



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 17

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35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, October 19, 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 19, 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 with the Order Paper.
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of visitors here today who are joining us for our tribute to Poverty and Homelessness Action Week. I would like the Assembly to share a warm welcome to Jack Bogaard, Kristina Craig — and I know that people sort of are all through the Assembly — and Cyprian Bus. As well, I have joining us today Ulrike Levins and Sharon Stewart, and I think I also saw Suzanne Greening, who is our next executive director at Habitat for Humanity.

For the rest of the folks who are here today, thank you for coming today for our tribute. I think I do see Kate there — I am looking to see — behind masks, I apologize.

Applause

Ms. White: Just to add to that one group here for Poverty and Homelessness Action Week is Kristina Craig. Thank you for being here, of course, for a very number of years. Thanks for being here today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In honour of the tribute to Waste Reduction Week, we have a number of persons here. We have a number of employees from Raven Recycling, and we may also have persons from Love to Thrift and Zero Waste Yukon. As well, from the Department of Environment, we have Deputy Minister Manon Moreau, Christine Cleghorn, Bryna Cable, and we may also have, behind the masks, Amanda Janssens, and perhaps Mara De La Rosa from the Climate Change Secretariat. Thank you so much for coming today.

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Poverty and Homelessness Action Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Yukon's Poverty and Homelessness Action Week. The theme this year is "Honouring Our Human Rights". Events planned this week focus on safe and affordable housing as a human right.

From the 2021 point-in-time count, we learned that at least 151 people did not have stable housing as of this spring. The main barriers to housing listed were affordability and discrimination.

Most recently, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's 10-year progress report noted the continued need for affordable and adequate housing — in particular, the challenges for those needing rental housing. As we continue to move forward to meet the housing needs, we know that we have work ahead of us to provide more housing options to Yukoners.

We also know that the work ahead of us involves all of our housing leaders, stakeholders, and partners. We all have a role to play, working together and continuing to find innovative solutions as we move forward.

Today we recognize the amazing and dedicated work of some of these community organizations, including the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'an Council, the City of Whitehorse, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Safe at Home society, Habitat for Humanity, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Blood Ties Four Directions, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in men's shelter and transitional housing, and Help and Hope for Families. These are only some of the many organizations and community organizations that work every day to support our vulnerable Yukoners.

I would also like to take a moment to highlight the Safe at Home society, which has been working determinedly on the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness. The society works on direct ways that we can take action.

I would also like to mention the members of Voices influencing Change for sharing their lived and living experiences with poverty and homelessness in order to improve policies and services, providing an understanding for all Yukoners.

Thank you to the many organizations and the people behind them who are working to ensure that the Yukon is a better place for everyone to be able to thrive and for all Yukoners to be able to meet their basic needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's Poverty and Homelessness Action Week. Since 2005, this event has taken place each October to raise awareness of poverty and homelessness across the territory and provide outreach to the community through education and initiatives.

This week kicked off with, on October 16, World Food Day. This year focuses in on the food you choose and the way you consume it, as both affect our health and our planet. We are fortunate here in the Yukon to have sustainable local food production through an incredible community of farmers and local producers. Each of them deserves our thanks and recognition.

October 17 was the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. As we move through this pandemic, we have all faced a number of challenges. Moving through the pandemic, many families and individuals have been affected by factors that have pushed them into poverty situations. Many were already facing poverty. Their situations are now being

amplified by COVID. We need to listen and to act in order to help those Yukoners.

Rising housing costs and food and utility costs, paired with increased taxes and increased stress, create hardships for many, although few are willing to talk about those hardships openly. I encourage Yukoners to watch out for one another and to offer help where it is needed.

As we sit here in the Legislature, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition is hosting Whitehorse Connects at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. This incredible event brings volunteers and organizations together with those who are in need of meals, personal services, clothing, and other types of outreach.

I would like to thank the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and all other Yukon-based organizations that dedicate their time, volunteers, and expertise to Whitehorse Connects and each of the other initiatives taking place during Poverty and Homelessness Action Week and throughout the year. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the hard work done by the folks at the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and in acknowledgement of Poverty and Homelessness Action Week.

The theme this year is “Honouring Our Human Rights”, so I would like to quote from article 25 of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* — and I quote: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...”

You will notice that housing is in that list. Housing is a human right. What is so important about this statement is that there are no conditions. It doesn’t say that you have a right to housing if you have a reliable income, if you have good references, or if you follow all the rules in the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. It just says that everyone has a right to housing.

There are so many people working across the Yukon to uphold this right in the midst of our housing crisis. Today we pay tribute to all of them — to the people at Yukon Housing Corporation and NGOs like the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Safe at Home, Habitat for Humanity, and Blood Ties; to the community members supporting their neighbours; to the First Nation development corporations that have chosen to address housing in a real and meaningful way; and to activists fighting for change. Thank you for everything you do.

Applause

In recognition of Waste Reduction Week

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to Waste Reduction Week.

One of the things that I love about the Yukon is how close our lives are intertwined with the environment and wilderness. We all have a stake in this territory and its natural beauty and untouched wilderness. It’s important that each and every one of us makes an effort every day to reduce waste and keep our

environment clean. This week is about celebrating our environmental efforts and achievements while also encouraging new, innovative ideas and solutions. We are finding more ways to keep our environment clean and make our solid-waste management system more sustainable.

Reducing waste is one of the best ways we can move toward sustainability and a cleaner Yukon for years to come. I just had the opportunity to attend the Love2Thrift store event, which focused on fast fashion and other disposable items in our economy. I had a look and I found this not-wonderful stat: It is estimated that the emissions of 15 of the mega container ships match those from all cars in the world. If the global shipping industry was a country, it would be ranked between Germany and Japan as the sixth largest contributor to CO₂ emissions. Although, of course, there is vital trade that occurs, it is certainly, I think, an eye-opener as to what those container ships emit.

Our government has been working hard to modernize and improve our solid-waste management system so that our landfills follow best practices in waste management. By reducing the waste that we produce and sorting out recyclables and compostables from our waste stream, we ensure that landfills don’t fill up or produce methane, which is a very potent greenhouse gas.

This year, we started an organics composting pilot project at the Mount Lorne solid-waste transfer station. The system is only a pilot at this stage, but what we learn from this project will help us develop systems for organics recycling throughout the Yukon. This project is happening because we have dedicated individuals like Mike Bailey and Garret Gillespie, who work tirelessly to divert waste from landfills and build the systems required to reduce waste.

Another way that we are addressing the issue of waste in the Yukon is by banning single-use shopping bags. This ban comes into effect with plastic bags on January 1. Paper bags will follow one year later. This ban gets Yukoners thinking about single-use products in general, most of which end up in our landfills after only one use.

Introducing consistent tipping fees across the Yukon is another part of our plan to modernize our waste facilities and make them more sustainable. Tipping fees ensure that everyone is equally responsible for paying to dispose of their waste and encourages waste reduction and recycling, which will help our landfills last longer. Tipping fees will be introduced at every solid-waste facility throughout the Yukon in the near future.

Collaboration is a key when it comes to solid waste. We all have a role to play, and we can all take action to reduce waste in our territory. I am confident that all Yukoners want to see more waste diverted from our landfills. When we divert waste, we keep our environment clean and we lengthen the life of our solid-waste facilities. Waste diversion on a large scale can be accomplished through small changes in our daily habits. All Yukoners, including residents and businesses, play a vital role in our efforts to reduce waste. We share this responsibility with households and businesses, and I look forward to continuing to work together and adopting best practices in waste reduction and responsible solid-waste management.

I urge all Yukoners to join the people across Canada and think about how we can reduce waste this week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Waste Reduction Week in Canada from October 18 to 24.

As in previous years, Waste Reduction Week focuses on different themes throughout the week. From Monday to Sunday, we see emphasis placed on a circular economy, textiles, e-waste, plastics, food waste, the sharing economy, and the concept of swap and repair. That's pretty popular in the Yukon.

We all need to take a look at our habits at home. Do we recycle and compost properly and effectively? Do we reuse what we can? Is there a way to repurpose the things that would otherwise be just hitting the garbage? I'm please to see the steps that we have taken in many municipalities across the Yukon toward ensuring that less waste hits the landfills. Recycling and composting efforts are helping divert much of our waste.

Whitehorse Blue Bin Recycling is dedicated to diverting waste and ensuring that Whitehorse residents have the option of only having to drop their recycling curbside for pickup. Yukoners living outside of our larger municipalities would be happy to have the opportunity to recycle and compost, were they given the opportunity as well, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from residents a lot over the last years on the topic of waste and waste reduction. Many would like to see additional waste-reduction measures put in place to complement the current waste-disposal model in their region and ultimately, Mr. Speaker, to reduce waste or increase recycling and composting.

So, I hope that one day we're able to offer more opportunities for rural Yukoners to reduce their waste, to recycle, to reuse and compost, and more. I encourage Yukoners to do what they can to reduce their own waste footprint. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to talk about garbage, junk, litter, rubbish, or, in this case, the reduction of waste.

Waste Reduction Week isn't new, and it has actually been around since I was a kid. What also isn't new is society's obsession with material objects. We all know electronic and telecommunication producers that design items with the intention of them becoming obsolete so that the user is forced to purchase a newer version of the same item rather than getting it repaired. It's a good thing that we now have a path to easy recycling with our e-waste.

