critical issues, both of which were redacted in the documents that we received through ATIPP. I don't think that Yukoners need to wait any longer. I think that the minister could simply go up, grab this document, and release it to us so that we can all see what information she was provided in her transition binder in 2021.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The review is underway, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to be clear with Yukoners that I think, again, at the heart of this is getting to determining the facts around this situation and further looking at very clear recommendations for improving government-wide policies and procedures to better support Yukon school communities.

The review is underway as we speak, and all of the necessary documents that will need to be reviewed will be reviewed. I have committed to releasing this report once it becomes available to me. In the meantime, as in the previous questions that have come forward today, we will continue to support our school community. I think at the heart of it, that is where a lot of my effort will be, and that of the Department of Education, as this review unfolds.

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school, Child and Youth Advocate review of

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, shortly after the story about what happened at Hidden Valley broke, the Child and Youth Advocate announced a review. Responding to media, the Minister of Education stated publicly, and I will quote: “It is the view of the Government of Yukon that the Child and Youth Advocate office doesn't have the legal authority to conduct this kind of a review.”

Last week, I asked the minister three times to tell Yukoners who gave her that advice and told her to say that. Three times, she refused to provide an answer. I would like to give the minister another opportunity to answer that. Who told the Minister of Education that the Child and Youth Advocate did not have the legal authority to conduct this review?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated more than a few times, I am supportive of the Child and Youth Advocate's work on this review. We have been working with the Child and Youth Advocate since July to clarify the terms of reference and the scope of work to focus in on the policies, protocols, and actions taken after allegations were brought forward. There are ongoing RCMP investigations related to this matter, and it is critical that we protect the integrity of those investigations. We are pleased to see that the advocate will ensure that the review does not interfere with ongoing criminal and civil proceedings related to the matter. The advocate's

review is specifically focused on the Department of Education's response, which is why we felt that a broader, independent review of government's response was necessary, including how we work with the RCMP in these cases.

As I have stated several times today, that independent review is now underway, and we will continue to work with the Child and Youth Advocate to support the review that she is conducting.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that perhaps now the minister is supportive of the Child and Youth Advocate, but when first asked about this, she felt that the office did not have the legal authority to conduct this kind of review.

Mr. Speaker, our office has obtained a copy of internal e-mails about this issue. They show quite clearly that it was in fact political staff from the Premier's office who directed the minister to tell media that the Child and Youth Advocate did not have the legal authority for this review.

Can the minister confirm that it was indeed political staff from the Premier's office who directed her to criticize the review launched by the Child and Youth Advocate and to claim that the advocate did not have the legal authority to conduct such a review?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I want to continue to tell Yukoners that we share the Child and Youth Advocate's interest in ensuring the safety and protection of Yukon youth and ensuring that policies and supports are in place to do what they are intended to do: keep our children safe.

The advocate's review that is underway focuses on Education's policies, protocols, and actions taken after allegations were brought forward and determining whether the actions taken follow established protocols. We have been working with the Child and Youth Advocate since July to clarify the terms of reference and scope of work to focus on — and now our focus on policies, protocols, and actions taken after allegations were brought forward. We will continue to support the work of the Child and Youth Advocate, again, in the best interests of our children. That is what is at the heart of all of this, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the opposition would like to continue to make this a very political issue. Really, at the heart of this is our children and their well-being.

Mr. Kent: So, let us take a look at the timeline here. On August 3, the Child and Youth Advocate announced that they were launching a review into the Hidden Valley situation. On August 6, the Minister of Education conducted a number of interviews with media to criticize the Child and Youth Advocate and claim that they did not have the legal authority to conduct such a review. As I mentioned, documents that we have obtained from the morning of August 6 revealed that the Premier's office wrote the talking points for the minister directing her to tell the media that the Child and Youth Advocate did not have this legal authority.

The question for the minister is: Did she question the direction from the Premier's office about this at the time, and what new advice has she received that has caused her to change her position on this issue?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we've been working with the Child and Youth Advocate since July to clarify the terms of reference and scope of work to focus on in terms of the policies, protocols, and actions taken after the allegations were brought forward in 2019. I myself met with the Child and Youth Advocate. We have worked through this and we now have that review underway, along with an independent review that I have also launched that will be broader in scope and will include the review of many documents and interactions. It will also include interviews with families and those directly impacted by these incidents. I just want to reiterate to Yukoners that the Child and Youth Advocate and the Department of Education — we share the interest of ensuring the safety and protection of our Yukon youth and ensuring policies and supports are in place to do that.

Again, at the heart of it, Mr. Speaker, is to keep our children safe.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, October 13, 2021. It is Motion No. 112, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, October 13, 2021. They are Motion No. 113, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North, and Motion No. 87, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 84

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 84, one of the three motions today to do with COVID-19 and the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 84.

Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 84

Clerk: Motion No. 84, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Fall Sitting, any Member of the Legislative Assembly who is unable to attend Sittings of the House in person due to COVID-19 symptoms, illness or protocols may participate in the sittings of the House by teleconference, notwithstanding Standing Order 8 or any other Standing Order, and by teleconference shall:

(1) be recognized to speak in debate, notwithstanding Standing Order 17;

(2) be permitted to vote, notwithstanding Standing Order 25;

(3) contribute to constituting quorum in the Legislative Assembly, under Standing Order 3 and the *Yukon Act*; and

(4) be considered to have attended the sitting of the Legislative Assembly, with no deduction of indemnity required under subsection 39(5) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I won't take up much time at all, other than to say that this motion is identical to a motion that was considered important by the Members of the Legislative Assembly back in 2020 when we were first dealing with the effects of COVID-19.

We have had much success here in the territory in the meantime, but nonetheless, we are trying to be cautious. Again, we hope — as I've said before in this House when dealing with these motions — to never have to use them, but in the event that we do, it is an important precaution. Our colleagues across the north in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have already had difficulties with members of their legislative assemblies either having symptoms or needing to be away for testing — those kinds of protocols.

I believe that this is timely, and we have discussed it at House Leaders. I understand that it will be supported by all members. I encourage them to do so.

Mr. Kent: Just to add to what the Government House Leader said, it was, of course, discussed at House Leaders, and the Official Opposition will be in support of this motion and the other two that we are going to be debating here today.

I would like to thank the Clerk's office for drafting the motions for us, which are similar, if not identical, to what we had approved last fall coming in after the shortened Spring Sitting because of the pandemic, and helped us to operate safely and effectively last fall.

Again, I thank my House Leader colleagues for their support of this and the Clerk's office for the drafting. As I mentioned, the Official Opposition will support this motion.

Ms. White: In speaking in support of this and the other two additional motions, it is important that all Members of the Legislative Assembly have the ability to participate if they can't be here for reasons beyond their control.

With that, we will be supporting this and the following two motions.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 84 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two further motions.

I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 85.

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 85

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 85.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 85

Clerk: Motion No. 85, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Fall Sitting:

(1) the Clerk shall keep a daily list of paired members, in which any member of the Government and any member of an opposition party may have their names entered together by noon on that date to indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division in the Legislative Assembly held on that date; and

(2) following each such division held, the names of any members entered on the list of paired members for that date shall be printed in Hansard and the Votes and Proceedings.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I noted earlier, there are three such motions, all designed for the purpose of allowing the Legislative Assembly to continue its work in the event of a COVID-19 situation that would affect this particular Legislative Assembly. Again, we have discussed this at House Leaders. I expect all members to agree that this is an appropriate motion to be passed here today and I encourage them to do so — unanimous consent, not only for the discussion of this motion, but on the motion itself.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, the Official Opposition will be supporting this motion as well. While this motion was brought forward to deal with absences primarily due to COVID-19 protocols, I am hoping that the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — SCREP — will take a look at this and make it part of our Standing Orders so that these pairings — whether they are now or going into the future — if they are provided to the Clerk's office prior to noon, they are recorded in Hansard, regardless of the reason for the pairing. I'm hoping that, again, SCREP takes a look at that and the possibility of adopting that into the Standing Orders.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 85 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: My last and final motion for today: I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 86.

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 86

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, Motion No. 86.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 86

Clerk: Motion No. 86, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Fall Sitting, if the Legislative Assembly stands adjourned for an indefinite period of time, the Government House Leader and at least one of the other House Leaders together may request the that Legislative Assembly meet virtually by video conference, with all of the Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to participate remotely, notwithstanding any current Standing Orders regarding members' physical presence in the Chamber.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, this being the third and final motion that I have noted today, I'm again hoping that we do not need to use the terms of this motion. I encourage all members to support it. Again, it has been discussed at House Leaders.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion No. 86 agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 202, standing in the name of the Hon. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to the first supplementary estimates for 2021-22. When we stood in this House over one year ago, I detailed a vast number of programs rolling out supports for Yukoners — supports that continue to make sure that businesses can keep their doors open, supports that allow Yukoners to take the time necessary off work for loved ones, to seek testing, to rest, or to recuperate if they get sick, supports that have helped to reinvigorate our tourism industry, which has

not escaped the pandemic effects that have been felt by other world-class destinations around the globe as well.

While we are now aware of many of the most acute needs for help and factored them into our main estimates this past spring, we continue to support Yukoners dealing with the challenges of COVID-19.

While our recovery from COVID-19 continues to be a top priority for this government — and for all Yukoners, for that matter — this budget updates supports for Yukoners in the face of other unexpected circumstances as well. This includes record flooding, which I will speak to later in greater detail. There is also funding in this bill for Yukon families as we develop accessible, affordable, quality early learning and childcare.

We believe that all families should have access to high quality, affordable childcare, and this budget update further delivers on that goal.

I will also detail, Mr. Speaker, funding for other initiatives that lead to healthier, happier lives in the territory. This government remains committed to providing Yukoners with the services that they need and expect while managing funds responsibly.

These supplementary estimates build on the foundation of responsible spending that we established in the 2021-22 main estimates where we were able to table a modest deficit despite the effects of the pandemic.

Before I dive into the numbers, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say a few words of thanks first, please.

This appreciation extends to all Yukoners who have come together to make sure that we emerge from the pandemic on a path that makes us stronger and healthier as a territory. To all the medical professionals and the health care workers who continue to care for Yukoners, inform our decisions, and keep Yukoners safe, your work remains vital to our success. To those who looked after and cared for the 10 Yukoners who tragically lost their lives to this virus, we recognize your sacrifice and honour the exemplary care that you've given to so many over the past 19 months. There are no words for our level of gratitude that this government and all residents have for your work.

We are also extremely grateful to every group, every individual who played a role in the fire and flood season this year in the Yukon, from Government of Yukon personnel, to municipalities, to First Nation governments, incident management teams from our territory and from out of our territory, flood specialists, engineers, the Canadian Armed Forces, property owners, community members, and all the volunteers.

To the public servants who have worked, and will continue to work, tirelessly around the clock to ensure that Yukoners have access to programming like the previous Yukon business relief program, the tourism relief recovery package, paid sick leave, and numerous other programs, your work has been absolutely invaluable. It has ensured that Yukoners have a robust safety net to weather the effects of this pandemic.

Lastly, to all Yukoners who have heeded and continue to heed the advice of this government and the chief medical officer of health, those who have kept gathering sizes small, who have travelled to the communities respectfully, and who

have received their vaccination, thank you — thank you for doing your part to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the territory.

The past year has been a collective effort, and the actions that I've seen from all Yukoners have made us the envy of the country. Yukoners are a special bunch, and I'm eternally proud to call Yukon home.

With that, I would like to now outline the budgetary changes that we are proposing between the main estimates and the supplementary estimates. In total, the 2021-22 first supplementary estimates contain \$72.2 million in additional gross spending.

It can be broken down to \$58.4 million in gross operation and maintenance expenditures and an increase of \$13.8 million in gross capital spending. The result is a revised deficit of \$18.2 million in the 2021-22 fiscal year, or a change of \$11.6 million from the forecast in the 2021-22 main estimates. The first supplementary estimates also show revised net debt of \$183.1 million, an increase of \$13.5 million from the revised May estimates.

At the same time, this government's ability to leverage its excellent relationship with the federal government ensures that appropriate recoveries are in place wherever possible. This guarantees that we see maximum value for every dollar that is spent here in the Yukon. The result of this positive relationship is \$49.4 million in total new recoveries, offsetting almost 70 percent of the new spending.

The spring budget contained \$15 million in COVID-19 contingency, which was reserved in the government's fiscal framework to fund further potential support without affecting the surplus deficit position. That \$15 million was already baked into the mains. These estimates include a reduction of \$4.5 million from the COVID-19 contingency fund to support the tourism sector, the COVID-19 call centre, and additional cleaning requirements in buildings. On top of that, we are trying to be cautious and preserve the ability to respond to new pandemic needs, including possible future waves. This is why we're keeping over \$10 million in the COVID contingency line for future use.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to provide a breakdown of O&M changes for members, beginning with an update of COVID-related spending. As I mentioned, new O&M spending will represent \$58.4 million in new spending. The result is \$20.9 million in additional COVID relief O&M spending and \$37.5 million in non-COVID spending. Part of this increase includes \$16.9 million with the Department of Health and Social Services. The largest portion of this increase, or \$10.7 million, is being used to address additional COVID-19 pressures. While not exhaustive, the remaining non-COVID amount in Health and Social Services will go toward various other significant initiatives.

The amount of \$515,000 will go toward the implementation of midwifery in the territory. This money will fund two midwives and one administrative assistant. Integrating midwives into the Yukon health care system will provide Yukon families with access to additional high-quality maternity options.

The amount of \$2.4 million in this supplementary budget represents carry-forward amounts under the territorial health investment fund, and \$1.3 million will go toward cultural activities for children in and out of home care. This latter initiative represents an ongoing shift in Yukon's child welfare practices and philosophy. At the core of our collaborative work is ensuring that all children have the right to be healthy and emotionally, physically, and spiritually safe and to feel loved, valued, and respected in their culture.

Finally, Health and Social Services is including funding for a supervised consumption site. Supervised consumption sites provide a safe and supportive place for people who use drugs to consume illicit substances in the presence of trained health care professionals. Like the rest of Canada, Yukon is experiencing an opioid crisis and continues to see an increase in opioid and overdose deaths. Supervised consumption sites help to reduce overdose deaths and increase the number of clients accessing addictions treatment services.

The Department of Highways and Public Works also requires a further \$5.8 million in funding to cover costs related to the pandemic. Of this funding, \$5.3 million represents a distribution of federal funds flowing through the Government of Yukon to support air carriers in order to maintain essential air services to the communities. This amount of money is entirely recoverable.

The remaining COVID-related spending within this department includes \$220,000, which will go toward cleaning supports for rural schools, and \$300,000 for the COVID call centre contract.

As we continue to deal with the impacts of this pandemic, this government will also continue to prioritize economic programs in support of Yukon businesses in order to mitigate the impacts on local employees, employers, and organizations. COVID-19 support programs continue to be recognized as the best and most generous in the country in supporting those who need it the most.

As of September 21, we have provided close to \$11.5 million to nearly 600 businesses across the territory through the Yukon business relief program.

In the supplementary estimates, we are including \$4 million to continue supporting Yukon businesses and individuals through the tourism accommodation sector supplement and the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, otherwise known as TAS and TNAS respectively.

These programs help visitor-dependent Yukon businesses remain solvent by providing funding up to the point of break even. The tourism accommodation supplement provides up to \$400 per room each month up to the point of break even for eligible accommodation businesses. Under the tourism non-accommodation supplement, businesses can receive up to \$60,000 between October 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022 to cover eligible expenses up to the point of break even. This extends the total amount eligible for non-accommodation businesses from \$60,000 to a total cap of \$120,000 in the 2021-22 fiscal year. As of September 23, these programs have provided \$4.4 million to support businesses.

As one of the major backbones of our economy, Mr. Speaker, the extension of this program will ensure that the tourism operators are here for visitors to enjoy these world-class experiences once travel returns to pre-pandemic levels. This is also why government is extending the Great Yukon Summer program. The Great Yukon Summer Freeze is a continuation of the summer program and will function the same way, with Yukoners paying the full price up front and then applying for a 25-percent rebate for eligible tourism packages offered by local operators. These experiences will take place between November 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022. I encourage all Yukoners to get out there and enjoy all that the winter in Yukon has to offer.

We also extended the paid sick leave rebate from September 30, 2021 to September 30, 2022. Since being launched in March 2020, over 180 businesses have benefitted from nearly \$850,000 in support from the paid sick leave program. Beginning October 1, workers and self-employed individuals may receive up to 10 days of additional paid sick days if they have COVID-19 symptoms or are caring for other household members with COVID-19. This is the third intake of the program since it was launched in March 2020. While this COVID-related spending is not negligible, it does represent a reduction compared to last year's first supplementary estimates. This is a result of improving case counts, increasing vaccination status, and the overall economic rebound that we are experiencing.

We expect COVID-related costs to continue to develop as we move forward, barring the emergence of any new variants or unexpected circumstances. We hope to see decreases in those costs.

Moving to non-COVID-related expenses, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the record flooding that was seen in the territory this summer. The effects of this flood were felt by many Yukoners over the past few months, but perhaps no one more than the homeowners who dealt with the threat of losing their homes.

Mr. Speaker, I would once again like to thank everyone who did step up and offer assistance with mitigating efforts to make sure this outcome was avoided. While we are not always able to predict how climate change and other factors will affect Yukoners in any given season, we are starting to see extreme weather events that challenge what we have come to know and expect when it comes to fires and flooding in Yukon.

When I was out volunteering, one of the homeowners said, "I used to use these words — a '200-year event'. I used that in 2007, and I will never use that expression again as we sit here in 2021 battling something that dwarfed the events of the previous flooding."

This year was a historically complex and long season. Well, 2019 was definitely complex for the long fire season that we had, and followed by 2020, this season saw the lowest number of fires and hectares burned that we have on record. This is extreme in its own way. We are grateful that we didn't see fires added to the floods, but again, to go from a historically complex season in 2019 to our lowest number of fires in 2020 — we are seeing extreme weather patterns.

This year, we are also responding to both fires and floods at the same time, which is not a typical scenario, putting another strain on Government of Yukon resources. As part of this supplementary estimate, approximately \$11 million will go toward flood mitigation and response efforts as well as \$250,000 toward efforts to enhance First Nation firesmart projects.

Looking forward, we must plan for extreme weather. We need to plan for these extreme weather events by creating wildfire- and climate-resilient communities and by investing in infrastructure that protects us from climate disasters.

In the boreal forest, this means managing fuels surrounding communities and creating firesmart areas and fuel breaks as well.

Our government is working with local leaders and stakeholders to create community wildfire preparedness plans for Yukon communities.

As we think about our environmental future, we must also think about the well-being of all of our citizens, Mr. Speaker, and that's why Community Services is making a new investment of \$1.1 million toward Emergency Medical Services for additional staff. The Yukon is unique in that we have a small population spread out over a vast amount of distance. The structure and staffing of our Emergency Medical Services programs reflect the statistics from our 17 EMS stations across the territory. This additional staffing will ensure that the Yukon EMS is able to continue to provide the critical services in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, \$9.9 million will go toward costs associated with universal early learning and childcare in the government's Department of Education. As I mentioned earlier, we believe all families should have access to high-quality, affordable childcare. The new universal childcare system in Yukon provides children an opportunity for learning and development in the early years. It also provides a curriculum in a child's education, while putting more disposable income into the hands of families, allowing parents and guardians to have more choices if they want to work outside of the home.

The universal childcare model is possible due to collaboration between Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, childcare operators, and partners across the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to report that every penny of this funding is recoverable from Canada.

The amount of \$375,000 will be included in this supplementary budget as part of a transfer agreement with Queer Yukon Society for the Pride Centre. The Yukon Pride Centre is a major initiative of Queer Yukon Society that is community driven and collectively imagined with a goal of creating a physical space where community members can gather and access resources, programs, and support.

We are also supporting Yukoners through policy changes, Mr. Speaker. On September 16, the Government of Yukon changed the name of the former Women's Directorate to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. Changes like this are important to reflect the important work that is already happening to advance and to support women, girls, and the LGBTQ2S+ community.

There is also an additional \$620,000 in the supplementary estimate in the Department of Environment's Fish and Wildlife branch for moose surveys in the Sifton-Miners Range, Whitehorse South, Quiet Lake, and Nisutlin River regions. These surveys are updated on a 10-year basis, and these locations are due to be updated. Determining moose populations in the Yukon supports the development of appropriate regulations and keeps the moose populations in the territory healthy and sustainable.

While there are other spending challenges reflected in the supplementary estimates, these changes reflect the most significant variances on the O&M side of things.

Let's talk capital. We are continuing to make progress on our capital program. There is also a small number of changes to projects included in the plan for this year. On the capital side, COVID-19 continues to have an impact on the implementation of the program through pandemic-related delays and cost pressures. Changes in this area ensure that we effectively respond to these challenges while delivering on the government's strategic investments that support the growing economy and delivering valued government services.

In this supplementary estimate, we will see increases for the Mayo-to-McQuesten transmission line and the battery grid project as well. The amount of \$6.4 million represents funds that were deferred from 2020-21 to this year as a result of COVID-19 delays. That work can now proceed. The grid-scale battery storage system will help to balance daily demand for electricity, while the transmission line upgrade will improve services in the Mayo region and provide renewable energy to the Eagle Gold mine site, reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by up to 53,000 tonnes annually. Mr. Speaker, these projects support our goals set in the *Our Clean Future* strategy by reducing diesel reliance and supporting renewable energy projects. This funding is also 100-percent recoverable.

This supplementary budget also includes additional funding for modular classrooms at Robert Service School in Dawson City and for the Whitehorse housing complex at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street. These projects will require an additional \$2.4 million and \$3.6 million respectively, with the modular classrooms being fully recoverable.

There is also \$1 million in this budget for program increases under the renewable energy initiative. It will allow more applications to be approved, helping to increase the supply of renewable energy and reduce diesel consumption in the Yukon. An additional \$5.8 million will also go toward capital costs in the Department of Health and Social Services, with a portion of these costs helping the Yukon meet its goals under *Putting People First*. This includes \$2.3 million from Canada Health Infoway and \$1.5 million for Meditech, both under the 1Health program. Launched on June 1, 1Health is the Yukon's new electronic health record system.

This allows for secure, instant, and seamless exchange of health information between teams in our hospitals, and in the coming months, it will serve other health care providers across the territory, including long-term care, home care, and continuing care, among others. For Yukoners, this means that only health care providers caring for you have access to this

information and that it is securely stored all in one place so that you no longer have to re-tell your story at each point of care.

This \$5.8 million also includes \$1.7 million for renovations needed at Copper Ridge Place.

There are also some decreases in capital spending. Most notably, Mr. Speaker, is a \$6-million decrease in spending for urban land development. This decrease resulted from the repackaging of the Whistle Bend phase 7 tender. This change allowed us to accelerate rural lot development so that there is a \$3.7-million increase in spending for developed rural lots in places like Haines Junction, Watson Lake, and Dawson City.

Our government remains committed to providing housing options across the housing continuum throughout the territory. This shift in spending will ensure that housing options exist for Yukoners, not just in Whitehorse, but in all communities. In Whitehorse, Whistle Bend lots will continue to be released over time.

There are also changes to recoveries included in the first supplementary estimates. Earlier, I mentioned our positive relationship with the federal government, and I am pleased to say that a result of this work with our federal partners means that, of the \$13.8 million of new capital spending, nearly all of it — \$12.3 million — is recoverable. This ongoing work with our partners is crucial in ensuring the maximum value of every dollar that is spent here in the Yukon.

On the O&M side, recoveries are just as favourable in that, of the \$58.4 million in new spending, \$37.1 million is offset by new recoveries. The largest portion of these recoveries is the result of COVID-related expenses. I look forward to detailing all of these recoveries during Committee of the Whole.

It is not surprising that in-year changes also result in some adjustments to our anticipated revenues. The 2021-22 first supplementary estimate reflects a decrease of \$10 million in revenues. The most significant impact on the Yukon's revenues is reflected in the \$8.5-million decrease in proceeds associated with sales of lots and lot development. As I mentioned earlier, this is a factor of the reduced spending in urban land development to accurately reflect the timing of when we expect lot sales.

The remaining decreases in revenues are associated with supports to Yukoners and Yukon's various industries. In some industries, fees including aviation fees were waived or reduced, decreasing those potential revenues. As well, there will be less revenues from the fees associated with outdoor pursuits as fewer tourists were able to use our campsites or our campgrounds or purchase angling licences. These temporary adjustments resulted in just under \$1 million in reduced revenues.

There is no change anticipated to our regular annual transfers from Canada, as per note.

Today we are also releasing the interim fiscal and economic update. In 2021-22, the interim fiscal and economic update represents updated expectations on Yukon's finances and the economy since March 2021 — the fiscal and economic outlook at that time.

The outlook for the Yukon's economy remains very positive. This document gives us a further glance into the

current forecasts and reveals that, following estimated growth of 1.1 percent in 2020, the Yukon's real gross domestic product, the GDP, is forecasted to grow by six percent in 2021 and 8.1 percent in 2022. This is a direct result of our strong mining sector, as mineral production is a key driver of growth in both years. It is also a contributing factor to job growth, which is now forecasted at 1.4 percent in 2021 — a figure that is expected to pick up further next year, along with the recoveries in the tourism sector.

I am happy to report, in fact, that employment gains are expected in every year of the outlook, with total employment expected to return to the 2019 levels in 2023.

While COVID-19 has dampened economic forecasts around the world, the interim update tabled today reveals an outlook that is less clouded by uncertainty. There is significant optimism as the Yukon emerges from the impacts, the immediate effects of the pandemic.

I want to note, for the record, an error that was related to the budget tabled in the spring during the 2021-22 budget exercise. The amount of \$32,000 of capital funding was allocated to the Department of Finance for office furniture and equipment. The 2021-22 main estimates reflect this allocation to the Department of Finance. In error, the bill reflected that the \$32,000 was allocated to the French Language Services Directorate instead of the Department of Finance. This error did not impact the total appropriation amounts. To correct this error, the *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* includes an appropriation of \$32,000 to the Department of Finance with an offset by a corresponding \$32,000 deducted for the French Language Services Directorate.

The 2021-22 main estimates and schedule A of the *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* were misaligned. The *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* is presented to reflect the intent of the vote requirements.

I would like to conclude my remarks by reflecting over the last six months. While the territory has continued to face challenges related to COVID-19 with new clusters and rising case counts over the summer and fall, we also have much to be optimistic about heading into winter. With the guidance of our medical professionals, the office of the chief medical officer of health, and our partners, Yukoners have been able to begin resuming many of their regular routines in a safe and responsible way.

As of last month, more than 80 percent of Yukon's total population was fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This leaves us well positioned to meet the challenges arising out of a fourth wave. While this latest wave continues to be one that primarily impacts unvaccinated individuals, our vaccination program will remain open to all those who are wishing to get vaccinated.

At the same time, this government continues to support Yukoners and businesses impacted by COVID-19 through the various programs introduced in 2020 and renewed in the 2021-22 budget. The last year has been an immense collective effort, and I want to thank everyone who has contributed to Yukon's success in navigating this new environment. We are on a good path and I look forward to seeing further recovery in

our tourism sector, in our business sector, and in our broader economy as well.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, today our government presents a responsible first supplementary estimate that responds to unexpected challenges in a way that ensures Yukoners are supported in their health and also in their finances. I invite members to treat Committee of the Whole as an opportunity to request further details on any of the areas included in the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to lead the responses from our side today as the Official Opposition Finance critic. I would like to begin, first of all, by again thanking my constituents in Lake Laberge for the continued opportunity to work with them and for them. I am also pleased here today to have the opportunity to continue serving as the Official Opposition critic for Finance as well as Health and Social Services, Agriculture, and Justice. I would like to thank the Leader of the Yukon Party for that opportunity and thank all of my caucus colleagues and staff for their continued work and support.

This spring we had a very short Sitting, which left us with just 11 days in total. It was insufficient to be able to ask the questions that we had about the budget and, indeed, that Yukoners wanted us to ask on their behalf about the budget. We will continue here in the Legislative Assembly to do our best as the Official Opposition in holding the government to account for their decisions, and that includes both acknowledging where we agree with them and criticizing them where we feel that change is needed and things should be done better.

Among those concerns is that, on top of spring, which saw this Liberal government going further into the red with increased spending, they have added to that this fall with increases in the supplementary estimate comprising a total of \$58.4 million in new O&M spending on top of what was estimated in the spring and an additional \$13.8 million in capital. That sees the deficit for this year increase — almost tripling — from the projected \$6.6-million deficit in the spring to \$18.2 million in the fall supplementary. It sees the estimated net debt at the end of the fiscal year increase from \$169.6 million to \$183.1 million.