Clothing, furniture, and other goods can be purchased cheaply without having been designed for longevity or the intention of repair. Most of these things end up in the waste stream, and that's problematic. This is a problem that our communities and our planet are drowning under.

The City of Whitehorse has done an incredible job of reducing the amount of waste that goes to the waste management facility. These gains have been hard fought through education. The city runs a comprehensive composting program that has diverted large amounts of organic material away from the standard waste piles. The best part of that is the fabulous compost produced from this waste. Industrial and construction sites are required to separate cardboard, construction and demolition waste, scrap metal, and more so that those products can also be recycled.

In Whitehorse, we're lucky to have both Raven Recycling, P&M Recycling, and the Blue Bin Recycling program that do an excellent job of diverting recycling from the landfills.

At the end of this year, we know that the Conservation Klondike Society will be closing its doors on the Dawson City recycling depot. Dawson City council is negotiating for funding to take over and manage the recycling, but without additional funding, they will not be able to add this to their already stretched budget, so, of course, we remain hopeful. Thank you to those recycling depots across the territory for the work that you do in diverting recycling from the landfills.

But, Mr. Speaker, this leads us to the next point: Yukon communities with transfer stations. A transfer station is a location where local residents can drop off their waste and recycling in a contained location, where it is then picked up and taken to a management facility in or outside any number of Yukon municipalities. Unfortunately, a decision has been made to close down four of these transfer facilities — those in Destruction Bay, Silver City, Keno City, and Johnsons Crossing — leaving residents with few options to easily sort their waste. In many cases, some are required to make a 100-kilometre round trip to dispose of that waste. It doesn't sound very environmental.

So, when we talk and celebrate waste reduction, it is important to highlight both the successes and the shortcomings. If we as a society are truly interested in waste reduction, we have a long way yet to go.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: I have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Teachers' Association to its members.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Pursuant to section 15 of the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*, I have for tabling the 2020-21 Cannabis Yukon annual report.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 3 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 3 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative

Assembly, as presented by the Member for Lake Laberge on October 18, 2021. The petition presented by the Member for Lake Laberge meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 3 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 3 shall be provided on or before November 1, 2021.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to ensure that witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation appear in the Legislative Assembly during the 2021 Fall Sitting and provide the House with notice of the date they will appear without further delay.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to recognize that the current state of Jackfish Bay Road is a safety issue and take immediate action to widen the narrow section that was raised this summer.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to improve the maintenance of public roads to properties at Braeburn Lake.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to appoint a full-time chair and additional directors and to provide sufficient funding to the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues so that they are able to meet and perform their legislated role under the authority of the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to ensure that witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board appear as witnesses in the Legislative Assembly during the 2021 Fall Sitting and provide the House with notice of the date they will appear without further delay.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to ensure that witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the

Yukon Energy Corporation appear as witnesses in the Legislative Assembly during the 2021 Fall Sitting and provide the House with notice of the date they will appear without further delay.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address the concerns outlined by Blood Ties Four Directions, the Safe at Home Society, the Yukon Status of Women Council, and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition by immediately undertaking a comprehensive review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that entryways to all Government of Yukon-owned and -leased buildings remain accessible to all Yukoners and are kept free of snow and ice at all times.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Panel on Climate Change

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Young Yukoners are stepping forward as climate change leaders, and they deserve to have their voices heard. As legislators, it is important that we listen. Our young people will be the most affected by the decisions that we make today, and we want to harness their ideas and passion to inform the territory's actions to tackle climate change.

Last year, our government established the Youth Panel on Climate Change in partnership with the local youth organization Bringing Youth Towards Equality, or BYTE. Actually, I believe that their line has changed. I apologize to BYTE, and I will certainly clarify at future times when they are mentioned. The panel was asked to provide recommendations on how we can take action to support the goals identified in *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. This inspiring and diverse group of young people dedicated their time and energy to this important work, and I want to recognize each of them for their efforts. They are as follows: Abeer Ahmad, Alyssa Bergeron, Azreil Allen, Bruce Porter, Jagger Jamieson, Kadrienne Hummel, Koome Marangu, Min Stad, Sarah Booth, Sophie Molgat, and Sruthee Govindaraj. The panel explored key themes related to climate change and engaged experts, elders, and other Yukon youth to develop recommendations to inform government action. They also met with the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship, established under the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region.

The global pandemic over the last 19 or 20 months did not hold them back from accomplishing their goals. They met frequently with a focus on four key themes: people in the communities; infrastructure and innovation; wildlife and environment; and policy and government.

Last week, the Premier, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and I met with the panelists to receive their recommendations. It was great to hear their perspectives on what we can do, as a government and a territory, to tackle climate change. Their recommendations covered a range of issues, including: education; capacity building; land use planning; indigenous sovereignty; local transportation and food production; bringing together science and indigenous knowledge in knowledge acquisition and policy creation; and the mining and extractive industry.

As the Minister of Environment, I'm inspired by each of the panelists, their diverse experiences, and their motivations for advancing the climate change issues that they care about. Their work is an important step toward developing inclusive policies and approaches to climate action that reflect the needs and priorities of our younger generations. Their passion for tackling climate change is admirable, and we thank them for their dedication.

We look forward to reviewing the panel's recommendations and incorporating their insights and perspectives into our actions to address climate change. Thank you once again to each of these incredible young Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement regarding the Youth Panel on Climate Change.

The Yukon Party recognizes that climate change is an important issue for all of us, but especially for those of us who are living in the north. We must all take action to preserve our planet for future generations. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to see engagement from the next generation of Yukoners on this important topic. We would like to thank, on this side — the Yukon Party would like to thank all 11 youth panelists and the panel coordinator for the work that they have put into developing 11 pages of recommendations in the report entitled *Our Recommendations, Our Future*. I understand that there are some important partnerships in making this a reality, so I want to give a shout-out to those partners.

The report's general statement reads: "The Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change prioritizes reconnection and sustainable relationships with the land and people to ensure that social and economic systems are based on reciprocity and supported by ecological integrity."

Mr. Speaker, as a tourism business operator and as a hunting and fishing enthusiast who has respected the land for decades, I couldn't agree more. I want to highlight the guiding principles of the document centred on stewardship. The principles recognized in this document, such as relationships with the land, innovation and creativity, land-based education systems, and environmental literacy give me great hope for the future.

Combined with principles such as recognizing mental health, indigenous rights and sovereignty, and food security, youth do have their pulse on the future. The reason they have their pulse on the future is they are growing up in Yukon, where the environment is a part of who we are. Our Yukon education system teaches at a young age that we must respect the

environment. Our final agreements established renewable resources councils, bringing the community together to address climate and environmental issues and concerns.

We are also so lucky to have leaders in our communities like First Nation cultural camps, the Junior Canadian Rangers, cadettes, and many others. This has guided the territory to where we are today. We really rely on the guidance of our elders and our seniors. Now we can look to the fresh ideas of our youth.

Again, I extend my thanks to the Youth Panel on Climate Change for their time, their effort, and their wide scope of recommendations.

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to congratulate the Youth Panel on Climate Change for their brave and forward-thinking report. My words today are directed to the youth themselves.

For me, sitting down at the table across from you, the young people who wrote the report, while reading the paragraph that sets the tone of the work you were presenting was heavy, because in this opening is the recognition that things need to be done differently. The opening paragraph reads — and I'm quoting: "The Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change prioritizes reconnection and sustainable relationships with the land and people to ensure that social and economic systems are based on reciprocity and supported by ecological integrity. Overall, this results in a changed mindset and way of living to sustain a healthy planet."

So, thank you for sharing so much of yourselves and the knowledge and lessons that you learned from your peers, your elders, your culture, and your communities. You have made 27 recommendations to programs and policies and, in your words, "to embolden the Yukon's climate action". I love that you chose the word "embolden", that you were encouraging the government and decision-makers to have the courage and confidence to act and behave in a different way. Your recommendations are brave; they aren't dependent on how government systems currently work or don't work. They were delivered without cynicism and full of hope. You challenge all of us in this Chamber as current decision-makers to change our mindsets and our way of addressing climate action so that by the time you are in our seats, a course correction will have been made.

Each of your recommendations is grounded in the lived experience of Yukoners. You learned from and reflected on the lessons you learned from the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship and others. Your recommendations are spread across all of government and demand that we do better, that we think bigger, and that we aspire to do more. You challenged us to use an equity-based lens for climate decisions so that all of society can participate. You have told us that the education system isn't keeping up with the real-world knowledge that you and your peers and future students need to better understand climate and that today's curriculum doesn't reflect *A Clean Future* or your role in it. And you are right: That needs to change. So, there is no way that I can do each of your recommendations justice in the short time I have today, but I

want you to know that I heard you. I heard both what was spoken and what was unspoken, and I understand the urgency and the hope behind what you have said, and the Yukon NDP will do our best to honour the work that you have presented.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the comments from the Member for Kluane and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

The climate crisis that we are experiencing is the biggest challenge of this generation and Yukon youth deserve to have their voices heard. Our government recognizes the great leadership of our youth and we are taking steps to empower the next generation of leaders. The recommendations provided by the Yukon's first-ever Youth Panel on Climate Change will help us to address climate change and build a brighter future for our territory.