With large numbers like millions and billions, I know that they sometimes seem out of reach for people, but I would remind Yukoners that this is for a territory of just over 40,000 people. Those numbers, when broken down on a per-person allocation, are quite significant. We see as well, according to the handout that government provided with the supplementary estimates, another significant increase in the number of government employees. Madam Deputy Speaker, I remind you that this is on top of the significant increase that we already saw in the spring.

According to their handout, the increase on top of the increase we saw in the spring is 110.5 full-time equivalent positions — so, 110.5 new government employees. They have indicated that 87.3 of these are due to pandemic management. I have asked and will ask again for more clarity on that spending, because it is difficult to understand how the Yukon government could have seen such an increase in the resources

required for pandemic management since the previous fiscal year, since the spring that would require another 87-plus employees on top of what were already there.

Now, I do understand and recognize that resources continue to be required for the pandemic, but the significant ramp-up that occurred last fiscal year and again the additional amounts provided this spring were already in place. It is difficult to understand why there would be such an additional requirement since the spring of 87 new positions. It does lead to some question on my part of whether other positions that are being created are simply being pushed under the banner of “pandemic management” in an effort to blame all new costs on the pandemic rather than answering for those costs on an individual basis and defending those costs on their individual merits or lack thereof.

I would also point out that it does seem somewhat ironic that, on the one hand, this government talks regularly about a housing crisis, and then part of their solution to that housing crisis is their continued pattern of hiring hundreds of new full-time equivalent positions and, in many cases, bringing those people in from outside the territory to compete for the already limited housing. I’m not disagreeing that in some cases new resources may be required, but when the growth continues at the rate it has, it is part of the problem — and not just the spending problem but the housing availability and affordability problem.

Mr. Speaker, in touching on a few other issues, I would note as well that, in the area of pandemic response, we in the Official Opposition appreciate the efforts that continue to be made by people across government departments, as well as in the Yukon Hospital Corporation and in medical clinics across the territory, as well as pharmacies and indeed throughout the private sector to deal with various aspects related to responding to the pandemic or to simply dealing safely with the pandemic.

It has posed a significant challenge for many, many Yukoners. It has caused some businesses financial difficulty, and for many others, it has simply meant additional costs, challenges, and hassles. But we recognize that, for people across the territory, it creates challenges and it also — as I noted earlier, in speaking to World Mental Health Day — in some cases, increases mental health pressures for some people. We need to work together to be part of trying to assist those in need, both financially and through areas such as mental health supports.

I would like to thank everyone who is part of the ongoing work by government and the ongoing work by the private sector in the health care sector in responding to this.

A couple of other areas I would like to touch on, Mr. Speaker, include — as I mentioned on the first day of the Sitting, I read a motion into the record regarding the issue of the thousands of Yukoners who don’t currently have a family doctor. We in the Official Opposition are calling on the government to do more in this area, including to establish a better working relationship than they have had in the past few years with the Yukon Medical Association, and to work with them jointly on improving our approach as a territory to

physician recruitment and retention. There is a problem and more needs to be done.

Years ago, during my time as Minister of Health and Social Services — at the time, we responded to issues then by developing the health and human resource strategy, which included working with the Yukon Medical Association to develop incentives to encourage physicians to move to the territory. One of the things that is necessary today is, first of all, for the Liberal government to recognize that they have not done very well in the past in their relationship with the Yukon Medical Association. They need to improve that and they need to recognize that working with the physician community to develop an appropriate package of incentives and recruitment strategies to get more doctors to the territory is very important. In fact, for the thousands of Yukoners who don’t have a family doctor, for some of them, this issue is critically important.

I am pleased that the government has again included money in this budget for the Meditech replacement project called “1Health” and I do appreciate that the Premier is now extolling the virtues of the project, because as you will recall, when we first began debating the need for this project back in 2017, we had many hours of disagreement on the importance of this where we have advocated for the government to advance this project, and it took them quite a while to get around to actually doing so. I am pleased that they are addressing it here today. As members will recall, I would like to recap the fact that, in our election platform during this spring’s election, health care was a priority for us, and this included supporting the needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

As the Premier’s colleagues will recall, we have, in many Sittings — in fact, every year since the spring of 2017 — criticized the government for their record of chronic underfunding for the Hospital Corporation, and we will continue to advocate for priorities, including enhancing supports for our Yukon hospitals, taking action to reduce wait times for essential health procedures, and implementing a wait-time reduction strategy.

As noted by the Leader of the Official Opposition during the election campaign, quality health care is timely health care, and we will push the government to take action to reduce wait times and to ensure Yukoners get the care they need when they need it.

We will also push the government to do as we committed to do, and that is providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation with stable and predictable funding. It needs to deliver quality care, including an annual increase to the funding.

I will just take a brief segue from that to note that, in looking at the additional money in these supplementary estimates, we don’t really see much there in terms of resources for the Hospital Corporation. While we do see significant increases to address pandemic-related pressures in the Department of Health and Social Services and elsewhere, the same does not seem to be in place for the Hospital Corporation, so we will be asking some questions about that. The number one question being: Why?

Just moving on to the next area in my notes, I will, in my introductory remarks here, touch on a number related to my

critic responsibilities, but there are a number of other items that I will address later on during departmental debate.

With regard to the pandemic, I would note that one question I have heard from a number of Yukoners is about the availability of a booster shot for people — particularly for seniors. As the Minister of Health and Social Services and colleagues may know, the Northwest Territories has taken some steps in that area.

The Yukon did recognize and make that available for some immunocompromised individuals, but I would note that the Northwest Territories has gone further, including according to what the Premier of the Northwest Territories told CTV last week, I believe. She had indicated that they were making booster shots available to seniors 75 and older who wished to receive them. While I don't have detailed information on what the Northwest Territories is doing, we would appreciate it if the government could provide clarity on what is being done here in the Yukon, what is planned next, and how that compares to other jurisdictions, including the Northwest Territories. This is an area of active interest to immunocompromised people and senior citizens who are wondering, based on some of the available information through media and other sources, whether their own immunity may be declining if it has been six months or more since their shot and are looking for the best available information about what is known about that and what the government plans to do in terms of making available a booster shot to them if and when that becomes advisable and they wish to receive one.

Mr. Speaker, I would just also like to again touch on the flood response. We do see additional spending in here related to that. As I noted earlier while responding to the ministerial statement on the topic, we do appreciate the work that was done by department staff, by volunteers, by private contractors, and by the military in terms of dealing with the flood response and recognize that much was done well. However, there also were some areas where things could have been done better and our job as the Official Opposition includes to note what was done well and also identify where mistakes were made and point out where there's room for improvement.

I would also note, as the Leader of the Third Party mentioned earlier when she made reference to the importance of a post-flood analysis, that I agree that it is important, particularly since government is indicating that, as we deal with climate change, we may see future flood years as early as possibly 2022. Because of that, it is especially important for a robust post-flood analysis to be done that gives a frank assessment of what was done well, what could have been done better, and what can be done about it in the future to ensure that, in future years, we avoid making some of the mistakes that were made this year, as well as identifying some of the more at-risk sections of infrastructure where government investment on doing things such as building up certain roads or areas may prevent a problem from occurring in future years.

This includes some roads in the Marsh Lake area as well as — the Jackfish Bay Road is an example of where it is quite clear that, if the road is not raised up and widened to a level

above where it flooded this year, it is going to be an obvious problem in future years.

I just want to again remind ministers, as I did through a recent e-mail, that in fact, after the super-bag berm was taken away, government unfortunately did not do as I had suggested at the time and take that opportunity to also fully widen the road and build it up. Right now, what I've heard from a number of my constituents down that road — they are concerned about the current access to their homes. The road itself — I drove down recently — is quite narrow where it crosses the area that was flooded. It's wide enough for a light truck to cross or for a car, but it's questionable whether it's even wide enough right now for a fuel truck or for a fire truck. Certainly, if the road isn't widened before the winter, a situation is likely to occur where vehicles either won't be able to get there or may slip off the road in slippery conditions. So, I would just like to again flag that for ministers and note that this problem is very solvable, but it would be better done before too many more days or weeks pass and we're fully into winter.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to the next area that I wanted to touch on here today, I would note that, while the Premier made reference to additional resources in the budget for EMS, there continue to be concerns in rural communities about the gaps in coverage that occur in rural Yukon. I know that a number of my colleagues have written to government about this in the past and raised issues. I know that this is an issue of importance for the Member for Watson Lake, the Member for Kluane, and the Member for Pelly Nisutlin. I would again just emphasize that, while the additional resources in this budget are welcome from my perspective, they don't seem to do anything to address the needs of rural Yukon in terms of gaps in coverage and the increasing pressure and, to some extent, instability in coverage, which is occurring in some Yukon communities.

We do recognize the challenge of providing this service, and I want to express my appreciation for the volunteers across the territory who make this service available in their communities, but it is incumbent on government to recognize that the current model has more gaps in it than are acceptable. If government doesn't work with our volunteer EMS providers to come up with a solution to this, unfortunately, where this is inevitably headed is that those gaps in coverage will lead to serious problems, and even potentially fatalities, as a result of not having that coverage in place.

It is not that the government hasn't tried to deal with this issue, but what has been tried to date isn't working well enough. I know that my colleagues have heard concerns from constituents repeatedly. I have heard concerns from people across the territory, and I would just emphasize to the government that this is an important issue to deal with. While it falls under Community Services, instead of the Health and Social Services critic area for which I am responsible, it is one that is very directly linked and is an important part of our health care system. If we continue to have large gaps in coverage for emergency medical services in Yukon communities, unfortunately, the result of that is predictable and in some cases will be tragic.

I hope government will take my appeal to heart and do more in this area to work with rural volunteers and figure out solutions to the problems that we are seeing today.

Another area in terms of rural supports that is very different from EMS, but is also important to people living in the area, is the issue of access to get rid of their garbage. While it is not perhaps an exciting issue, it is one that, for people who are a long drive from the nearest alternate facility, the government's plans to shut down the Braeburn transfer station for waste, the Silver City transfer station for waste, the Johnson's Crossing transfer station, and the Keno station are causing great concern to people in those communities.

What the government hasn't seemed to recognize as well is that the effects of this are myriad. It affects small businesses that are trying to earn a living. In some cases, due to the pandemic and other factors, they are struggling to survive in rural Yukon. Taking away accessible garbage disposal options either places them in a situation where they are forced to stockpile garbage until they are able to drive a long distance to the nearest facility — which, of course, increases the risk of a wildlife conflict — or it puts them into a situation where the temptation to either burn garbage or dump it illegally is increased directly as a result of government slashing these rural services.

As I touched on also in the spring during budget debate, this has an effect on what government has referred to as "aging in place" in that, for seniors who are living in rural Yukon, losing access to the garbage disposal option that was there when they bought their home — for some, this creates a significant problem. I have heard that from constituents in Braeburn. I know that others have heard that in other areas. I would point out that, although it may seem like it's a cost efficiency to government, if you or a member of your family had bought a home in a rural Yukon community, planned your sunset years, and then found that government was yanking away the garbage bins down the road from you, you not only would not be very happy about it, but you wouldn't see that as very fair. Using the example that I am most familiar with — my own constituents in the Braeburn area — for people to have to drive all the way from there to the Deep Creek dump and only be able to go there four days a week during certain hours is a hardship for some people in those areas.

A related note that I touched on in the spring and that the government has yet to resolve — so I will bring it up again — is that government, despite talking a good game on aging in place, actually cut the in-territory medical support for some Yukoners travelling to Whitehorse. This is something that I've heard especially from seniors living in the Braeburn area who are upset about the fact that they have to travel into Whitehorse multiple times for specialists and other appointments because of the inability of the system to allow them to book all of those appointments on one day. For some, it means travelling in multiple times in the week between visiting the lab for testing and seeing the specialist. For a senior on a fixed income, those costs typically all come out of pocket. The government cut the support, and I am again urging them to reinstate it and am reminding them that, if they are actually committed to the line

that they talk about aging in place, it includes recognizing the importance for Yukoners who are living out in rural Yukon and outside of communities or in small communities — if they lose access to financial support that helps them to get the health services they need, they not only are not helped to age in place, but it puts them at greater risk of having a problem that results in them ending up in a hospital or continuing care facility at an earlier date.

Again, using the example of Braeburn, the combination of losing that in-territory medical travel subsidy and losing a transfer station just down the road from them and being forced to try to time their trips to a dump that is only available four days a week — two of them on weekends — with specialist appointments and doctor appointments, it starts to become an additional hassle and there are significant additional costs entirely created for them by this Liberal government.

That is not something that the government should feel good about, and they can solve it, so I urge them to actually do that.

Mr. Speaker, I would also note that, while I centered on the affect of withdrawing garbage service from the Braeburn area, there have also been letters written by my colleague, the Member for Kluane, who has had constituents writing upset letters and circulating a petition regarding how upset they are about the Silver City facility being shut down as well as their view of the minister's attitude toward their concerns. I would also note that the member for Mayo-Tatchun is probably well aware of the fact that several people from Keno have written letters to the government and letters to the editor about how upset they are about losing this service.

I'm going to move on to a few other areas here. I would note as well, as I touched on in the spring, that there are many Yukoners who are upset about the new rules that the government imposed on agriculture land. The government did take a step back after receiving criticism from me, from some of my colleagues, as well as from individual Yukoners, but what we haven't heard publicly is what the next steps are in terms of consultation, et cetera. This has been a bit unclear. If the government has simply decided to back down on the rules that they initially brought in on April 1, 2021, then that is good news.

If the government is planning to bring something else in place, then it's incumbent on them to be clear with people about what they are looking at doing and what the opportunities will be for public consultation. It is important to emphasize that, when you apply rules retroactively to people's property, to put them in the situation where they bought property and it has negatively affected their ability to get a building permit — in some cases, even for a primary residence — it has made it difficult to get building permits for farm buildings and has required them to jump over a higher bar to be able to either develop buildings or to subdivide their property. It has taken a situation where, if someone makes — very likely — the largest investment of their lives in their property — and they do it on the basis of an understanding of what their rights and opportunities are — and then government comes in after the fact, unilaterally changes the rules, and leaves that Yukoner left owning something that is not as valuable as it was before

government came in — and when their rights to even develop their property have been impeded to the point where, as members will be aware — as the minister may be aware, in his own riding, there was a situation earlier this year where the sale of an agricultural property fell through because the people who were looking at purchasing it found that, under the current rules, they would not be able to build a primary residence on an agricultural lot that did not have a cabin or house on it. They found that they would not be able to complete that for two years. Based on what was explained to them about the rules, they chose not to purchase the property. As a result of that type of uncertainty that is created, it negatively impacts both the housing availability and the agricultural sector.

Again, I would urge the minister to provide us with an update on the status of those rules, and particularly, I want to emphasize the importance of ensuring that government consults with people about any proposed zoning changes and does not bring in changes that take away, in any significant manner, the rights of property owners.

I would also like to touch on the agricultural policy itself. During the election campaign, I heard on the doorstep from Yukoners who were concerned about the details of it and noted that, while there is some good stuff within it, the government did not consult very widely on the details of the policy and did not do public consultation. There was some very early stage consultation on concepts, and then the government sat on that, did work behind the scenes, and came out with a policy a year later than they promised and skipped consultation with people who were affected by it. That was not the right way to handle it. The new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has the opportunity to fix this problem by actually doing consultation on details of that policy.

As well, I'll be looking for updates from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on the status of Shallow Bay zoning, as he is well aware that the approach that was taken previously by the government was very upsetting to a number of property owners there and particularly considering that the government was actually both, with a proposed riparian buffer, applying on titled property, which was unprecedented — and a reduction of some of the current zoning rules — they were creating a situation where people were losing a significant portion of rights that they had before the Liberal government came into office.

Mr. Speaker, I would also just like to, before wrapping up my remarks here, touch briefly on a few other issues and areas. I would note that this summer seems to have been a particularly bad one — probably in part because of precipitation — for secondary roads, for rural roads having potholes, washboards, et cetera. I've heard repeatedly from constituents about roads, including the Braeburn road, the Jackfish Bay Road, and Takhini River Road — again, I continue to urge the government to invest in a major upgrade to that road. I'm sure that my colleagues, when they rise, will talk about some of the roads in their ridings that are in need of improvements. I do note that one of the takeaways from the conclusion that increased precipitation may come with climate change is that government may need to do more to invest in maintenance to rural roads.

I also should have mentioned earlier, but I will add now, that the Old Alaska Highway was another one that had a significant amount of potholes on it.

While this may sound to people who don't live down those roads as a minor inconvenience, in some cases, depending on the severity of the potholes and how muddy the surface is, this can be a serious safety issue if a fire truck or an ambulance needs to travel down the road. After it has deteriorated, that can be an issue. Again, I would emphasize that Takhini River Road has continued to be particularly notable in how bad that road gets after precipitation. Considering the high population of people living down there, it is in need of investment.

Another area that I would like to touch on is the ongoing issue of lack of cell service and the gaps in that. It continues to be an issue and a priority for people in my riding and the Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, and Fox Lake areas as well as Ibex Valley where they have seen a deterioration in cell service. It also affects sections of the Takhini Hot Springs Road. I know that colleagues have also asked for increases in services to areas such as Junction 37 and Mendenhall. Again, we have reminded the government of the list in the past, and this continues to be an issue of importance for people for emergency services as well as convenience. Unfortunately, this is one that the Liberal government has simply paid lip service to in all the time that we have been raising it.

Moving on to another issue that the government has paid lip service to, I would note that the ongoing elk problem continues to be in need of action. My colleague, the Member for Kluane, and I wrote jointly to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Environment this summer regarding this problem, urging the government to make the entire Takhini valley area an elk-exclusion zone, which, as they know, is a request that came from the Yukon Agricultural Association. Unfortunately, we saw a situation where, first of all, the Leader of the NDP joined us in going with farmers on a tour of affected properties — ministers did not see fit to join, nor did they take offers from farmers to book that later in the summer — and, in follow-up to the letter that the Member for Kluane and I sent and the request from the Yukon Agricultural Association, they did hold a virtual meeting with the Yukon Agricultural Association and other farmers that — “they”, I should specify, was the Minister of Environment, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and senior officials. I think that the polite way of wording the response of the Yukon Agricultural Association to how they felt they were heard and treated is that they were profoundly disappointed.

The letter that the Member for Kluane and I sent urging the government to make the entire Takhini valley an elk-exclusion zone was dismissed out of hand by both ministers. We got very much of a blow-off response in reply. This continues to be a serious issue for my constituents as well as for constituents of the Member for Kluane. We will continue to work on behalf of our constituents and bring forward the importance of coming up with a better solution to managing the elk than the government has been proceeding with.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that I would just remind the government about, as I did in the spring, is that not only do

government tipping fees at dumps continue to be a problem, the problem that was created last summer in commercial garbage service outside city limits being impacted by the Government of Yukon and City of Whitehorse not having a structure between them that allows predictability for commercial waste providers is something that is having a serious cost impact on some farmers as well as other business owners in the Whitehorse periphery. While government did one thing, they didn't work with the city to come up with a clear, predictable structure that would actually facilitate the service being provided.

I would point out to government that this is creating a situation — I've said this in the past, but I have to remind them again — where the status quo sees a situation where the structure encourages farms down the Takhini Hot Springs Road to personally take their garbage to the Deep Creek dump, taking their waste on a 40-mile side trip instead of going straight into the Whitehorse landfill. That is not a very efficient structure financially, and from a climate-change perspective and emissions-reduction structure, it is certainly going in the opposite direction of reducing emissions.

I would also just touch on the fact that we've seen serious delays this year in the permits for firewood that government has made available. This is entirely a government-created problem, which is leading to challenges for people getting firewood for the winter, significantly increased costs, and wood being brought in from BC instead of being used here in the Yukon.

I recognize that in the area of wildfire reduction in the communities, we have been calling for government to do more. They have taken some steps, but there is a very real opportunity for the government to work with First Nations, municipalities, and the private sector to use targeted harvesting in your communities to not only reduce wildfire risk but improve fuel-wood access. That could be one part of addressing the fuel-wood need. Additionally, in the other areas, as we have heard from Yukoners across the territory, the biggest thing that government needs to do is stop delaying the issuance of fuel-wood permits, because this is causing a problem for small businesses, it is causing a problem for citizens, it is causing a problem for seniors and many others, and it has resulted in an illogical situation where some fuel-wood providers find it easier to import from BC instead of harvesting locally.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for a while about other priorities and concerns, but I think I will leave that there for the moment and turn the floor over to someone else. As I mentioned, I look forward to addressing a number of these issues at greater length in individual department debate.

I would just conclude by following up on the subject that we have raised during Question Period on both days that the House has been back in session. I have raised it with the Minister of Education multiple times in a letter — that being the importance of the Hidden Valley school situation and government being transparent with parents and the public about it, including providing answers to the questions that parents have and being accountable for their own actions, including what they knew, when they knew it, and what they did about it. I have to warn the government that this issue is not going away.

It would be a lot easier to actually be open and accountable to Yukoners and provide them with the information that they deserve.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, what a lesson — it has been a day full of lessons.

For the Member for Lake Laberge, as reference, I did not attend a farm tour with him. He attended a farm tour with me, as it was my suggestion to the Yukon Agricultural Association. I said that, with everyone having a common language and understanding, it would be great, and I was pleased to see it, although I will echo his thoughts that it was disappointing to not have the ministers at the time, but I do look forward to them going on the farm tour and seeing the elk damage.

I would also point out at this point in time that the Member for Lake Laberge was also a minister when there was an elk problem and nothing happened then, although I am hopeful — forever optimistic — that we will deal with this issue. Elk in the Takhini River valley are a problem. They are a problem for agriculture, and if we say — and we have — that there is a climate emergency and if we are committed to food security in the north, these are things we need to talk about. They are not necessarily easy or comfortable, but they do need to change.

Some of the questions and concerns I will have over the next while have to do with the COVID support programs. When they were initially announced and they had timelines, some dates that were included made a lot of sense. For example, the paid sick leave program, when it was initially announced, said that you needed to have a business that had been registered prior to March 13, 2020. That made sense for the first part of the program to make sure it wasn't abused and that the support funding wasn't used, for example, for new businesses to start up. Knowing that the program has now been extended means that folks who have been in business and just hadn't registered by that date are being affected and are looking to access the paid sick leave program. I'm hopeful that this has just been an oversight. Knowing that some of those programs initially were announced way back in 2020 and here we are at the end of 2021 and those programs have been extended — which is important. It is important that we have the proper supports in place.

There are many, many questions with the supplementary estimates, which I am looking forward to discussing with the ministers as we get into those departments. Some things that maybe won't be there that I would like to be there — this is just a heads-up for the Minister of Highways and Public Works — the temporary anti-slip paint that goes on the wooden walkway outside of the Yukon tourism information centre has worn off. It was put on about a month or six weeks ago, and in places where it has worn off — it turns out that the railway tracks that go through the Millennium Trail are actually the responsibility of the Department of Highways and Public Works — they are really slippery with the frost. I can attest to that as I am a new convert to bike commuting. I pass those trails every day, and I'm nervous about both crossing the tracks and that wooden surface. Although that was a measure that was put in place to take us through winter, it's already wearing off.

When we talk about supplementary estimates and we talk about additional changes to budgets, it is important to note that there definitely are things that won't be there. We have been contacted by folks who have concerns about wait times for MRIs at the Whitehorse General Hospital, so we are looking forward to the hospital appearing here as witnesses.

There are different things that were brought forward. If we have nearly 3,000 people — I think it is 2,600 people — on a wait-list for a family doctor — I have been asked by someone who doesn't have a family doctor if health care is truly universal. If you don't have access to a doctor and you have to go to the emergency room, is health care truly universal? It is a question that we should answer. Knowing that folks without a family doctor at this point in time are having a hard time getting prescription medication, because sometimes that prescription medication needs to be under supervision — so, by a doctor — but if you don't have a doctor, it makes this challenging.

Knowing that there have been recent decisions made by the residential tenancies office that affect mobile home parks, making sure that the information is shared widely with folks in parks but also making sure that one decision covers other parks that are doing similar things that have been found to not have been done correctly in respect to the legislation —

So, although there will be many departments called forward for the supplementary estimates, ultimately, I look forward to actually being able to engage with the Premier and being able to ask the questions and get the answers, because being here like a talking head is, I don't feel, the most effective way to get my point across. I look forward to engaging with the ministers responsible for different departments. In the case where those departments won't be up for debate, I'm looking forward to having these conversations with the Minister of Finance because budget times are times to ask questions about how departments make decisions and how decisions are made.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues, and more than that, I look forward to Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity to address the Legislative Assembly today. As I begin, I would like to take a second to thank my family and friends for their endless support and understanding. As everyone who has done this job, or maybe even contemplated doing this job, knows, being a member of the government and of this House takes a toll on relationships. It is wrong, Mr. Speaker, but the demands on your time mean that your family and friends regularly take a back seat, and they don't have you in some of the everyday moments of their lives, as much as they, or as much as you, might like.

When we ask our neighbours and our constituents in our communities to send us here to represent them and their issues, our families and friends also make that commitment. Managing through a world pandemic only makes that commitment and that workload more intense.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Riverdale South have sent me here to represent them and to bring forward their concerns and to help resolve their issues and those issues that are of the

greatest interest to them and to all Yukoners. That honour, Mr. Speaker, is mine.

Individually, Yukoners took the time to express their votes and participate in our democratic process and make sure that there was a representative sent to this Legislative Assembly. They took the time to do that in the first of what turns out to be three elections this year and to send someone to represent them to this Legislative Assembly.

I also appreciate — let me say it this way: I hope that Yukoners will not lose stamina with elections and will turn out in record numbers to support municipal mayors and councils in the next number of weeks, that election being on October 21 here in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, my notes from last year describe it as an unusual and challenging year for everyone. We had all hoped for a strong return, maybe to our pre-pandemic lives, and unfortunately, that is not yet the case. We continue to live through a moment in history. It is with patience, kindness, and mutual support that Yukon communities are working to keep us all safe and resilient.

I've said many times before that governments must understand their responsibility to the people of this territory. Our government works every day with that in mind.

Sometimes a supplementary budget is required when there are changes to the main budget for one reason or another. It won't surprise anyone that anticipating what the costs might be for certain things, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, would be unusual and perhaps need adjustment.

The supplementary budget includes spending due to the COVID-19 pandemic and what our government spent and continues to do to address and assist Yukoners in multiple necessary areas.

Mr. Speaker, in making these decisions, we turn our minds to the question of what is in the best interests of Yukoners. This supplementary spending reflects that question and approach. What is the help that Yukoners need and are asking for? What can we do to keep Yukoners safe during this unusual time?

I will turn my comments to the supplementary budget focused on Health and Social Services for 2021-22. I am going to take a moment first, please, to thank the officials of the Department of Health and Social Services, in particular, the deputy minister, Stephen Samis, and his team of amazing assistant deputy ministers: Amy Riske, Karen Chan, Mary Vanstone, Shehnaz Ali, and Sharon Specht. They, along with the department, have been instrumental in ensuring that we develop a budget that supports Yukoners. I want to thank them for their dedication and their hard work.

It is clear that COVID-19 comes and continues to have a significant impact on all Canadians and all Yukoners. Keeping Yukoners safe has been our government's top priority since this deadly virus first appeared more than 19 months ago. In fact, the first real COVID wave only arrived here in the Yukon in June of this year. While we weathered that gamma-variant-fuelled storm, it was not easy. As we are seeing across Canada, the delta variant is now a threat to Yukoners.

That is why our chief medical officer of health continues to recommend that we get vaccinated and practice the "safe six

plus one". Our ongoing pandemic response is, of course, guided by our *Forging Ahead* document, which outlines two goals and six pillars to support Yukoners. The two goals are to enhance Yukoners' well-being and protect populations that are vulnerable. The six pillars, Mr. Speaker, are supporting First Nations and community partnerships, vaccinations, testing and surveillance, surge capacity, social supports for vulnerable people, and public health measures.

Through this supplementary budget, as we continue our efforts under each of these pillars, our work is not yet done. It is only through ongoing, sustained efforts that Yukoners will be able to live and cope with COVID.

We continue to support our hospitals and meet their financial needs related to COVID, and this is also included in this supplementary budget. We know that we must continue with robust contact tracing and provide supports and self-isolation options for some Yukoners.

Most importantly, we must continue our territory-wide vaccination efforts. Vaccinations are our best defence. Scientific evidence shows that raising our vaccination rates even by a single percentage point helps reduce the risk of breakthrough cases for the fully vaccinated and of community transmission. For those who have not yet chosen to be vaccinated, I urge you to do so. Each additional person who chooses to get vaccinated helps to protect us all.