Our Liberal government has taken significant action to tackle climate change. In 2019, we declared a climate emergency in the Yukon, a clear acknowledgement that climate change is real and that we all — governments, industry, businesses, communities, and individuals — need to take action against this crisis.

Yukoners, including young persons, want action and our government is listening. Last fall, we released *Our Clean Future*, an ambitious Yukon-wide strategy to address our changing climate in a comprehensive and sustainable way. With clear targets and tangible actions to reach them, this strategy marks an important turning point for the Yukon as we collectively take steps toward a more resilient future for our territory.

This year's budget includes more than \$50 million for implementation of *Our Clean Future*, with climate change, energy, and green economy initiatives across government.

\$16 million will support community-based renewable energy projects across the territory. \$14.4 million will make government buildings more energy efficient and switch to renewable sources of heating like biomass, which will also grow our local biomass energy industry. \$1.2 million is dedicated to making First Nation housing more energy efficient. \$6.1 million will be provided for energy rebates which will help Yukon families and businesses adopt renewable sources of heating and make their homes and buildings more energy efficient.

These rebates will also support local contractors and tradespeople in Yukon's green economy. My colleague, the Minister of Community Services, tabled legislation in this House to support the better building program. This program will help Yukoners retrofit their homes and businesses in an affordable way by providing up to \$50,000 for homeowners and \$100,000 for businesses at the prime lending rate, the lowest interest rate available, which is currently 0.25 percent.

These are just some of the initiatives we are taking to help Yukoners advance the objectives of *Our Clean Future* and help us meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets.

We look forward to continuing to support Yukoners and our partners across the territory to tackle climate change and build a strong, resilient future for our territory. We also

certainly look forward to receiving the *27 Programs and Policies to Embolden Yukon's Climate Action* which the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change has provided and, where we possibly can, to integrate these recommendations with *Our Clean Future*.

Thank you so much to the dedicated youth for their work. We are excited to move forward on this file.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday my colleague tabled a petition with the signatures of nearly 350 Yukoners demanding answers from the Deputy Premier.

We know that the Deputy Premier learned of sexual abuse that occurred at Hidden Valley Elementary School in 2019. Instead of telling parents, the Deputy Premier chose not to disclose this information to Yukoners. As a direct result of the Deputy Premier's decision to sweep this information under the rug, several children went without justice and support for over a year.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: The Deputy Premier failed to do her job and ensure the parents were notified. The Deputy Premier failed these children and these families.

Does the Deputy Premier accept responsibility for her actions — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to once again rise to speak about these very serious matters that occurred in 2019. I accept the questions that are posed here today in the Legislative Assembly.

As I have spoken about many times over the last several days, I have launched an independent review of the Government of Yukon's response to the situation in Hidden Valley Elementary School. This, again, Mr. Speaker, is a commitment I made to the parents of Hidden Valley Elementary School.

This independent review will look into the internal and interdepartmental processes of 2019 when allegations of child abuse were brought forward to Department of Education staff. It will also include a broad and comprehensive review of established government policies and procedures around operations, reporting, and communication to address serious incidents in schools. This review will include not only the Department of Education but also Health and Social Services and Justice. We will look at the interactions as well with the RCMP.

I will continue on with my answer in the next supplementary question.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the Minister of Education. I would note that my question was directed to the Deputy Premier and I would remind her of the principle of ministerial accountability.

As a direct result of a decision made by at least one member of the Liberal Cabinet to try to sweep this under rug, several children who were victimized went without justice or

support for a year. The Deputy Premier had a duty to inform parents and failed.

Was the Premier aware that the Deputy Premier had made the decision not to disclose the information about the sexual abuse of children in the elementary school when he promoted her to Deputy Premier — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I want to also remind the member opposite that I am now the Minister of Education and I am taking my responsibilities very seriously, of course, as we all have taken an oath of office.

I will continue on with my previous response with regard to answering questions around the incidents involving Hidden Valley Elementary School in 2019. The independent review will be completely supported by the three departments. The review will go where it needs to go. It will include parents, families, and guardians of students at Hidden Valley Elementary School. They will also be involved in this review along with other partner organizations, agencies, and the RCMP. Of course, as I have stated, it will include our internal and interdepartmental communications, protocols, and policies.

Mr. Speaker, we take these matters very seriously and I am prepared to release the findings to the public.

Mr. Dixon: I would remind the current minister that she had to learn about this incident from the media and not from her colleague who could have briefed her about it. She didn't even know about it for two and a half months after becoming minister.

Let's be very clear. A draft letter was prepared in 2019 to inform parents about this abuse. When the Deputy Premier got involved, the decision was made not to send the letter and not to inform parents. The Deputy Premier was then briefed at least a second time — that we know of — in March 2020. Then again, the Deputy Premier failed to tell parents about the sexual abuse that took place at the school. As a direct result of the Deputy Premier's decisions and a direct result of her failure to do her job to try to inform the parents, victims of sexual abuse went unidentified and without justice for over a year.

Is the Premier at all concerned that the individual he promoted to be Deputy Premier hid this information from parents?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to keep on answering these questions; they are important ones. I, as always, stand to speak first and foremost to the families and the school community and those directly impacted.

We have acknowledged that it was a mistake that other parents were not made aware of the situation and that steps could have been taken at that time to better inform and support families. We have absolutely acknowledged that.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the issues that have brought us to the launch of an independent inquiry. Amanda Rogers is in the Yukon this week, starting to conduct the investigation, and our departments are cooperating fully with this review.

I also would like to point out once again that the Child and Youth Advocate has launched a review as well, and we, of course, share the interest of the Child and Youth Advocate, which is the safety of our children. The advocate's review will

focus on education policies, protocols, and actions. We also have an RCMP review of their investigation in 2019.

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last few weeks, we have learned a few things. The first is that the current Minister of Education claims that she only found out about the sexual abuse at Hidden Valley on July 16 of this year from the CBC. The Deputy Premier has admitted that she found out in 2019. So, can the Premier please tell us when he found out about this incident?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I once again point to the steps that we are taking to address the situation. The independent review will help to provide answers to these questions. The independent review will look into our internal and interdepartmental processes in 2019 and bring us to today — of course, back in 2019, when allegations of child abuse were brought forward to Department of Education staff. It will also include a broad and comprehensive review of established government policies and procedures around operations, reporting, and, yes, communication to address serious incidents in Yukon schools.

I have stated over and over and over — and I will continue to do that, if it is necessary — that we take these matters very seriously. There is nothing more important than the well-being, safety, and protection of students when they are in our care. This is devastating; it is absolutely devastating to everyone involved, particularly the children, particularly the families and the school community, who are working hard to move on with their school year this year. I want to commend the actions of the administrators, the teachers, and all of those who are in care of our children.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, it is a very important question. It is a question for the Premier, and it speaks to leadership, it speaks to trust, and it speaks to ethics. Because of decisions that the political leadership of this government made in 2019 and 2020, victims went without justice and support for over a year. Yukoners deserve to know who within the Liberal Cabinet was aware of this and who within the Liberal Cabinet chose not to inform the public.

We have heard from the current minister that she learned this summer from the CBC. We have heard from the former minister that she learned in 2019.

So, when did the Premier find out about the sexual abuse that occurred at Hidden Valley school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I will continue to talk about the steps that we are taking to address the questions on the floor today. The independent review will help to provide answers to these questions.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity, since I am on my feet quite a bit during this Sitting, to just recognize the hard work and dedication and the very sincere work of the Hidden Valley Elementary School administration and staff, who are going above and beyond usual responsibilities to ensure that children feel well-supported and safe. It is including a number of actions that they are taking, but

I really want to hold my hands up to them. This is a very difficult time for the Hidden Valley school and for education overall. I have certainly heard that it is weighing heavily on folks who are working hard to provide good education for our children and to provide safe learning environments.

Mr. Speaker, I have said many times that we acknowledge, of course, that mistakes were made back in 2019. We are working to try to find the answers for Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's silence speaks volumes. The fact that the Premier is refusing to tell us when he found out really leaves Yukoners with the impression that, just like the Deputy Premier, he was likely aware of the sexual abuse at Hidden Valley before CBC broke the story in July.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier just tell us: When did he find out, and what did he do when he found out?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, as the minister responsible for Education in Yukon, I take my role very seriously. I have launched an independent review. I tabled those terms of reference for Yukoners who may not be aware of that. I tabled them in the Legislative Assembly for all to see. This is going to be conducted by Amanda Rogers, who is actually in Yukon this week and will be working on this with a target date of January 31 to bring a report back to me.

The terms of reference clearly point to — particularly section 4 — finding of fact related to responses of the Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Education, and Department of Justice to the incidents of 2019 involving the Hidden Valley Elementary School. Also, she will be bringing forward recommendations for improving government-wide policies and procedures to better support Yukon school communities. I look forward to being in receipt of this report and taking further action.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. As we proceed to the next couple of questions, would members please be respectful when a member has the floor and is speaking. There is a lot of bickering going back and forth, and it is hard for me to hear. I am pretty sure that it is also hard for the viewers to hear the statements and questions that are being presented on the floor. Thank you.

Question re: School staff shortage

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, was in Old Crow this weekend and heard directly from parents and citizens about the severe staffing shortages at their school.