For the Department of Health and Social Services, protecting and enhancing the well-being of Yukoners during a global pandemic has been both challenging and expensive, but through the dedication and hard work of all our front-line health and social support workers — from doctors and nurses to continuing care workers to personal support workers to cleaning staff, and to all those who support our efforts, along with the acting chief medical officer of health — we have continued to offer the services and supports that our citizens rely on. Our vision of healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities continues even during a global pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of our efforts combating this pandemic, we have continued moving forward with *Putting People First*, the final report of the comprehensive review of health and social services, which has been endorsed by the government.

In this budget — some of this has been mentioned by the Premier, but it is worth noting — we are requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$22,764,000. This represents a 4.6-percent increase to the overall budget of Health and Social Services. This additional funding is required for not only our pandemic response and our ongoing health system transformation but also the legislated and required service that we provide to all Yukoners. Approval of this funding will allow the Department of Health and Social Services to continue meeting the requirements of essential health and social programs while continuing our response to the pandemic.

For COVID specifically, the department is requesting \$10,674,000. This includes a significant request, as noted by one of the members opposite, of 87.3 FTEs to support COVID. It is really our people who do the work to protect us — the front line of the pandemic and services. It is the screeners, the nurses,

the greeters, the social workers, the epidemiologists, the rapid response teams, and public health experts who are keeping us safe. Without the necessary human resources, we cannot meet the needs of Yukoners. These funds will be used in part to continue our ongoing vaccination efforts. This includes making vaccines available throughout the territory for everyone who wants them. It also includes booster shots for our long-term care residents and immunocompromised citizens.

There were some comments earlier to me to draw attention to perhaps whether or not those are questionable at this time. Immunocompromised citizens, as listed on yukon.ca, are able to get booster shots as we speak and have been able to for some time. There was a small hiatus from the vaccine clinic here in downtown Whitehorse so that booster shots could be delivered to all long-term care residents last week, which was done, and we have returned to five days this week at the vaccination clinic available to Yukoners.

We also expect that Health Canada will soon approve a vaccine for children, ages five to 11. We will need to be ready — and we will be ready — to administer these vaccines to Yukon children as soon as the vaccines are approved. We need to be ready for booster shots, further than the ones that have already been delivered.

Funds will, of course, be used to support our acting chief medical officer of health in monitoring the environment, including assessing epidemiological models and providing recommendations to Yukoners — all vital to combating the virus.

As mentioned, effective testing and contact tracing are also crucial to prevent community spread. We plan to continue operating the essential services provided by the COVID testing centre in Whitehorse and our mobile testing and vaccine teams in communities. The COVID testing centre has a staff that includes nurse practitioners, nurses, administrative support, greeters, and cleaners.

Given the upcoming flu season, testing is especially important, and we expect the number of people to be seeking tests to increase when the flu arrives.

We are seeking funding to continue our vaccination clinics, which will also administer flu shots here in Whitehorse. Both influenza and COVID-19 cause serious respiratory illness. The combination of both diseases could be life-threatening, especially for some vulnerable people. Community Nursing will continue to hold clinics in communities across the territory. Additionally, pharmacists in Whitehorse will once again be able to deliver seasonal influenza vaccine to Yukoners over the age of five. This will allow more access to Yukon citizens. Funding will support the hiring of auxiliary-on-call nurses, greeters, cleaners, and administrative staff to support those clinics.

During the pandemic, like everywhere in Canada, we have been paying particular attention to our most vulnerable populations. These are Yukoners living in our continuing care residences, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance, and those who are precariously housed or homeless.

Due to our vulnerable populations and the number of 24/7 facilities that the department manages, some of our additional

funding continues to be spent on cleaning and screening to ensure that we comply with best practices and the recommended guidelines from the office of the acting chief medical officer of health.

Continuing Care alone has approximately 300 long-term care beds and more than 700 home care clients. The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its guests also continue to be greatly affected by the pandemic. We are mitigating the risk of transmission among this vulnerable population through enhanced cleaning and infection control measures and the implementation of social-distancing measures. For example, the department continues contracting with local hotels to house clients who are unable to be accommodated at the shelter due to the physical distancing requirements.

In addition to responding to COVID, there is an additional \$1.2 million for social service supports. This includes \$650,000 for the John Howard Society to operate the Housing First residence on Wood Street for individuals who are experiencing homelessness and who may require support due to mental health or substance use challenges. Additionally, there are funds for increased demand for the Yukon seniors income supplement. It also includes funding for increases in individual respite agreements and for two full-time disability service social workers to offset increased caseloads.

The pandemic has also had an impact on Canada's other ongoing public health crisis — opioid poisonings and deaths. As we all know, Yukon has not been immune to these impacts. This year, 14 Yukoners have already died due to opioid overdose. This is a 40-percent increase from the year — and it's not over.

This supplemental budget includes 3.5 FTEs and operational funds for the equipment for the Whitehorse supervised consumption site, which opened last month. This is about harm reduction, and this new initiative will save lives.

To get our much-anticipated midwifery program up and running this fall, we are seeking approximately \$673,000. This includes funding for equipment and funds to hire two midwives and a part-time support staff.

This supplemental budget request includes a significant amount of money, which is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada. For example, there is a \$2.438-million adjustment to carry forward funds from the territorial health investment funds that were not used last year. These funds support innovation and transformation, including implementing *Putting People First* initiatives, and are 100-percent recoverable.

There is \$3,769,000 for IHealth, which is Yukon's electronic health information system that launched in June of this year and has new locations coming on each month over the next number of months. Once fully implemented, this integrated health information system will connect health care settings across the territory, increase access to care, and improve the delivery and coordination of care. Of that amount, more than \$2,300,000 is fully recoverable from the Canada Health Infoway. There is also a proposed increase of \$1.3 million to support cultural events and activities for First Nation children in out-of-home care and cultural programming

for their families. Of this proposed increase, nearly \$1,200,000 is recoverable through Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

Everything that we do within the Department of Health and Social Services is to maintain and improve the well-being of Yukoners. I will be pleased to answer any questions in Committee about the important work that is currently underway. Thank you for the opportunity to address this Legislative Assembly today.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to respond to the second reading of the *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, Bill No. 202. As the second session of the 35th Legislature begins, I would like to relate how these funds are being spent and also about all the dedicated and innovative work that my departments are doing for Yukoners.

First of all, I would like to start with the *Our Clean Future* report. This is our government's response to the global climate emergency that we are facing with 131 action items provided as progress markers. This is a priority for me every day. I try to apply this lens to my decision-making and all of my work on behalf of all Yukoners. I am proud to be a part of a team that shares this vision.

Recently, we increased our reduction target to Yukon's greenhouse gases to 45 percent by 2030, below 2010 levels. This aligns with Canada's international commitments to be credibly ambitious at reducing emissions and building a greener economy.

We need to urgently reduce our carbon footprint. This is a challenging task; however, doing nothing is not an option. It is now globally common ground among a large majority of climate scientists that aggressive measures need to be taken in order to have a chance to keep global warming below an increase of 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius by 2023, thereby potentially avoiding the direst consequences of climate change.

Specifically, this summer, I spoke on a number of occasions of an impending tipping point as it relates to electric vehicles versus internal combustion engines. In Norway, they are already there, with the overwhelming majority of new vehicles sold in that country being BEVs, or battery-electric vehicles. In one recent month this past summer, only 10 percent of vehicles purchased in Norway were internal combustion engine vehicles. I checked this as recently as today, and there is an article on the site *drive.com* from Australia indicating that Norway is projected to hit 100-percent electric vehicle sales early next year. This is clearly an aspirational goal. We must aim for these types of paradigm-shift tipping points in the Yukon. This is about our personal choices and, as well, it is about steering our Yukon government ship in that direction. We do not have another choice.

As we move toward cutting our emissions, I want the Yukon to be a leader in climate change adaptation and mitigation in Canada — and, in fact, globally. In that regard, I am encouraged that our government established, among other things, the youth panel on climate change. This panel represents youth voices from across the Yukon who have demonstrated active leadership on climate change advocacy and policy. Over

the last summer, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I met with the two co-chairs of this panel. I was impressed with their enthusiasm and devotion. I am looking forward to meeting the entire group to hear their recommendations and potential climate change and mitigation solutions this upcoming Friday.

In addition, our government is excited to see the establishment of the first Yukon Climate Leadership Council, which will include members from different sectors and from across the Yukon. This council will draw from the *Our Clean Future* recommendations as a framework to develop plans to reach the stated 45-percent reduction goal. This ambitious target will require concrete and significant plans. I would note that it has been fruitful to be working on this initiative with my colleague from across the floor, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre. The Yukon Climate Leadership Council will commence its important work within this next month.

As we move forward, I have directed the Department of Highways and Public Works to accelerate the implementations of *Our Clean Future*. One example will be advancing on multiple fronts to identify and implement key energy projects such as biomass and solar in order to reduce the greenhouse gas footprint of Yukon government's physical operations.

Whether it is the newly installed and impressive sun-angle-adjusting solar panels at the Tombstone Interpretive Centre, which I had the privilege of visiting this summer, or, in the future, our plan to retool or repurpose currently diesel-operated remote grader stations along the Dempster Highway by installing significant solar arrays — when piloted, with respect to the grader station, we anticipate that 80 to 90 percent of diesel use can be offset between February and October annually.

We are striving to get where we want to be quicker and credibly. As minister of both Environment and Highways and Public Works, I'm excited to be able to prioritize and witness the important synergies of these two departments. I am proud that it is under my watch that this government will be implementing a ban on single-use plastic bags that will come into effect this January. We need to reduce the amount of waste and decrease the release of emissions and by-products associated with the manufacturing of single-use bags. I was particularly impressed with the level of detail on this consultation which ultimately determined the date of the implementation of this regulation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the public, retailers, and other key stakeholders for sharing their perspectives on the optimal way to proceed. As we move toward bans on both plastics and paper bags, I would like to commend those Yukoners who have already chosen — in some instances, years ago — to consistently bring their reusable bags to go shopping.

Returning to *Our Clean Future* and the issue of climate change, Yukon's climate is changing, impacting the water and land. We know that elders lived through winter temperatures that our children may never experience. Wildlife and plant species are claiming habitat in places they have not before. In some locations, water levels are low and water systems are

taking new paths as glacial sources retreat. Flooding may be more severe and frequent in other areas. Species like the pine beetle, which kills pine trees, are making their way to Yukon forests while outbreaks of spruce bark beetles already kill spruce trees in the territory. More dead flammable trees in our forests could contribute to wildfires becoming more frequent and intense.

In Old Crow, the Vuntut Gwitchin are on the frontlines of climate change and a declared state of emergency. Both the City of Whitehorse and the Government of Yukon followed suit and declared their respective climate emergencies.

In the Yukon, climate change has had real impacts on the communities we call home. Like the landscape we live in, Yukoners are changing too. We are modifying the way we build, finding new ways to travel, and exploring more sustainable energy sources. All Yukoners have a part to play in addressing climate change. Together, we are adapting to the effects of climate change, reducing our emissions, and establishing the future of a changing Yukon.

The Government of Yukon is monitoring and studying the changes around us so that we can make informed decisions about the actions we take, and we are not doing it alone. The Government of Yukon is an active member in climate change action for our region, our nation, and our world. We support Canada's commitment to the United Nations 2015 *Paris Agreement*. Nationally, the Yukon's perspective was a part of shaping the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*. We also worked with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut on projects specific to climate change in the north. Canada and the Yukon continue to partner on taking tangible climate action in the territory.

In budget 2020-21, the Government of Canada committed \$25 million to support the Government of Yukon's climate change priorities. This new funding will support initiatives in *Our Clean Future*, such as community-based renewable energy projects, low carbon transportation infrastructure, building retrofits, and renewable heating projects, as well as hazard mapping and emergency preparedness initiatives.

Here at home, we lead a coordinated approach to reduce our emissions and adapt to current and future climate change impacts. *Our Clean Future* is the Government of Yukon's answer to the climate emergency. We are working in partnership with Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, and Yukon communities to implement the strategy. *Our Clean Future* and our recent increase to Yukon's greenhouse gas reduction target to 45 percent by 2030, below 2010 levels, aligns with Canada's international commitments to reduce emissions and build a greener economy. We know that, as our population continues to grow, we will require more energy. At the same time, we need to reduce our carbon footprint and ensure economic stability and energy security.

We want to be leaders in climate change adaptation and mitigation in Canada and around the world. Those leaders are not just in government. Youth, for example, are playing a significant role in climate leadership. Yukoners aged 12 to 25 are now meeting regularly to engage, support, and empower their fellow young people to learn about and take meaningful

action on climate change. These youth will provide advice and perspective to government on issues related to *Our Clean Future*.

Additionally, we are excited to see the establishment of the first Yukon Climate Leadership Council, which will include representation from different sectors and members of society from across the territory. Using the current *Our Clean Future* strategy as a framework, the council will develop plans to reach the 45-percent reduction target and submit a report of recommendations to the government by May of 2022. There is no doubt that this ambitious target will require significant action across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, adapting our approach to climate change is essential. The Government of Yukon is assessing how best to accelerate climate action in order to prepare and respond to the climate emergency. Gathering input from those experiencing climate change first-hand is just one way this government will continue to take action on climate change.

We completed several key actions in 2020 that are reducing the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing energy security, increasing resilience, and growing our green economy. These include new rebate programs for zero-emission vehicles and electric bicycles. Since the initiative launched, we have helped 31 Yukoners purchase electric vehicles and 197 Yukoners purchase electric bicycles. That reduced greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. I understand, as well, Mr. Speaker, that recently the total registration of plug-in electric and battery-electric vehicles may in fact have surpassed 100 vehicles in the Yukon; that is certainly encouraging.

We have also increased the rebate for smart electric heating systems, incorporated climate change impacts into hydroelectricity generation forecasts, and progressed geohazard mapping for communities, as you have heard in some of the debate already with respect to the unprecedented flooding of this past summer. This includes continuing our new zero-emission vehicle and e-rebate rebate programs established in 2020.

We are launching a pilot project to test the use of medium- and heavy-duty electric vehicles for commercial use, and with my hat as Minister of Highways and Public Works, I am excited about integrating medium- and heavy-duty electric vehicles into the Yukon government fleet where appropriate and operationally sufficient for the government's purposes.

We have begun working on a requirement for all new residential buildings to be built with the necessary infrastructure for electric vehicle charging. We are also working to access moveable, clean-air shelters that we will deploy in Yukon communities that are experiencing very smoky conditions due to forest fires.

We are also working on longer term projects to increase our supply and use of renewable electricity, improve fuel efficiency and supply of renewable fuels, and support building retrofits to make buildings more energy efficient.

Another key initiative for 2021 is incorporating a climate change lens into the decision-making process for major Government of Yukon projects, policies, and programs. The

climate change lens will make sure that greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience are considered on a regular basis when decisions are made across government. At the same time, we are also working on climate change training for Government of Yukon staff. This will help staff to apply a climate change lens and integrate climate change considerations into their work.

When it comes to preparing for the impacts of climate change, we are completing a Yukon-wide climate change risk assessment. This will prioritize our needs and inform the planning necessary for climate change adaptation. The risk assessment will also help inform how to measure progress toward our target of being "highly resilient to the impacts of climate change by 2030". Our partners in climate change science, like Yukon University's climate change research team, are integral to finding new, made-in-Yukon solutions to address the challenges of climate change. They also help to make climate change information more accessible so that Yukoners can make informed decisions when they are considering climate change.

Through the federal government's climate change preparedness in the north program, we have received \$2 million over four years to undertake projects that help the Government of Yukon adapt to the impacts of climate change. Some of the projects include: undertaking a climate change risk assessment; mapping permafrost along the Dempster Highway and around Whitehorse; tracking the impacts of a warming climate on wildlife and their habitats; understanding how climate change threatens human health; and identifying best practices for food security in a changing climate.

Another important aspect of successful climate action is making sure that Yukoners are aware of climate risks and the role they play as we build a clean future together. During engagement sessions for *Our Clean Future*, Yukoners highlighted the need for more information about climate change and how they can participate. Later this year, we will launch a Yukon-wide social marketing campaign to provide clear, useful information about climate change and energy issues in Yukon. This will include ways that Yukon families, businesses, organizations, and individuals can be part of the solution. I know that Yukoners listening do want to be part of this solution.

In the Yukon, transportation and heating buildings are the biggest sources of emissions. As part of the Government of Yukon's commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, we are tracking and reporting the territory's greenhouse gas emissions. While the Yukon's emissions are a small percent of Canada's emissions, our per capita emissions are the sixth highest by jurisdiction in Canada. The Yukon will do its part to tackle this global challenge, which is already affecting our lands and our people. We will reach our reduction targets by implementing the actions in *Our Clean Future*, reviewing and updating our actions as needed, and adopting new emission reduction technologies as they become available.

With the Yukon government, we are also tracking greenhouse gas emissions from our operations and activities, which account for approximately five percent of Yukon's overall emissions. By effectively tracking and monitoring

emissions, we are better able to understand and evaluate and provide our own personal report card on our progress toward the goals outlined in *Our Clean Future*. We look forward to continuing our work with our partners to lower greenhouse gas emissions, meet increasing energy demands, adapt to the impacts of climate change, and build a green economy.

All that is to be said, Mr. Chair, is that we are committed to meeting the needs of Yukoners while responding to external spending pressures and balancing those pressures with our plans in a fiscally responsible way. Moving forward, the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment will continue the vital work of keeping our vital transportation systems moving, our information flowing, and our buildings running safely and reliably all year-round.

I will conclude my comments by thanking the hard-working, dedicated, and creative individuals at the Department of Environment and the Department of Highways and Public Works. It is an honour to serve as their minister.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am pleased to rise today in response to the 2021-22 first supplementary budget, presented by the Premier on behalf of our government today, October 12, 2021.

Mr. Speaker, it remains a complete honour to represent Yukoners in the 35th Yukon Legislative Assembly and particularly to represent the citizens of the Mountainview riding. I am deeply grateful for their continued support in my role as their MLA. It is my honour to represent them and be their voice in this Legislative Assembly.

Thank you to my family and friends for your continued love and support, particularly my husband, Rick McLean, and my sons, Colin and Jedrick Dendys. I am truly grateful for my circle of family and friends. You hold me up; you keep me grounded.

Since the election of 2021, we hit the ground running. In both of my portfolios, for sure, I have been pleased to see exciting changes and new projects come up, which are now coming into reality. This includes changing the name of the Women's Directorate to Women and Gender Equity Directorate, as well as receiving the review of inclusive and special education through the Department of Education and working forward in the implementation of this.

I have a few reflections from the summer that I wanted to share with the Legislative Assembly today. September 30 was the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada. It is important that all Canadians reflect on the history and legacy of residential schools. A clear awareness of the past along with an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted is critical to inform our actions going forward as a society. Our government remains committed to supporting indigenous communities and Yukon First Nations in their efforts to bring to light and recover from the harms of residential schools.

We also continue to support the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action. Thank you to the Third Party for bringing those motions forward on the first day of the legislative Sitting. We each have a role to

play in addressing our tragic history, supporting healing efforts in our communities, and advancing reconciliation. I encourage all Yukoners to read the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action and reflect on how we can bring a brighter future to our country.

Just a few short days after this important day, we participated in the Sisters in Spirit walk for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I want to just be clear, of course, that when I reflected at the fire around the Truth and Reconciliation Day of Action, there may be a few days in between these two events, but they are very much the same. Violence against indigenous women and girls is a direct result, in so many ways, of the residential schools and our past history. I really want to highlight these particular events.

I also want to reflect on the beautiful new monument that we have on our waterfront. I was able to attend that unveiling and be part of the ceremony. I am very proud of the indigenous women's groups and all of the partners that played a role in making this happen. It is embedded in our strategy for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in the Yukon. There is a tremendous amount of work that went into that. I am really proud to have that monument overlook Rotary Park, welcoming folks and as a reminder to this tragic part of our history.

I will now take a few moments to highlight for Yukoners some of my priorities going forward in both of my departments. I will start with women and gender equity. I am pleased to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate supplementary budget for 2021-22. As I mentioned, it is no longer the Women's Directorate. This fall, we officially changed the name and mandate of the Women's Directorate to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate.

The work of the directorate expands so much further than just advocating for women, though that remains a very important aspect of the work that they do. We have now expanded their formal mandate to intentionally include sexual orientation. The new name and the formal mandate also align with the understanding that gender is a spectrum.

This fulfills a mandate commitment and is something that I have been advocating for since I first came into the portfolio in 2016. This supplementary budget reflects that work. The Women and Gender Equity Directorate has done incredible work over the past few years in advocating for gender inclusivity here in the Yukon. A great example of this is our LGBTQ2S+ action plan that was released this past summer. We have some exciting initiatives planned with our community partners. The action plan is divided into nine sections with more than 100 actions on health care, education, youth, community and culture, inclusive governance, public facilities, Yukon government as a work place, gender data, and tourism and culture. Many of these actions are already underway.

A physical space was one of the top priorities in the LGBTQ2S+ community — one of the high priorities for the community that was shared with us during the public engagement. We were told that having a physical space that can be used as a gathering place for education, programming, resources, and a place for community and connection should be a priority. That is why we are providing \$375,000 in operational

funding for Queer Yukon Society to support the establishment of the Pride Centre — the first ever in Yukon.

Work continues on advancing Yukon government's commitment to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people. I am one of the three co-chairs of the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+ People. We are working closely on the creation of the implementation plan for *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*, which was released on December 10. We are on target to have this implementation plan completed by December 10, 2021.

I am particularly looking forward to an upcoming event in February, the first missing and murdered indigenous women and girls two-spirit-plus accountability forum, which will be an opportunity for all our partners who signed on to the plan to share the progress that they have made on advancing this important goal.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that are still being understood. We know that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the safety and security of marginalized populations, including women and girls and two-spirit+ people. Home is not a safe place for everyone.

As Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I am so grateful for the grassroots work of local Yukon organizations that create and run programs that provide critical services and spaces to many women and children in our community. That is why, this year, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate will be providing an increase of funding of \$65,000 to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to continue the Sally and Sisters program. Sally and Sisters has been operation in Whitehorse for nearly 10 years, providing a safe environment to meet emergency needs for food security. This funding will support the expansion of services from twice a week to four days a week.

Moving on to Education, it is a challenging and transformational time in the Department of Education. The 2019 report of the Auditor General of Canada on kindergarten to grade 12 education and the 2021 review of inclusive and special education and the Child Advocate review of attendance all highlight that we can do better. This is my commitment to Yukoners: We will do better. We recognize that we cannot make systemic changes alone. We need to work collaboratively with students, families, First Nation governments, school communities, and other education partners. To this end, we are working with our partners to identify, commit to, and carry out meaningful action that will achieve real change for our students. This includes collaborating with the First Nation Education Commission and the advisory committee on Yukon education. We are supporting the Chiefs Committee on Education and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate on their road to establishing a First Nation school board.

We are working quickly to establish a work plan to implement the recommendations of the review of inclusive and special education. We will be hosting an education summit on

November 12 to further advance this work at the community level with our partners.

I would be remiss if I didn't speak to the very concerning situation at the Hidden Valley Elementary School. As it is the topic of this legislative Sitting so far, I will not dwell — but I do want to speak for a moment directly to parents. I absolutely hear and feel your pain, your anguish, and know that we let you down. I am committed to walking with you on this long path of rebuilding your trust with our school system. I am confident that, with the many reviews underway, this will lead to policies and procedures that will ensure that this never, ever happens again and that this terrible situation is left behind us.

The supplementary budget for the Department of Education reflects how the department is working to achieve its priorities for education as we move through the pandemic. This includes: ensuring the health and safety of students and staff; ensuring learning continues for all students; supports for students with diverse learning needs and those in need of additional supports; and support for students, teachers, and support staff for flexible learning, including access to technology tools and training. We are making investments in capital infrastructure, which are required to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing enrolment, and create modern learning environments and community spaces.

In the supplementary budget request, we have requested an increase of \$13,216,000 in O&M. Nearly all of it is recoverable, with recoveries of \$13,211,000. Therefore, we have a net increase of only \$5,000 in O&M. We are also asking for a net increase of \$119,000 in capital. As we move further into debates on the supplementary budget, I will go further into details.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with some thank yous. It has been a very challenging year for students, parents, teachers, and administrative staff navigating how we educate during an unforeseen pandemic, and then being faced with the reality that we have significant work to do to improve our systems is daunting.

I want to personally thank Yukon educators and the administrative staff for never giving up, even though we face many challenges. I know that each and every one of you believes in the progress that we will make. Each of you is an incredibly important part of the solution and need to come with us. We need to go on this journey together, because at the end of the day, this is about our children and we can never forget the critical part we now play in making sure their futures are as bright as they possibly can be.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the supplementary budget. I look forward to the debates that will happen in Committee of the Whole and to answer any questions that folks may have on the details.

Again, I thank my family and I thank my friends for being there and being supportive. I look forward to the debate with all of the folks from across the way during further Committee of the Whole debate.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I hope everyone had a wonderful, low-key Thanksgiving weekend. Personally, I was glad my

riding dodged rain and snow until late Monday. Heck, I even managed to run my mower one more time — giving the rabbit and chickens a nice pile of fresh clippings. They love those clippings — just love them. I can't remember the last time I ran the mower in October. I can't remember the last time it was warm enough and dry enough in the second week of October to do it. It is, to me, unusual.

These are themes — environment and climate change — that I will come back to again and again this afternoon and in the coming weeks. So, we've established that it is October and that means, like clockwork, it is supplementary budget time here in the Legislative Assembly, so let's begin.

I have spoken to my constituents in Whitehorse West a lot this year, through two election campaigns and many chats on the dog trails and at the end of driveways — their thoughts on lot development, housing, affordability, retrofits, the environment, climate change, land use planning, childcare, energy, mental health, substance abuse, safe injection sites, the fentanyl crisis, midwifery, the hospital operation, the labour shortage, sheep counts and hunting issues, and dozens of other pressing things. As always, these conversations were informative and personally invigorating.

I carry your thoughts, concerns, and ideas with me daily as I navigate this role as minister in Cabinet and as your representative in the House. I seek to imbue my remarks with your thoughts and opinions. If I am successful, you will hear yourself reflected in this Chamber. I thank you, all of my constituents in Whitehorse West, for the trust that you have placed in me. I also want to thank the staff at the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the Department of Community Services. Your professionalism and your compassion as you serve Yukoners is an inspiration, so I thank you.

I also want to thank my colleagues on both opposition benches. This House is a forum for ideas and broad perspectives in the pursuit of a better society for us all. Mr. Speaker, we forget that at our peril. There is enough ugliness, intolerance, and bullying in our society without elected leaders thoughtlessly heaping more onto the pile. Each of us has been chosen by Yukoners to represent their interests with grace, empathy, and tolerance and more than a pinch of good humour. The opposition is the whetstone against which a government hones its policies to a precise edge, and I appreciate your questions, however difficult they may be. I also look forward to hearing all your preliminary thoughts on the supplementary budget this afternoon. I am sure that they will be insightful.

Mr. Speaker, it was a heck of a summer. As I recounted earlier this afternoon, within a few short weeks of being sworn in, we had flooding in Carmacks and Teslin, and a couple of weeks later, the torrent hit the Southern Lakes and Laberge. Water levels rose daily, a disaster in slow motion threatening more than 100 houses. This was deeply disturbing to residents living in these flood zones, of course. It was also troubling on a macro level. The territory faced the loss of more than 100 houses at a time when it needed thousands of new ones. The territory mounted the largest flood mitigation effort in history.

Thanks to an extraordinary effort by civil servants, residents, volunteers, local contractors and businesses, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, flood specialists from Manitoba, incident management professionals from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Yukon, and the Canadian Armed Forces, we didn't lose a single residence; I showed you a map the other day — not one. Working as a team, this group deployed almost 600,000 sandbags, maintained pumps, and planned and built other flood prevention infrastructure.

I'll have more to say about this when we discuss the department's spending in Committee in the coming weeks, but floods are expensive, and the response, its dismantling, and long-term plans will cost an estimated \$11 million. This makes up the largest chunk of Community Services' supplementary budget this fall. What I want to highlight is the root cause of the floods, fires, and other threats to Yukoners, our communities, and infrastructure.

The climate is changing, and the effects are coming into sharper focus every single year. We drafted *Our Clean Future* to lay out a nation-leading plan to do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As I heard this spring and summer in the neighbourhood, the time for analysis is over; Yukoners want action.

So, we will reduce our carbon footprint. There are hundreds of millions of dollars in actions identified in *Our Clean Future*, and we will deliver these actions as Yukoners have demanded.