Right now, the acting principal is teaching the grade 4/5/6 class on top of his administrative duties. They have no kindergarten teacher and not nearly enough EAs and teachers on call. We are two months into the school year, and this community is missing teachers, educational assistants, a permanent principal, and teachers on call.

We know that this isn't the only school in Yukon facing staff shortages. When will students and parents in Old Crow see a full complement of teachers, educational assistants, and teachers on call at their school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I have been making my way around to all the school councils in the Yukon. I haven't been to all of them yet, but we are well on our way. I have certainly heard directly from schools and from administrators that this is a very big concern for them. I know that having teachers on call is one of the primary needs to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. We certainly have staff and folks away from school due to some of the outbreaks that have happened. Effective teachers are one of the most important factors in a student's success at school, and we are working hard to attract and retain the best educators.

What I know is that this is an issue across the country. Staffing shortages and the retention of teachers is a huge problem across the country. As of October 19, we had — in terms of the teachers on call — 176 registered in Yukon; 136 are in Whitehorse; 40 are in rural communities; and 32 applications are pending right now, so we will have more on the list.

I will continue with my answer. This is a very, very important issue to our school community.

Ms. White: The opening line in a memo that I tabled, sent from the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association to its members, is brutal — and I quote: "The quality and availability of meaningful support for Yukon Educators and students is grossly inept."

I will quote again: "As of mid-September there were still nearly 50 educator vacancies in the Yukon."

There are schools with only acting principals, principals teaching classes due to a shortage of teachers on call, and teachers on call without adequate training are working full time to replace vacant teacher positions, and schools across the Yukon are in crisis right now with no help in sight from the government.

From chronic understaffing to educators and students struggling to no end, what is the minister doing to address this crisis in our schools across the territory, and when will we see real tangible change?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I've already stated, we know that this is a very big issue in our schools across the Yukon. I myself have gone to meet with school councils. I have heard first-hand and I know that there is huge stress in our schools.

Schools have several options available to help them manage, should they have staff vacancies, which most of them do. These include but are not limited to: temporarily adjusting staff teaching assignments; adjustments to student learning groups; and the use, of course, of teachers on call. The Schools and Student Services branch is actively recruiting caring and qualified staff for several schools, including those in rural communities. We maintain high standards for the staff as staff are selected to work in Yukon schools.

Current postings, as of October 18, include: 11 teaching postings, with three in Whitehorse and eight rural; six EA postings, with three in Whitehorse and three rural; and four Yukon First Nation language teacher postings, with two in Whitehorse and two rural. I'm very aware.

Thank you very much for bringing this to the floor of the House. We're actively working on this, and we'll continue to make this a high, high priority.

Ms. White: The memo also quotes the minister's promises on the changes that have supposedly been made regarding no alone zones and additional support, and I hope that the government is ready for one last quote — and I quote: "We have no information about how DOE intends to make good on..." these changes.

"These types of promises tell me our Minister is out of touch with the reality of Yukon schools and/or is in open denial of Department of Education's long-standing inability to properly resource schools to adequately meet the needs of students."

Day in and day out, the minister is telling us that changes are being made. Day in and day out, we receive information that this is not the case. This letter is a damning reminder that our education system is crumbling before our eyes — that our educators are feeling unsupported.

How did it come to this? How can the government watch our education system fall apart before their eyes and still hope to fix it with empty promises?

Hon. Ms. McLean: When I came into the position, I came in in receipt of a number of very concerning and in-depth reports. One of them was the Auditor General's report of 2019.

Actions have been taken, of course, to start addressing the issues, which took decades and decades to get to where we are. I am really proud that our government has taken the steps to get to the bottom of where we are really at with our education system.

Yes, thank you for bringing your comments forward to the Leader of the Third Party. We are taking active measures to work with all of our partners to address the very serious issues that we have in our education system. I know that people are feeling tired. We are only in the middle of October and teachers are feeling the fatigue. I have heard it first-hand. We are working hard to find solutions. We are actively recruiting and will continue to work with our school communities and all of our partners to ensure that our education system is the best that it can be. We have work to do — yes, I admit that — and we will do that work.

Question re: Student behavioural issues at Jack Hulland Elementary School

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, we have heard from several families who are concerned about serious incidents affecting safety of students and staff that have been occurring at Jack Hulland Elementary School. These incidents include violence toward students and staff, bullying, and acts of vandalism. The Jack Hulland Elementary School Council has been pulling for these issues to be addressed by the Liberal government for over a year now.

Can the minister tell us what measures she is taking to address these issues and what she is doing to ensure the safety of students and staff at Jack Hulland Elementary School?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I think I will start by saying that it is vital that our education system meet the needs

of individual students in a way that really reflects diverse learning needs in our schools. We will continue to improve how we provide education to support all of our students.

I have personally met with the Jack Hulland Elementary School Council. That particular school council meeting included parents and staff. This meeting happened with me on October 6, I believe. At that meeting, I brought back a few things to the school council and to the folks who normally and regularly attend these meetings. One of them was a new communication protocol in terms of how matters are communicated to parents and the school community.

The other was a Grove Street handbook, which was a commitment from a previous meeting to review the handbook with the school council, school administration, and Student Support Services. This was completed in September. Also, there is to be a facilitated meeting with the staff, which I am attending later this week.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, we have also heard that many of the incidents involve students who are attending the Grove Street school, which is, of course, housed within Jack Hulland Elementary School. So, I would like to know if the minister has begun a formal review of the Grove Street program to ensure that it is meeting its intended purpose, and as part of that review, is the minister considering moving the Grove Street program out of Jack Hulland to help address the impacts of these incidents on students and staff?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I will speak a little bit about the Grove Street program. The Grove Street school program at Jack Hulland Elementary School is designed to serve some of Yukon's most vulnerable students, who have not been able to consistently demonstrate success in a regular classroom. This program has a very low staff/student ratio so that students can receive the intensive supports that they need — an almost one-to-one staff/student ratio this year. With careful planning and a trauma-informed approach, we are able to focus on helping students to manage their behaviours in order to then allow them to focus on their academic success. The program has been located in Jack Hulland Elementary School since 2011, with significant supports from the Student Support Services branch, which is available to support teachers and staff at Jack Hulland Elementary School.

Are there issues? Yes, there are issues. I have just spoken to that and we are working to address the concerns. As I stated, I do actually have a meeting, as well, with the staff this week and look forward to further discussions with the administration.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, on April 5, 2021, during the election campaign, the Yukon Liberal Party put out a press release regarding supportive education, and in that press release, they said that they would look at behavioural support programs such as the Grove Street program to ensure that it is meeting the intended purpose. That was what the subject of my previous question was, so I will ask again.

Is the minister looking to review the Grove Street program to ensure it is meeting its intended purpose, and when will that review start?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education continues to collaborate with the Jack Hulland

Elementary School Council and others concerned in the school community regarding safety. I did talk just a little bit earlier about the review of the handbook, which is now complete.

I also would like to just touch on something very, very important that was a result of the Auditor General's report and was launched by the previous Minister of Education — the review of inclusive and special education. I think that this is work that is key to working toward new ways of bringing all our partners together to make strategic changes. This review was done despite COVID-19 instantly forcing our school system to adapt and respond quickly in a rapidly changing and very unpredictable crisis situation. We continue to do the work with education partners to engage in significant system renewal through the review. The Department of Education reviewed the final report of inclusive and special education which was done by Dr. Nikki Yee. We have an education summit coming up on November 12 that will dig into the implementation plan.

Question re: Individualized education plans

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, under the coalition agreement between the Liberals and the NDP, there is a commitment to reverse the Liberal decision to cancel the individualized education plans. On March 10 of this year, APTN reported that the Liberal decision to cancel IEPs resulted in at least 138 students being removed from these supports.

Can the Minister of Education tell us how many of these 138 students have now been returned to IEPs?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, the 2019 audit and final report of the review of inclusive and special education says that we can do better, and we will, to support students with diverse learning needs so they can reach their maximum potential. I really think that is an important statement, which is the undertone of all of this.

Under the confidence and supply agreement between our government and the New Democratic Party, all parents and guardians of students whose plans changed from IEPs to another type of learning plan were contacted directly by the schools before the end of the last school year and given the choice to remain on the current type of plan or switch back to an IEP.

Schools have been working with students and parents and guardians who choose to return to an IEP to develop individualized goals for the student and develop a plan accordingly. As of October 1, 2021, 39 student learning plans have been reinstated as IEPs for implementation for the start of the 2021-22 school year; 22 families affirmed the desire for their child to remain on the student learning plans.

I will continue on with the answer after the next questions.

Ms. Van Bibber: I am not sure that I caught the numbers. Can the Minister of Education reaffirm how many of these 138 students have now been returned to individualized education plans?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I will start again on that part of it. As of October 1, 2021, 39 student learning plans have been reinstated as IEPs for implementation for the start of the 2021-22 school year; 22 families affirmed the desire for their child to remain on the student learning plans; 10 plans

were identified as students who moved out of the territory or graduated. In the work plan of the review of inclusive and special education, we will work with Yukon First Nations, parents, staff, and stakeholders to create greater clarity around the types of learning plans available to students. This is a very big part of the work that we're doing on inclusive and special education and one that will be a very important discussion at the upcoming education summit on November 12.