On the COVID front, earlier this year, we ended the state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. While the danger has not passed, with our vaccination rate one of the best in the country and our procedures and PPE well in hand, we have moved beyond the state of emergency. Despite the end of that emergency, I want Yukoners to know that we are still focused on keeping them safe. We encourage everyone to get vaccinated if they have not already done so. We ask that people continue to wear masks when proper distancing is not possible, and we want people to stay home whenever they show symptoms of a possible COVID-19 infection. We have not, and will not, take this pandemic lightly.

As the supplementary shows, we will act to keep Yukoners safe, whether it is from COVID, natural disasters, or something unforeseen — God forbid. We always put people first; we always will. That approach has differentiated ourselves from places like Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. I also firmly believe that our government's approach differentiates us from our colleagues in the Official Opposition.

Generally speaking, this budget is further evidence of our sound fiscal management and action that Yukoners have come to expect from their Yukon Liberal government. It also shows that this government is willing to spend what is necessary to confront immediate threats and longer term challenges like climate change.

I will take a moment to acknowledge some of the great work done by my former department, Highways and Public Works. I have had the pleasure of working with some of the amazing public servants in that department during my tenure as minister. Getting the full First Nation procurement policy into

effect this month is a noble achievement and no small feat. A special thank you to all the civil servants, First Nation representatives, and business leaders for their work on this file and to the Minister of Highways and Public Works as well for his work shepherding it to fruition.

The new voice-over IP system, which is currently being rolled out throughout the government, will save it millions of dollars and essentially bring us into the 21st century when it comes to communication. The northern fibre link to Inuvik will provide Yukon with needed redundancy and is being built as we speak. The online service folks did a great job on the vaccine certification process, which is elegant in execution and easy to follow. I want to thank the team in ICT for their incredible work on these important files. There is much incredible work done by Highways and Public Works, but I felt that it was important to congratulate the department and my colleague for these initiatives.

I've touched on Community Services' incredible flood response, and I've heard the opposition's praise for that effort. That praise is well deserved. Of course, there are other initiatives in this supplementary budget. Getting back to the details, Community Services is seeking \$12.89 million — let's say \$13 million in round figures — for operation and maintenance expenditures. About \$11 million of that is for our flood response and recovery efforts, as I have said. More than \$6 million of that money went to local contractors for their much-valued work. Our thanks again to them for their contributions to our response. We had more than \$700,000 that went to Yukon First Nations Wildfire, which built and maintained flood infrastructure in various locations. We thank them as well for their efforts. I must also acknowledge federal Minister Bill Blair who responded quickly with a pledge to help after I personally reached out to him this summer. There is no question that without the troops and resources provided by Canada, our efforts would have been less successful, and I suspect we would be having a far different conversation today.

I also want to thank Brigadier General Godbout and his Joint Task Force North for their incredibly quick deployment and professionalism in helping hold back the fast-rising waters this summer. This is also true of the emergency management teams that we received from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and especially Manitoba. They were absolutely essential to our efforts.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Community Services will be seeking an increase of \$250,000 for First Nation firesmarting projects. This, of course, ties into what I was saying earlier about the costs of climate change. Higher temperatures and winds bring an increased wildfire risk, and so keeping up and even expanding our firesmarting work is absolutely vital to the territory.

Also included in the supplementary budget is \$1.1 million to enhance Yukon emergency medical services in Watson Lake and in volunteer recruitment and retention throughout the 17 EMS stations across the Yukon. As I've heard on the doorstep and within the department itself, paramedics are a hot commodity across the country. They are hard to find and

important to keep. This investment is critical to supporting our paramedics who support Yukoners throughout the territory.

It is also part of our FTE count, which was just recently criticized by the Member for Lake Laberge. I look forward to seeing how he reconciles that criticism with our incredible first responders and the work they do.

I will add that both the municipality of Watson Lake and Liard First Nation indicated that EMS services were one of their top priorities. I heard that remark when I was down there on my community tour, and I hope that the MLA for that area supports this supplementary budget, which has so many important, critical services for her constituents.

We are requesting \$549,000 for the Yukon northern wellness project. This funding targets support for active healthy living initiatives, training and programs, tobacco cessation and prevention, and the immunization partnership fund in the territory. My good colleague from Laberge has weighed in on the transfer station issue this afternoon. I am grateful for the opportunity that presents. I know that we will talk more about it in the coming weeks. I have heard the complaints first-hand, but I have yet to hear tangible solutions from the Official Opposition on the issue of garbage. I have yet to hear how they will plug the hole in a system that free and monitored bins pose to a user-pay model that municipalities have asked us to implement.

Let me shed light on the issue this afternoon just for a moment. Garbage disposal is expensive. I would rather be spending precious government money on people than on personal garbage disposal. We want those generating garbage to pay a part of the cost — roughly a dollar a bag for residential waste. Everybody in society is generating more trash. Municipal costs are skyrocketing as are long-term liabilities.

In 2017, the Association of Yukon Communities asked us to act, and so we have. This issue is not new; it has been in process since then — 2017. We have spoken to all communities about this plan, even Destruction Bay. We have spoken to them several times, in fact, over the last four years. The Yukon is following best practices of the rest of the country and adopting a user-pay system at waste management facilities. We want to ensure that people generating garbage have to pay something. There is a cost pressure to encourage people to manage their waste better. The goal is to better manage waste facilities to reduce environmental pollution and the contamination of groundwater and soils. Also, we want to ensure that all facilities are supervised and fees collected so the system is fair to everyone. If we keep small sites open and unsupervised, people will drive and dump their nasty waste in those sites to avoid tipping fees. We have seen it in Whitehorse; we have seen it in the communities. It will not stop until we plug that hole.

So, we are supervising every site in the territory except the smallest four; those four will be closed. They are all in reasonably close proximity to other landfills. I have heard from Yukoners on this issue. I have heard the difficulties with this approach, which is a best practice across the country.

As is the case with other initiatives I am involved in, I intend to implement the policy that serves the good of the territory while exploring solutions to the individual problems

that surface as a result of that wider policy. I appreciate the feedback that I have received from the community so far. Bottom line — we are asking Yukoners to do their part to reduce waste, dispose of it properly, and protect the environment. I know that everyone wants to look after our beautiful Yukon. I have heard that loud and clear in every community that I visited this summer.

I will close by once again thanking the constituents of Whitehorse West for allowing me to represent them here in the Legislative Assembly. I also want to thank the rural citizens who have been so welcoming and thoughtful in their discussions of issues that matter to them during my recent community tour. The conversations that I have had in those communities on the doorstep, over the phone, and through e-mail continue to guide me in my role today and will continue to do so as I move forward.

Thank you all very much.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is my pleasure to rise as the MLA for beautiful and soggy Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. Today, while I enjoy being in the Legislature — and it is a privilege, of course, to represent folks here — I wish I were in my community. Today, we are having the first of several open houses. This one is in Marsh Lake. It is running from noon — running right now — and I think that next week there is one in Carcross, Tagish, and Laberge.

It has been quite a summer, and I just want to begin by acknowledging how tough it has been for folks in my communities and in Laberge, dealing with flooding on top of COVID. It has been very challenging. I understand that, as of 3 o'clock today, the high-water advisory was cancelled, so another step.

I reached out to neighbours this past weekend. I have a list of about 120 people whom I'm corresponding with about the flood fairly regularly, and I let them know that we were almost back down to average water levels.

I'll talk more about the flood in a bit, but I just want to say that it has been a very stressful time for folks dealing with this risk of flooding. I just wanted to begin by thanking everybody who contributed to keeping people safe. It is so appreciated. The residents themselves, their neighbours, Armed Forces, Wildland Fire folks, and many of the members of this Legislature volunteered, and a lot of Yukoners gave up their time, so thank you so much to everybody — and this while we had a pandemic going on.

Let me just acknowledge that, since we were here last, we've seen the largest wave of cases here in the Yukon. It happened between the third and fourth waves of the provinces, but it was really our first wave. Thank you to everybody who helped keep us safe during that time.

As we debate the budget, probably we won't hear the French Language Services Directorate get up, and we probably won't have questions, but I would just like to take a second to give a shout-out to the folks at the French Language Services Directorate for the work they did. They did a lot of extra translating this past year and a half around COVID and around flooding and around keeping Yukoners safe, so I would just like

to say thank you, merci, for their work. I will just say, from a budget perspective, that this year the French Language Services Directorate budget has increased again, and I would like to thank the federal Government of Canada for that. Over the past several years, we've tripled the budget. I think it's up to \$5.25 million this year; it's up to \$5.5 million, and next year I think it's going up to \$5.75 million, and that is wonderful.

I also would like to make a few comments about the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Right now, the Dawson regional land use planning commission has put forward their draft plan. I encourage all Yukoners to put forward their comments to the commission. They are due by the end of November. I just want to remind everyone to be part of that, if you are interested.

As well, I would like to just give a little acknowledgment to the ongoing work on successor legislation for both the *Placer Mining Act* and the *Quartz Mining Act*. Those acts are a century old. They need an overhaul and we have been talking about this for many years. It was the work of the mineral development strategy, which followed from the mining MOU with First Nations. We are now there. There was a great turnout to the first steering committee meeting — super well-attended. I understand that last week we had the first industry table meeting with non-governmental organizations. I am getting reports back that the work is progressing well and people are excited to dive in. It doesn't mean that it won't be challenging — it will be — but I'm glad to see that work ongoing.

Sticking with Energy, Mines and Resources, I want to talk a little bit, as others have, about *Our Clean Future*. I would like to acknowledge that all three of the parties during the last territorial election embraced *Our Clean Future* and talked about how important it is. I thank them for that. There are many aspects underneath that, and I will just touch on a couple of them very briefly.

First of all, agriculture — we really do want to promote more agriculture. Agriculture has been doing great here in the territory, although there are some challenges — for example, with elk and our farmers in the Takhini valley. I would just like to acknowledge the Member for Lake Laberge and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. They mentioned a tour that was set up. The Minister of Environment and I unfortunately sent our regrets. I was meeting with chiefs in northern Yukon to talk about several issues that they had invited me to ahead of the farmers. Unfortunately, I was not able to switch that meeting with several chiefs, and I think that the Minister of Environment was meeting with the Canadian minister of environment and colleagues from across the provinces to discuss climate change and other issues. We happily worked to try to find another time to connect. I will just acknowledge that the issue is outstanding. It is still a challenge. As I said at the time, we are happy to work with farmers to try to find a good solution.

Another challenge that we faced this year was wood, whether that is timber or firewood. We have had some real challenges. I would just like to thank the forest resource branch for working very hard, since we met with the Wood Products Association, to try to find solutions to get more supply available

for Yukoners. I am sure that we will discuss that when we get into the budget a bit more.

Just for a second, I would like to echo some of the comments from my colleague, the Minister of Environment. I have worked on the issue of climate change for decades. I think I am more than 30 years in now on this issue, and it is a little tough to see an issue that, over tens of years, has not really moved, and I would like to give a shout-out to the youth, many of whom were born after I started working on this issue, but who have invigorated this dialogue and are helping us as a society to move forward, and I would like to thank them for that energy that they are bringing — that renewable energy that they are bringing to this issue. It is really wonderful to see. For the first time in my career working on this issue, I feel like we are about to take a leap forward — that this shift of the energy economy is about to happen, and I am looking forward to it.

One of the things — as the Member for Riverdale North noted — is that our two biggest sectors for emissions are not actually how we generate electricity but rather how our transportation dominantly — and also how we heat our buildings. But, of course, as we shift to electricity with those sectors, we need to then develop renewable energy so that it all goes together.

I was really excited just a couple of weeks ago to get to see the electric vehicle discovery day. It was held up at the Transportation Museum. It was just really wonderful to see everybody starting down that path. Whether it is an e-bike or a plug-in hybrid or a pure electric vehicle, we are working to support that and I look forward to further conversations here in the Legislature on that.

I want to make a few comments, Mr. Speaker. I was thinking about this issue when I was thinking about climate change. About 15 years ago, I was involved in helping to produce the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007 report.

I was asked to speak to this at a series of universities in the United States, to talk about the north, about the three territories and what is going on. Just at that time, the vice-president of the United States stood up and said, “Well, we know climate change is happening, but we don’t know what’s causing it. There is no agreement about what is causing it.” Where I sat, as a scientist, I recognized that, no, actually, we were very clear about what was causing it, and we are even more crystal clear. This summer, the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report came out, and they basically said that we are in code red as a world and that we needed to act.

Back then, in 2007, when that happened, I said to myself that democracy deserves that we maintain a lot of integrity around how information is shared. It is a challenging thing. So, I want to talk about a few numbers today, because when I listened to the Member for Lake Laberge, I heard some things that didn’t feel quite right to me, so I grabbed the handout that was given to the Official Opposition to look through, because he referenced it. He talked about how we are spending an additional \$58 million in this budget, and that is correct, but, of course, the bottom line is that most of that money is being recovered. So, yes, there is additional money being spent, but

most of it is money that we are able to recover, and it is not a net burden on Yukon taxpayers.

For example, the COVID assessment centre, the COVID response unit, testing, contract tracing, PPE, and support for vulnerable populations, \$10.7 million — all recoverable. Early learning and childcare agreements — \$9.9 million, all recoverable. The Mayo-to-McQuesten energy transmission project and battery storage project that the Premier was discussing — \$6.4 million, all fully recoverable.

That is great news. I hope that we don’t present these as negatives, unless, as the members opposite disagree with these projects — terrific. Then that is fine, but we should not present them as being a burden to Yukon taxpayers. Where did we spend extra money in this budget that is not recoverable? Flooding. Mr. Speaker, that is \$11.2 million of which \$0.3 million is recoverable — so far, anyway. So, effectively, that is the \$11 million that is the difference between what we originally broadcast as our deficit and where we are today with this supplementary budget.

The Member for Lake Laberge also talked about us hiring 100 new people, so I took a look to try to see where that is, and here it is: 87.3 are on pandemic management and they are term employees — in other words, temporary employees. They were here during that wave of COVID that we had. They were here to help Yukoners, and it’s not that this is a growth of government; this was a response to a pandemic to keep people safe. Those are not ongoing full-time employees.

There are some in here that are ongoing full-time employees — for example, several for midwifery, nine — or 8.7 — for EMS for our ambulance system, and 3.2 of those, I note, are for Watson Lake and for EMS there. I have had letters personally from the Member for Watson Lake in her advocacy to seek more support there for EMS, and I heard the Member for Lake Laberge talk about that too. I hope that is supported by the members opposite.

Let me turn back, in my last couple of minutes, to talk about the flood. I remember the 2007 flood. I was running the Marsh Lake Community Centre at that time, and my job was to try to help people get informed. What happened during that flood and what happened this time is really quite distinctly different. Both times, we got hit with a flood that was sort of off the charts. Both times, there was a tremendous response from Yukoners and residents, and both times, I think, we needed to learn lessons. I agree with the members opposite that there are important lessons to be learned, but there always, always is room for improvement, and there sure was this time as well.

But here’s one of the ways that it was different in 2007. I remember talking to the government at the time to explain that this is, in all likelihood, exacerbated by climate change. I was told, “No, no, no, it’s not” until finally I mentioned that this would also make the flood response an adaptation, and then, right away, it was, “Yes, okay, great. It was climate change.”

At that time, people might not have understood that I was a climate change researcher because I was running a community centre, but I did try to pass that information across.

During the 2007 flood, when the response started to happen, it wasn't really a government response at first. We, the community of Marsh Lake, hired a flood specialist from Manitoba to come up and try to advise us as neighbours and residents about how to respond well.

The government got upset at us for doing that, and we said, "No problem, just pay us for the person. We just want to make sure that there is someone here who knows about floods." This time around, what happened was that the flood response came, but it still took a little while to get it up and running. What caught us off guard wasn't just that it was a higher flood than 2007 — that one-in-200-years flood, which clearly is going to be more frequent now with climate change — it was how fast it came up. All the models — this was brand new for them, so yes, there is a learning process that needs to happen. It really does need that extra work now. I think that we are going to have to develop that expertise. Anyway, I really appreciate the work that happened. There is a lot to do, and the Department of Community Services has already committed to doing a review, looking at the whole process.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you. I am just going to use a couple of examples. The first one is to the Filipino association. The weekend — at its height, the Canadian Filipino Association of the Yukon came out — I don't know, but I think there were more than 50 people that day. It was a huge number. They had made food. They were there at the fill station between Army Beach and South M'Clintock. Then we would get a call that there was one residence that was really in trouble, and a half a dozen folks would go there. Then we would get another call from down the road that someone needed to move a deck, and a half a dozen people came along. That day, I saw the MLA for Porter Creek Centre. I saw the Premier. I saw the Minister of Health and Social Services. I was there volunteering. There were a lot of people there volunteering. I just want to say thank you. It was so heartwarming to see that effort.

The day before — I want to give a shout-out to a young fellow. He is four years old and his name is Bennett. He came to Tagish to help out and brought his mom, dad, their skid steer, and their trailer. Bennett was there helping to fill those sonotubes with bags. He had a real shovel and was shovelling it in there. He made us all work a little bit harder. It helped that he was named after Lake Bennett and we were helping to fill sandbags to protect homes around Bennett, Tagish, Marsh, and Laberge that weekend.

It is beyond words how much we appreciated all the help in our community. It was just so welcome, and I can't say enough thanks to Yukoners who came up and helped the residents. It just really was so heartfelt for us, and I think that, on behalf of my constituents, I just want to say thanks to all Yukoners.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the opportunity to touch on a couple of points around our supplementary budget and just an opportunity to also identify some of the activities that have occurred over the summer, like colleagues here in the Assembly have done in their earlier responses.

Again, it is my privilege to rise today as the MLA for Porter Creek South in the Yukon Legislative Assembly to speak to the 2021-22 supplementary estimates. I would first like to take a brief moment to thank the people of Porter Creek South for their many conversations over the last several months. Of course, this is your seat and I appreciate the opportunity that you have given me to sit and represent the community. Again, I am immensely grateful for that opportunity.

Since we last sat in the Assembly, I have taken the opportunity to meet with many stakeholders, business owners, community groups and organizations, municipalities, and First Nations to discuss their issues, goals, and priorities as we continue to navigate life with COVID-19.

Aside from living with the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, two major challenges stand out. Whether I am in Watson Lake, Beaver Creek, Whitehorse, Carmacks, or Pelly Crossing, labour and housing seem to be a very consistent theme of challenges — not just that the private sector is having but also even our municipalities and our First Nation governments that are trying to make sure that they have the appropriate amount of staff available.

Again, there is no simple solution for these complex and intertwined issues, but again, I am committed to working in partnership with all levels of government, NGOs, and the private sector as we look forward.

There was a lot of conversation in the previous mandate, as we were in 2020, around what COVID was doing to our economy and really about ensuring that we had the right strategy to ensure that we got Yukoners back to work and that those folks who had lost employment during COVID had that opportunity to come back. I'm happy to say that, on a month-to-month basis, what we are seeing now is that, if you take the total amount of individuals who are unemployed and they're out there looking for opportunities, the jobs that are available outweigh that. There are more jobs available right now than folks looking for jobs. We've been averaging around \$25 per hour in those jobs.

Also, working with my colleague, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, we've also taken a look at statistically where we land in the amount of, essentially, wages that are being paid in totality in the Yukon, and we're marking that. What we're seeing now is that we're actually about five percent above where we were when COVID struck. So, not only are there more wages being paid in the territory, we've actually increased that.

We've also seen not just a significant rise in job opportunities, but we also saw gross domestic product, GDP, growth during that period of time.

For all intents and purposes, we need to ensure that we aggressively deal with the housing challenges, not just in Whitehorse but in all of our communities. Mr. Speaker, going to the community you represent, the same thing — there is a need in all of our communities.

During those many visits through the summer, one of the things that I've tried to do in my conversations is just lay out the opportunity for collaboration and for partnership, whether it be directly with municipalities, private sector folks,

entrepreneurs who want to help us with our housing challenges, or with First Nation development corporations. To be very transparent with the Assembly, those conversations are essentially: How can we sit down and work with a development corporation, per se, where we can provide a commitment to them on leasing maybe a portion of the space on a new build?

We have over 900 units at the Yukon Housing Corporation that we have to look after. In those, we have both staff housing and we also have affordable housing. You'll find in almost every community in the Yukon that there's a scenario where, if there is a First Nation government, they also have an obligation to their citizens to provide affordable housing.

There is also that collaboration that has always happened around staff housing. Most First Nation governments, whether it be our self-governing nations or our other governments in Watson Lake, Ross River, or Beaver Creek — they are also grappling with making sure they have the right housing options so they can recruit folks if they need them.

It is actually a great opportunity for us to work together. As we get into the supplementary budget, we will touch on some of these challenges, but at the same time, that is really what the summer — it has been sitting down with folks, saying, "Look, these are the ways for us to de-risk your project, make it bankable, build an asset on your balance sheet" and all the while really helping all of us to achieve a greater set of options when it comes to housing in our communities, as well as in Whitehorse.

We touched on the flood that was reflected on by colleagues. As one of the members touched on this morning, I think there was some really significant, non-partisan collaboration. Of course, we come back and reflect on what played out, but that was very, I think, refreshing for all of us. It was really about just making sure that neighbours were looked after and that we had the right resources deployed where we could. People were extremely patient. MLAs were patient. You had MLAs on both sides of the House who were under a tremendous amount of pressure. Whether you are the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes or the MLA for Lake Laberge, you are under a lot of pressure from the people you represent, and so I thought that those individuals were class acts in how they handled it, and they worked with all of us to try to figure out how we could come with solutions. I appreciate the comments today about lessons learned and that we have to be prepared. I think everybody is walking away from this more knowledgeable about how we approach future years.

I know how hard folks worked. People just worked until the work was done, and that part I truly respect.

For the record, and for Hansard, it is important. When we were looking at our summer — the most vulnerable part of our economy was around the tourism sector, and that is why we have increased programs. We will talk a bit about our programs over the next 30 days and how they are reflected and how they affect the supplementary budget.

More importantly, we wanted to be extremely respectful of Yukoners who were going through challenging times. I commend the Department of Tourism and Culture. We were monitoring on a daily basis how to communicate the marketing

of tourism. In June, as you can imagine, we were ready to launch some of our domestic programs to make sure that there was cash flowing through the sector, but at the same time, we were cognizant of the fact that our COVID numbers had risen considerably, and we wanted to be respectful of what people were going through and how folks move throughout our territory. At the same time, we were dealing with the flood. It is hard to tell people to go and have a great experience when their neighbor is trying to save their home.

The incredible thing about Yukoners is that there are Yukoners who spent two or three or four days of the week working extremely hard to help people in their community, and then they would take a day and go and make sure that they got out for their own health and well-being and mental health. They would go and do an activity, and then they would be back at it helping other folks. Yukoners were just incredible in how they balanced such a challenging summer, and again, we also dealt with some communities having some pretty significant fire pressure.

In the morning, we would brief up and have a discussion about the next two or three days and how we were going to market. We would have it loaded to go, but we would monitor to that level. I just want to commend folks on how agile they were and really how sensitive they were to what everyone was going through but also trying to support the tourism sector.

I spoke again on the importance of housing. We brought folks together at the start of October. That was trying to bring people into the room. There was a lot of advice from the private sector and from different stakeholders who weren't necessarily in the room together. I think back to the sessions that Yukon Housing hosted a number of years ago. It started at the Yukon Inn with a tremendous number of stakeholders from different areas. That was a discussion focused on the 10-year strategy.

We are now well into that, but we thought it was important to bring in the other players that have a role and that is the private sector entrepreneurs, the surveyors, the bankers, and all of the other folks who play such a critical role. We needed to communicate that, whether you are a manager of a lands department at a First Nation, you are working in the Justice department at Land Titles, or you are an entrepreneur, everybody has a critical role in trying to move these things. When one part of the ecosystem is not moving efficiently, it can really have a domino effect on our success. I think that was the first of many check-ins or accountability frameworks in place, and as we spoke about and as I was questioned about, we will be coming back with a report of that first session with some short-term commitments. Certainly, one of the commitments was to get hands in the private sector raw land so they can begin to do their good work.

We are taking aggressive action with historic investments in lot development across the Yukon. We have talked a lot about that over the last number of years. It was largely the investment in affordable housing as well. Do we need to do more? We do, but I think it is also important to commend those folks who were here from Yukon Housing Corporation. I know that there has been a role from Health and Social Services and others. You just have to drive into our communities or through

the city and you are going to see really significant investment. You are going to see, at one point, one or two cranes in the air building very significant structures. This is going to lead to hundreds of new units over the short run, both from the standpoint of affordability — it's going to support our seniors, and we are seeing that demographic continue to grow — and a number of other different options. Again, it's a big investment. We know in our previous mandate how much was dedicated to lot development. In one period of time, I think we had 24 months where that outstripped the previous four years — just those two years of investment. What I'm going to try to do in this role with Yukon Housing Corporation is try to also keep pace on making sure that the private sector has an opportunity as well to put units out there and parallel that to the work that's being done by the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Again, we are seeing GDP growth forecasted in a positive light. We are seeing 8.1 percent in 2022. With the activity that is happening, we are very happy to see that. A lot of our challenges have been brought to us by a great economy and having a place that a lot of people believe is the best place to make their home — not just in this country, but in the world. Those are drivers that are causing us some of the challenges that we have. Retail sales, as well, have recovered, which is great to see. We are seeing in our forecast that we are just under \$980 million for 2021 — so, just under \$1 billion in retail sales out of this territory of 40,000 people.

Almost every industry has gained jobs since the pandemic job losses peaked in May 2020, with most either recovered or well on their way to recovery.

Again, as we talked about, despite these positive trends, tourism is the one sector that has not grown at the same rate. I think that it is important to say what we are hearing on the ground right now, and in the fall, we have some of our hotel properties that are about to hit record months. I think that is very positive. Again, we are closely working and aligning ourselves with Destination Canada and how they look at the coming — not just year, but years — to recover and are ensuring that our agencies of record, both Cossette and Aasman, have a very clear picture of what Destination Canada, as a corporation, is going to do as well. We have had a chance to sit with them and what we have heard is that the Yukon kept its foot on the pedal a bit throughout this period of time where other jurisdictions have had starts and stops. Because we did that, what we are seeing in our analytics is that the Yukon brand is still very much in people's minds. We haven't lost that, and that puts us in an advantageous position as we move forward and we start to reactivate tourism opportunities.

We will continue to provide two important programs. The Department of Tourism and Culture is tabling a supplementary budget of \$43.1 million. That is an increase of just under \$4 million. The increase will mean that from October 1 to March 31, 2022, tourism-related businesses will be eligible for a new round of supports. Again, that is extremely significant because there is no jurisdiction that, in my research or my briefings, comes anywhere close to how the Yukon is supporting the private sector. I think that this shows in our

economy and it shows in the fact that we have more businesses now than we did before COVID, and if anybody looks at any other jurisdiction, that's just not what they're experiencing, whether it be Ontario, Québec — you name it — a completely different story.

We all know someone whose livelihood depends on the tourism sector. Again, as we've announced the Great Yukon Summer program — we now have our winter program. Please — there are folks even in this Assembly whose families are tied to those winter tourism opportunities — please make sure that either you go out and take advantage of that experience or that, if you have family or friends who do visit, you have them out. But more importantly, with all the folks who have taken part in these programs, we now have 1,500 new ambassadors for different tourism products. We think that's really important.

Now, not only can somebody say that this is a great opportunity — no, you know what? Last summer, I flew to Mount Logan and what an exceptional experience it was. You have to do it if you're visiting here. That's really what we wanted to try to create — to have those ambassadors.

We also wanted to see a cash flow increase and we wanted people to be able to at least start to staff up and to get things moving. I think we've seen a seven-figure injection from that program that has happened, and in turn, people are in a position where they can start to recover. For some businesses that have been really impacted — in the previous year, such as our aviation industry — those folks have had the opportunity to really have — I think what I'm hearing — an exceptional summer. In talking to those operators, it seems as though they did.

Again, I look forward to lots of discussion around housing this fall, being able to debate the supplementary budget in Tourism and Culture and what's happening there and the recovery that's underway.

I'll just finish by thanking the folks at Yukon Housing Corporation for their agility in supporting me getting ready and Tourism and Culture for their collaboration and their very efficient ability to support the Yukon private sector and be leaders in policy development and execution here in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to this appropriation bill that is before the House now.

The nature of my comments will be specific to those departments that are —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 202 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed October 12, 2021:

35-1-7

Independent Review — Department of Education —
Terms of Reference, letter re (dated October 8, 2021) from
Amanda Rogers, Dispute Resolution, to Hon. Jeanie McLean,
Minister of Education (McLean)

**Written notice was given of the following motion
October 12, 2021:**

Motion No. 117

Re: terms of reference for independent review of
Department of Education (White)