Of course, at any time, parents and guardians can and are encouraged to bring forward concerns to their school to ensure a student is being effectively supported. All learning plans, including individualized education plans, or IEPs, are commitments to students and families first and foremost to provide the supports necessary for students to be successful in school.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, IEPs often come with the requirement for a student to have an EA. Can the minister tell us what are the total numbers of EAs and how many EA vacancies are there currently?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, we provide all students with educational programs to meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential. Educational assistants are one of several resources that a school has to support student learning. These include inclusive classroom practices implemented by classroom teachers to provide learning activities that accommodate students with diverse abilities and special education needs. We have school counsellors, educational assistants, and learning assistance teachers. The central Student Support Services unit — we have the First Nation education support workers and community education liaison consultants and community-based supports such as those provided by Health and Social Services.

You can see, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of supports, and EAs are part of that system. They are a very important aspect of it but not the only part. I think that is sometimes talked about in the Legislative Assembly as the only support and that is not, in fact, the case. We work with each school community, and this is another area that will be reviewed with inclusive and special education and how EAs are allocated. Right now, it's based on enrolment. This is part of the work that we will be doing together with all of our education partners.

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

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 4: *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 4, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Clarke.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I move that Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Public Works that Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to*

Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021), be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to bring forth the proposed *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)* for second reading.

This bill will align the current *Motor Vehicles Act* with the changes made to the *Criminal Code of Canada* in 2018. Yukon's current *Motor Vehicles Act* references sections in the *Criminal Code* that are no longer accurate, and there are inconsistencies between Yukon's law and the federal law. These outdated references and inconsistencies can create legal conflicts when enforcing the *Motor Vehicles Act* and the *Criminal Code of Canada* together.

To ensure the safety of Yukoners and to ensure that dangerous driving charges can be properly administered, these specific amendments were needed before the full rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act* is completed. The proposed amendments will address specific high-risk safety issues by allowing peace officers to impose immediate roadside impoundments in response to: (1) failure to stop after a collision; (2) fleeing from a peace officer; and (3) existing driving suspensions.

The Government of Yukon would like to extend its appreciation to the RCMP and the Driver Control Board for their input, which has helped to shape the development of these amendments.

I would now like to provide you with an overview of the key provisions of this bill. Section references and language for impaired driving-related offences have been updated to align with the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The threshold for impaired driving blood-alcohol content has been updated from "greater than .08 percent" to ".08 percent or above".

The waiting periods for the ignition interlock program have been changed to reflect the same waiting periods as found in the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Mandatory roadside alcohol screening may now be conducted by peace officers upon demand as long as they are in possession of an approved screening device. Where there is a failure to comply with mandatory alcohol screening, the *Motor Vehicles Act* administrative penalties can now be applied.

In order to improve road safety for Yukoners and the travelling public, the amendments provide peace officers with additional enforcement tools in the form of expanded roadside suspension and impoundment authorities. Peace officers can now impose 90-day roadside suspensions for criminal impairment by drugs or a combination of alcohol and drugs. Peace officers also now have the authority to impound a vehicle in specific circumstances, including: (1) failure to stop after an accident; (2) flight from a peace officer; and (3) an existing driver suspension.

Making periodic amendments to the law is common practice in most jurisdictions as a way to ensure that the legislation is kept current.

Mr. Speaker, the items presented represent highlights of the bill that has been tabled. We believe that these amendments will enhance safety for all persons on our Yukon highways and roads.

In conclusion, the government is pleased to bring forward the proposed *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*. These amendments will ensure continuity between the *Criminal Code of Canada* and the *Motor Vehicles Act*, while also providing Yukon's peace officers with new authorities with which to safeguard Yukoners and the travelling public.

I look forward to the passage of this bill at second reading and to answering any operational questions that may arise in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Hassard: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)* here today. I would like to begin by thanking the officials for the very informative and thorough briefing that was provided to us yesterday. I'm sure that we may have a question or two during Committee, but at this point in time, I'm confident that we'll be voting in favour of this bill at second reading.

I would also like to note that the minister just made mention of a major rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act* that we heard about many times from the previous minister. It would be interesting to know, when the minister is next on his feet or speaking about this rewrite, if he could provide the House with some sort of timeline on when we may see that.

At this point, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, we have had the opportunity to review this amendment. We've had a very helpful briefing from the officials, and I would also like to extend my thanks to the officials for their time in informing us.

We are satisfied that the amendment is technical in nature and that it is fixing a broken link between pieces of legislation.

Like my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, I am interested in knowing when the review of the act is expected to be complete. That's my primary question, and I look forward to supporting the bill at second reading.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I certainly will provide a more complete answer with respect to the voyage of the proposed legislation of the first complete rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act* in a number of decades. I can advise that I have received direction to review — and direction to draft — a number of different pieces of the proposed new legislation over the course of the summer. I anticipate receiving a few more of those discrete pieces and suggestions for the rewrite.

We do have a dedicated drafter at Highways and Public Works in order to complete the not-insubstantial work. I also understand that the original plan was for the full rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act* to be only the legislation and not the regulations. Some time ago, there was a change of heart or a change of direction, and the plan now is that once the full rewrite comes to the House for full consideration, it will include both the new legislation and the new regulations.

I am advised, as well, that some of these rewrites in other provincial and territorial jurisdictions have taken a long time — between eight and 10 years in some instances. We certainly hope that this will not be the case.

I am sure that the Official Opposition would like me to commit right now. I will likely be in a position to provide some relatively specific guidance in Committee of the Whole as to when Highways and Public Works and I hope to be able to present the entire package to the House for its consideration and hopefully its passage so that we have a new piece of legislation that will be one of the premier or leading motor vehicle acts in Canada, taking into account a lot of modern circumstances and contingencies. Thank you for your questions about that, however.

Speaking briefly in closing, I will just repeat that, once again, this bill will align the current *Motor Vehicles Act* with changes made to the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The proposed amendments will substantially address specific high-risk safety activities by allowing peace officers to impose immediate roadside impoundments in response to: (1) failure to stop after a collision; (2) fleeing from a peace officer; and (3) existing driver suspensions.

I do anticipate that there may be some logistical or administrative questions that may arise in Committee of the Whole. When I have my officials here, I certainly anticipate being in a position to answer any questions that members opposite may have. Thank you for your comments so far, and I look forward to passage of this bill at second reading.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

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

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 4 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I just want to welcome back to the Legislative Assembly Deputy Minister Scott Thompson, and I will cede the floor to my colleague.

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday when we left off, we were talking about the CASA and the implementation of the CASA by the Yukon government. So, to begin, I believe that we delved into a specific aspect of that agreement, but I will start at a higher level for the benefit of the discussion. Can the Premier tell us about the secretariat, where it's housed, and how it's funded?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe we answered that question last time when we said the secretariat is funded through ECO. If the member opposite is looking for some of the specific initiatives mentioned in the confidence and supply agreement, then obviously the particular items will be funded through various different departments.

Mr. Dixon: Obviously, the Premier is the Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office, so I will follow up with him on a few of the issues related specifically — to my knowledge, at least, to be in the Executive Council Office. If the Premier wants to defer me to another department, then I will bring those questions forward with the respective department.

I wanted to just get clarity on a question that I asked yesterday about the funding provided for the caucus resources for the NDP. I believe that he said they were funded through

the Executive Council Office, but I will ask the Premier to clarify that today.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am a little perplexed because, again, I believe that we answered this question last time — yes, Executive Council Office.

Mr. Dixon: How much money is allocated toward the secretariat?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't have those numbers on me right now. I am here for general debate, but what I can do is — when Executive Council Office does appear, I can get that, or we can try to find the answers for the member opposite on the fly right now. I don't have those specific answers for him here in general debate.

Mr. Dixon: I don't believe that Executive Council Office has a line item in the budget, and therefore, their officials won't be appearing before the Legislature, so this is the only opportunity that I have to ask these types of questions. I appreciate that the Premier may not have them at hand, so perhaps while we are asking other questions, he can return with that.

Can the Premier confirm that the executive director of the secretariat is an employee in the Cabinet Office, or are they an employee in the Executive Council Office?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I am trying not to be — with all due respect, there is a reason why ECO is not here; it is because they are not asking for any more appropriations, so we will get the details for the member opposite, as far as the costs for specifics in the secretariat. We do have an employee through the Executive Council Office who is supporting the secretariat, but, yes, the position that the member opposite stated is somebody who does work in our caucus office.

Mr. Dixon: As the Premier is aware, the staff of the Cabinet Office fall under the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*, which is a separate piece of legislation from the legislation that covers other public servants.

I am curious, because it sounds like the person is an employee of the Executive Council Office but they work in the Cabinet Office. I would like to know which piece of legislation that particular employee falls under.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite knows, the caucus office budget would be through the Executive Council Office. We have the one position that is from our Cabinet — is that lead position in the secretariat — and we did say that there is also another person who is being funded through the Executive Council Office for support as well.

Mr. Dixon: If I have that right, there is one person in the Cabinet caucus office who is tasked with this and one person who is in the public service who is tasked with this. If that is incorrect, I will let the Premier correct me.

Yesterday, the question I asked about the making work safe panel resulted in some debate. I am wondering if the Premier was able to find out in the past 24 hours who indeed is on that panel, and if he could tell me who it was who appointed that panel, since it certainly wasn't the Premier because he didn't seem to know who is on it. I am wondering who actually made the appointments to the panel.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The appointments to the panel have not been publicly broadcast yet. It's not that they are keeping those names, but the panel itself has not had a need yet to publish or broadcast who is on that panel.

This was the making work safe panel. I looked into that yesterday. It was established to develop the recommendations to establish permanent paid sick leave — sick days — in Yukon and was established in June and holds regular meetings. The panel is working on public engagement about how a make work safe program could be administered in Yukon. They are expected to go out for engagement next month.

So, very preliminary work has been done. The membership is the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission and also the MLA for Whitehorse Centre. We have, on that committee, Sheila Vanderbyl, Justin Lemphers, Kai Miller, and Staci McIntosh.

There are a few other committees as well to update the members opposite on. We have the *Our Clean Future* implementation committee that was announced by press release on June 7. Its mandate is to oversee the implementation of the *Our Clean Future* report. Membership on that is the MLA for Riverdale North and the MLA for Whitehorse Centre.

The *Putting People First* implementation committee was announced by press release on June 7. It will oversee the implementation of the *Putting People First* recommendations. That membership is the MLA for Riverdale South and the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin.

The CASA secretariat worked with the Minister of Community Services and the NDP on the appointments for the making work safe panel.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the Premier's answers there. He has likewise anticipated my future questions about the other groups, so I appreciate that.

The Premier noted that the making work safe panel will begin a public consultation next month. Can the Premier tell us if that making work safe committee or panel has terms of reference? Have those terms of reference been released?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, the terms of reference would have been in the confidence and supply agreement.

Mr. Dixon: So, the terms of reference would be the language on page 3 of the CASA, I take it.

That agreement, in the section that the Premier has referenced, notes that the committee may consider additional policy areas that have been highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the work continues to evolve. The agreement says — and I quote: “The committee may consider additional policy areas that have been highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that as work has evolved, it remains safe and the rights of workers are protected. The committee will report by January 31, 2022, with recommendations for amendments to the *Employment Standards Act*.”

Is the Premier aware of what the panel is considering beyond the paid sick days program that he has referenced?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think that the confidence and supply agreement is very succinct in what the agreement is and the responsibilities for those particular committees.

Mr. Dixon: The Premier is right; the CASA is very clear. It says that the committee may consider additional policy areas. I am asking if the Premier is aware if that panel is considering additional policy areas and, if so, what those are.

Hon. Mr. Silver: At this point, it is as CASA has stated. The committee will be working on paid sick leave.

Mr. Dixon: Obviously, the Minister of Community Services and the MLA for Whitehorse Centre collect the pay that all members and ministers do. Are the non-political appointments paid a per diem, or are they offered some sort of contract?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that an honorarium is paid to the other members.

Mr. Dixon: That means that the committee members would have been paid by the number of meetings that they have attended so far. Can the Premier confirm how many meetings that panel has had?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Could the member opposite repeat the question?

Mr. Dixon: In response to the Premier's note that the non-political members are paid an honorarium, I had asked — if that is the case, then I presume that they would be paid per meeting on either the half-day or full-day basis. As such, I was asking how many meetings they have had so far.

Hon. Mr. Silver: They have had 12 meetings, I believe, and the honorarium is \$75.

Mr. Dixon: Is it \$75 per hour, per day, per meeting? I'm not sure I was clear with what the Premier said there.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Per meeting.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the Premier for that.

Another aspect of the CASA was a letter that was sent from the Premier to the First Nation members of the Yukon Forum, requesting the participation of the Leader of the NDP. Can the Premier confirm that this letter went out, and what was the response?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Ours was sent mid-May, to my recollection. I believe that the response was on June 1. I am not sure if that correspondence — I will find out for the member opposite. With the Yukon Forum agreement being an agreement between not just one government but a few, I am not sure if that response is — and it could be — public knowledge or not. I will find out, and if it is, then I will table it.

Mr. Dixon: I think that I misheard the last piece. Can the Premier just repeat? Did he say that he would table the letter if he is able to? I understand that it may not —

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, I will make it available, whether it's tabling or whatever. Again, the Yukon Forum being an agreement — not just a legislative agreement — to meet up to four times a year, to know whether or not all of the governments involved want or intended for that letter to be a public document — at this time, I can't recall. If it is, then I will get that information to the member opposite, whether it is by tabling or other means.

Mr. Dixon: One of the other issues in the CASA that had fairly significant budgetary implications was the commitment to a territory-wide dental plan.

Number 4 of section 4 of the CASA commits that a territory-wide dental care plan shall be established as per the recommendation of the *Putting People First* report — recommendation 5.8 — with an initial investment of \$500,000 in the 2021-22 budget to develop the program, which will be implemented and fully funded beginning with the 2022-23 budget.

Can the Premier confirm that the \$500,000 has been added to the budget as per the CASA? If so, was it added in this supplementary budget? We know it wasn't included in the original budget.

Hon. Mr. Silver: That money was allocated in the main estimates — yes.

Mr. Dixon: The main estimates came out before the CASA was signed. I am confused why it would be in the mains already. Can the Premier elaborate on that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I understand — and as I have confirmed with my colleague — that \$500,000 was set aside in the mains for this particular initiative. If there is confusion about timelines, then I will get back to the member opposite as far as that goes.

But, yes, the money has already been budgeted and allocated.

Mr. Dixon: Deputy Chair, I believe that the confusion is around the first budget and the second budget. There was a budget tabled before the election and a budget that was tabled after the election. The second budget was the one that included the \$500,000. The Premier, I'm sure, is correct about that.

With regard to that investment, would the best place to ask questions about the allocation of that be in the Department of Health and Social Services, or is there another department, like Community Services, that is using that funding?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite will have to repeat that question because we were still talking back and forth here. On whether or not there were two budgets in the spring — there were two Sittings, but it is still the mains budget. That budget is allocated, and in that allocation, there is the \$500,000 in that second Sitting.

Health and Social Services is definitely the place to have further conversations about the dental program information. Could the member opposite repeat the second question? I apologize.

Mr. Dixon: The Premier actually did answer my question, so I appreciate that. The confusion was on my end with regard to the budget. There were two budgets that were tabled in the spring. One was tabled before the election and not passed, and then another was tabled after the election. The one after the election did include the \$500,000. That was my mistake.

I will move on. The second piece of that commitment was a commitment that the fully developed program would be available in the next budget in 2022-23. Obviously, we anticipate that cost being fairly significant. I am sure that the Department of Finance has been in contact with the Health and Social Services department to think about what that could look like for the budgetary picture.

Can the Premier give us any information about what the early indication is as to the size of that investment and the costs that we expect to see in the 2022-23 budget?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think that it is premature right now for us to speculate on numbers. There are a whole bunch of processes, as the member opposite would know with his time in government, to know the breadth of what can be accomplished in a fiscal year.

Again, any of the conversations specific to Health and Social Services — I would not have them at my fingertips here in general debate.

Mr. Dixon: The next item that I would like to ask about relates to the commitment in that same section, which is the safe supply of opioids to be "... available to people living with addictions within six months as a science-based harm reduction approach to tackle the opioid crisis in the territory. A supervised consumption site will be opened in Whitehorse by August 31, 2021. An initial investment of \$1 million will be made in the 2021-22 budget."

My question is: Was that \$1-million investment in the mains made? Were the timelines for that commitment met?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The process was delayed by a month. Conversations were had between the NDP and us on that. What we were contemplating is having the ventilation system for something that really only exists in about three other jurisdictions in Canada, so you can imagine a little bit of a logistics challenge to the department to figure out HVACs and all of that stuff. The project was delayed, but the money is being spent on a delayed basis but is in the process of being spent.

Mr. Dixon: Just to clarify, was the initial investment of \$1 million indeed made in the mains?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, that is where that allocation would be. I forgot to mention as well that the conversation also includes Blood Ties Four Directions, and the delay was also at the request of that amazing NGO.

Mr. Dixon: The amount of \$1 million — and the nature of the context within which that number was arrived at — suggests that it was probably not a definitive number and one that was probably made as a first guess. Based on what we know so far, does the Premier anticipate the investment going forward in the next budget to be the same, or does he anticipate an increase?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am not going to speculate on next budgets. I think that, again, in general debate — that would be a more specific question for the department. They might have some more insight on how the project is going and also unforeseen costs or savings, based on their experience.

Mr. Dixon: I will take that comment from the Premier seriously, and I will turn those questions to the department when they are before us later in the Sitting.

I'll move on. The government currently reports on ministerial travel and events — events that occur outside of the territory. Obviously, there hasn't been much in the way of travel outside of the territory since COVID started. I believe that when I checked the website last, the most recent event for travel was in February or March 2020.

Is the Premier aware of any ministerial travel that has occurred outside of the territory in 2021?

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is nothing in the supplementary budget on any particular ministerial travel. If there is, we will record this question and get back to him.

Mr. Dixon: I guess my questions are a little bit more catered toward the Premier in his capacity as Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office, which I believe administers that. Ultimately, my question is — we currently report publicly on travel of ministers to events outside the territory, and I was curious if the Premier had considered providing similar reports for travel within the territory.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am a little confused. I am wondering if this is the practice that the Yukon Party used to do that we are now not doing. We have a budget inside of Cabinet for internal travel. There has been some travel externally as well. I know that the Minister for Economic Development has travelled recently, but again, I am here prepped for the supplementary budget. If there is a policy that we are not doing that the Yukon Party used to do, then I apologize. Again, I wouldn't have that information at my fingertips right now as far as specific numbers or allocations of internal or external travel. But I will consider trying to figure out if we are missing a policy that the Yukon Party used to do. If not, we will continue with our regular budgetary process.

Mr. Dixon: No, I am not aware that there was any policy that the government has changed on this. I was just wondering about any future consideration of further changes and further disclosure.

I will move on. On the policy front with regard to the Executive Council Office, the Executive Council Office is in charge of protocol for the territorial government. One matter of protocol that comes up a lot — and has come up a lot in the last year — has been the raising and lowering of flags. I am wondering if the Premier can tell us what the current policy is for when flags are lowered or raised. I know that the Prime Minister has discussed this federally regarding federal buildings, and I am wondering if the Premier can give us an overview of the current policy with regard to the raising and lowering of flags from his department in the Executive Council Office.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is a government policy. I am not aware of any changes to a specific government policy on flag protocols. I know that the federal government, for reconciliation, has made a determination to keep flags at federal buildings at half-mast — for an indefinite period, I believe. From time to time, at my discretion, there have been individuals who have passed away who have definitely had an effect that I've felt is something deserving of lowering the flag — folks who have served in communities, on different files, and in different responsibilities — and I have made requests for lowering of the flag. It's not a lot, but over the years, there have definitely been a few.

The flag policy is on the Executive Council Office website, so the member opposite can take a look at what that policy is. Again, with all due respect, if he has issues with us from time to time, at the Premier's discretion, lowering the flag for certain

individuals, I can assure him that this isn't a move on a political basis. It's more a consideration of someone's time served in public service and dedication to the Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: No, I very much appreciate the Premier having some discretion and ability to respond to an emergent crisis, issue, death, or tragedy. I certainly don't begrudge him for that. My question is just that I believe that flags are currently at half-mast. I was wondering if the Yukon government had enacted a similar policy to the federal government, which was to keep flags at half-mast indefinitely. I am wondering if that's the direction that the Premier is taking with the Yukon territorial government.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The simple answer is no. They have been up and down in the last few weeks when the federal government has maintained a consistent lowering of the flags.

Mr. Dixon: I believe that the flags are currently at half-mast. Is the Premier going to tell us why they are currently at half-mast?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that the flags are at a lower mast right now for Peter Jenkins. We were just seeking to confirm, but I believe that this is true.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, yes, confirmed that it was for Peter Jenkins, a very dedicated leader in my community and somebody who has given me invaluable advice over the years, which I very much appreciate.

As folks in this Legislative Assembly know, Peter was a staunch Tory, but what was more important to Peter was the fact that Dawson City was well represented in the Legislative Assembly. The amount of knowledge that this man gave to me for horizontal infrastructure — the unsexy stuff in our community — he knew where every pipe was. He knew where every upgrade was. He knew where the pressures were, working as a municipal leader, working as a business owner and working, as well, as an MLA in this building for years. To have somebody like that care less about partisan politics and care more about the actual community and making sure that it was important that I knew what he knew, it makes our community a better place — that's for sure.

I believe that they are down and they will be down until — they were taken down, I believe, on — I'm not sure if it was October 11. Anyway, I don't have the actual date when they were down or when they are coming back, but I can get back to the member opposite for that.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the Premier's comments. My question was just that one of the implications of the federal government's decision to leave flags at half-mast indefinitely means that, when something emerges — like someone dying or passing away — which, in the view of the Premier, or the Prime Minister, deserves to have the flags lowered, they are not able to do that if they are always at half-mast. That is why I ask if the Premier had emulated the federal policy to leave them at half-mast indefinitely or if he had not, and it sounds like the Premier has not emulated that and is indeed raising or lowering them, depending on the circumstances at hand, which is what I had asked about, so I appreciate that.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Dixon: I believe that the Premier has a clarification that I am happy to hear.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The reason why we are a little confused over here is because — as far as my recollection — the flags are up right now; they are not down. So, when the member opposite said that the flags are down, I said: "Oh, let's find out why they are down right now." They are not down — they are up. The last time that they were down was for Peter Jenkins, and they were down until October 11, so just to clarify. I don't know — maybe there is — anyway, I'll let the member opposite explain. The flags are right there — anyway, just to clarify.

Mr. Dixon: In addition to the resources of the Yukon government, the government ministers are able to look at the flags from their seats, and I am not able to, so I apologize if I mistook that the flags were down this week. I thought that I had seen them down recently. Nonetheless, the Premier has answered my question, so I will move on.

Earlier this year, the government lost its Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture. Can the Premier tell us if that person resigned or had their contract terminated?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The Government of Yukon absolutely values the expertise and the contributions of all of the people who are appointed to serve as deputy heads in the Yukon public service. Deputy heads are appointed to their position by the Commissioner in Executive Council — as the member opposite knows, as a former minister — following certification by the Public Service Commissioner that they are qualified for the appointment.

With the exception of the Public Service Commissioner, the deputy heads serve at the pleasure of the Premier. Their appointment can be revoked at any time. Those who accept an opportunity to serve in this capacity understand this reality, as well. The government is actively recruiting for the deputy minister position with the Department of Tourism and Culture. The salary ranges, as we know and as the members opposite know as well, for all YG positions, including the deputy heads, is all public information that is available on yukon.ca. The former deputy minister is no longer working for the government.

Mr. Dixon: Is the severance that the DM received available?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I apologize; the member opposite is going to have to repeat the question.

Mr. Dixon: I asked if the severance that the deputy minister received is available publicly.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Under HR, that would be a personnel matter.

Mr. Dixon: Does the Premier recall making a commitment to release the severance of deputy ministers, when he sat in opposition?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Off the top of my head, no, I don't, but I am sure, from the tone of the member opposite's question, I must have.

Mr. Dixon: The Premier is correct. He did, of course, make that commitment in opposition to release the severance that is paid to deputy ministers when they are terminated from

their positions. Of course, that is something that they have not done in the years that the Liberal government has been in power. I am wondering if the Premier can explain why that about-face has occurred.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Being in opposition, you don't necessarily know all of the rules of personnel matters. It is not publicly available, just as it wasn't under the previous Yukon Party government. These are personnel matters. It is definitely not something we platformed on. It may have been something that I did say in the Legislative Assembly as an opposition member, but as the member opposite knows, as a minister, these are personnel issues.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the Premier's thoughts that he may not have been aware of all the rules and regulations in place for personnel matters when he was in opposition, but he certainly did make that commitment. The Liberal Party did, very clearly, in years past. Obviously, that is something that has changed.

I will move on. The employee engagement survey is often a good gauge of the sentiment of the public service and the view of the leadership in those departments. I am wondering if the Premier is able to update us on when the employee engagement survey will be completed.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. As the member opposite knows, we are dedicated to maintaining and engaging skilled public servants under a commitment of meeting the growing needs of a growing community and a growing territory. The employee engagement survey is absolutely pertinent to helping us measure the health of the work environments within all of our government public service.

The survey planned for 2020 was postponed so that the organization could focus in on pandemic responses. The 2021 employment engagement survey is now underway. Results will be available — I don't have a specific date right now, but this winter.

Mr. Dixon: I believe I missed the last part of the Premier's response. Could I ask him to repeat that, please?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes — we are hoping the engagement survey will be completed — it is still out in the field. It is still open right now, but we are hoping to have this completed by the winter.

Mr. Dixon: Can the Premier tell us who is currently serving as the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The acting deputy minister, or the stand-in deputy minister, would be Justin Ferbey.

Mr. Dixon: So, the DM in question is both the Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and Culture. Does the Premier have any plans to merge the two departments of Economic Development and Tourism and Culture?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Not at this time.

Mr. Dixon: So, the Premier was really definitive there. I will just ask for a little bit more clarity.

When he says "Not at this time", does that mean that there are no current existing plans within the government that we might find either through access to information or any other method or that there could be still future plans developed?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't know what else to say — none to my awareness, none to my direction, not at this time. I'm not really sure which other way to answer this question.

Does the member opposite have something that maybe they want to ask specifically about this? But my answer is no. As far as I understand, not at this time.

Mr. Dixon: I was as specific as I think I need to be. I was asking if there were any plans in place. Quite clearly, there are none because the Premier has said it's so. I'm sure that some kind of large-scale reorganization of the Yukon government would require his knowledge, so that's good to know.

I will move on. I would like to return to an issue that dominated the early part of the 34th Legislative Assembly. Of course, I was not a member then, so members will hopefully forgive my lack of understanding or knowledge of exactly what happened in those years.

I wanted to ask about the Financial Advisory Panel. Has the Premier or the government ever conducted a full response to the Financial Advisory Panel, including its acceptance or rejection of each of the options and recommendations made therein?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No official response to the panel — no. But there are initiatives from that very impressive work that we are working on.

The importance of growing the economy is extremely important — building economic infrastructure — roads, bridges, energy generation. Small population dispersion over a broad geographic area means spending on a new infrastructure and maintaining the existing infrastructure that is especially crucial. It also involves a lot of negotiating for flexibility on several different stages throughout the territories through the Western Premiers' Conference and then the Council of the Federation — the First Ministers' meetings.

At each stop, being able to use the advice of the Financial Advisory Panel was always key — having an independent review to take a look at where we are and where we need to be and to showcase the work that we're doing to move forward.

It is the same with the health review, *Putting People First*. That independent review goes very far when we talk to the federal government when it comes to Canada health transfers. We are doing our part to make sure that we are spending money in the most effective way possible. These types of reviews — while the member opposite would know this — are extremely important when you are talking budget from a federal perspective.

We worked on, through the Financial Advisory Panel, the fiscal anchor conversation, showing a balanced budget within the fiscal outlook — extremely important — and reducing business taxes as well — of course, the member opposite would know about our reduction of those business taxes — index borrowing limit to GDP growth, a comprehensive review of the health care sector, as we mentioned, with the *Putting People First* and the reviews there, the importance of working with First Nation governments — working in partnership with them is extremely important — and revenue-neutral carbon pricing. It is good to see that the members opposite have come on board in their platform, promoting carbon pricing as well. The review

of fees and fines better reflecting costs — specifically continuing care — a look at the fees on a case-by-case basis therein, rather than across the board. Also, services are improved or expanded. We need to make sure that we take a look at that, based upon the advice of the panel. Those are some of the initiatives that we are working on.

I really believe that we got a great bang for the buck when it comes to the Financial Advisory Panel. Specific to my Department of Finance — when we came in, it was more of a budgetary office. We had certain positions from the Yukon Party that were kind of in a conflict of interest, so it was good to be able to add the FTEs necessary so that a comptroller can be a comptroller and not have other problems or issues — again, making sure that the financial scrutiny is in place through the department.

We have also expanded from there as well. Once we could take the lead from some of these initiatives — I don't want to necessarily quote Rita MacNeil, but “flying on your own” kind of comes to mind. The department itself, as it becomes more and more stabilized — and being able to analyze and work with other departments, we're seeing a lot more investment into the human resources that our financial departments in other departments — the member opposite would know that Community Services has always been known as a “finance lite”. They have a lot of amazing people working over there on finance.

Also, Highways and Public Works — implementing of a five-year capital plan and making sure that we have more of a collaborative approach. Again, we started with an independent review, and then we blossomed into being able to really meld together the brain trust of these fantastic departments and do more with less.

Mr. Dixon: There was a lot there in that response. I appreciate that I did a fairly general question, so I would like to take up a few of the things that the Premier just said.

Let's start with where the Premier indicated that there were certain positions in the Department of Finance that were in a conflict of interest. Can he explain what those positions were and what he meant by that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: In the past, the breadth of the responsibilities under the comptroller — by the way, an amazing comptroller who has since retired, an amazing individual — and being able to focus in on the task of that particular office as opposed to being stretched into a whole bunch of different areas is that conflict. We have beefed up the department. We have added some FTEs. To get the member opposite up to speed on those positions, we can send him some information on those new hires after we get out of here.

Mr. Dixon: Just so I understand, the former comptroller of the Yukon government was in a conflict of interest. Can the Premier explain that, please?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think I just answered the question. There were way too many things on that particular job and desk. By the way, we haven't added new FTEs to Finance in quite some time. But, at that time, we knew that there was a strain at that desk, and we have added and augmented other positions to allow the comptroller to pay attention to the specific tasks of

that responsibility, which was not necessarily the case in the past.

Mr. Dixon: Obviously, there is a significant difference between the breadth of a job description and the need to tighten that job description with conflicts of interest.

It is clear to me, at least, that either the Premier didn't choose his words very carefully or he has changed his tune. That the comptroller wasn't actually in a conflict of interest but rather the job description needed to be tightened is what it sounds like. I will ask the Premier to explain that.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm not saying the previous position was somehow — maybe I didn't use my words right.

The job of the comptroller is enough to be one FTE. There were other responsibilities on that particular person's desk, so we expanded and allowed more FTEs to make sure that we have a Finance office that works like a finance office. This, again, was based upon recommendations of the Financial Advisory Panel — one of the first things that I did in my role here with my department.

Yes, I will say that I may not have chosen my words correctly by saying that there was a specific conflict of interest, but there were definitely conflicts at that job because of the sheer volume of responsibilities on that desk.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to clarify, can the Premier confirm that there were no positions that were indeed in a conflict of interest?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, Deputy Chair.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the Premier clarifying his comments.

He also mentioned that there was a Financial Advisory Panel recommendation around the consideration of a fiscal anchor. The Premier, in his comments a few minutes ago, noted that there was — and I believe to quote him — a “fiscal anchor conversation”. Can the Premier update us on what he means by that conversation and what the status is of that recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Twofold — I think that, in the past, the Yukon Party used the debt-to-GDP as a fiscal anchor, and maybe an ultimate one. We don't necessarily think that's the only picture. There is a reason why we went out into the index of well-being, for example, and, over the years, how that index of well-being — to basically showcase the wealth of Yukon and also the deficits of the Yukon, on a more societal basis, is extremely important, as well. To just say that we have a high GDP or to use forecasts — well, we do that for sure, but it's not the only picture.

On the one hand, we went toward an index of well-being. As we spoke yesterday, as well, in the Legislative Assembly, that index of well-being started off with southern universities kind of really taking the beginning on that, but over the years, the indicators became more Yukon-specific so, therefore, a better picture of where we are successful, compared to other regions, and where we are less successful when it comes to the wealth, the health, and safety of Yukoners. That was extremely important.

In the last year, we added the chief medical officer of health, as we are grappling with the pandemic, to take a look at

the indicators having more of a specific case to some of those indicators, as well. Some of the conversations that I would be referencing — one of the best anchors that you can have is the concept of a surplus versus a deficit. Where we were set in a situation in the Office of the Auditor General reports in the past saying that we, previous to our administration, definitely struggled to keep up with some of our aging infrastructure — faced with a decision to move forward on building for Yukon, we made a good decision to invest heavily in the assets that Yukoners need and deserve in order for our health — and the wealth of our economy and our people is so intermingled with — so, to go from — and again, I don't want to put words in the mouth of the Yukon Party, but it seemed like that debt-to-GDP ratio was more of the anchor that was — I wouldn't say the be-all and end-all, but that was definitely — GDP was definitely one of those things that was extremely important to the Yukon Party.

We've massaged that more. We believe that the surplus to deficit is extremely important. We believe that having a five-year capital plan to forecast where we're going is important. Over the years, I think that this has been an excellent — we have been hearing from the private sector, such as the builders in Yukon, that this is extremely helpful to them, as well, but if we are going to look at specifics and the member opposite wants to tie me down to a specific, I'm not going to play that game. We have other considerations, but a surplus to deficit, whether it is from the new leader of the party or the previous critic for Finance, has always been our target. I imagine that the conversation will go to net debt, but I will let the member opposite ask the question before I answer it.

Mr. Dixon: What I asked the Premier was a simple question about the recommendation that came from the Financial Advisory Panel, which was to consider a clear fiscal anchor. My question is simple: Is there a clear fiscal anchor for this government, or is there a relatively convoluted set of indicators that the Premier walked through that he didn't seem quite clear about which ones were included and which ones were not. My question is simple: Is there a clear fiscal anchor to ensure a robust financial situation well into the future for the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't think talking about the index of well-being is convoluted. I think it's extremely important. Maybe it's because the Yukon Party didn't consider something like this that they will now basically say that it's convoluted. We have heard that with the five-year capital plan as well. It's something they didn't do, and they have criticized us over and over again to have it.

I don't think that this is convoluted, but really, when it comes to the advice of the Financial Advisory Panel and a complete focus on having an anchor, it is returning to surplus. If the member opposite would care to look at the long-range forecast, that is what we are accomplishing. We would be there right now, if it wasn't for COVID. We also have in our budget, going back two mains from now, a very small, modest deficit with a contingency of \$15 million in it that we had to remind the member opposite about yesterday.

There is no better anchor than getting back into a surplus position. We are well on our way. If it wasn't for the unique circumstances of COVID — I mean, we could plan for the fact that Wildland Fire Management in the past, especially under the Yukon Party government, is hard to plan for. It's hard to know where the forest fires are going to be and which seasons are going to have forest fires. It's also hard to know when it comes to medical travel for Yukoners when the bills come in.

Those are two things that the members opposite would have remembered as being hard to nail down, but specifically, COVID is one of those things that we didn't prepare for — I don't think that anybody necessarily prepared for. Had it not happened, we would have been definitely in an excellent fiscal position right now — and we still are. Even though all Yukoners went through the pandemic together, we were one of the only jurisdictions with a positive GDP. When we were going through that, we were, again, among the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We saw the private industry — the mining community — really rallying and the placer community really rallying behind each other to make sure that, as an essential service, we could get people safely to camps.

So, a herculean effort, but again, sound fiscal management is extremely important, and as an indicator of wealth, I think — I can't understand why the member opposite would be so dismissive of an index of well-being. There is a growing movement across the world to use well-being as a lens, not only from a health and social services perspective specifically, but a decision-making lens for governments. We are proud of the work that has been done on this.

Last year, we launched the community well-being survey in partnership, as I mentioned, with the chief medical officer of health. Again, I don't think that this is convoluted to explain. If we are not going to have questions specifically about the supplementary, well then, I will use my time, as well, to explain some of the important initiatives that we are doing in these departments.

That well-being survey offered a chance to hear directly from Yukoners about things that we are doing, things that are happening during challenging times — like reaching out to people and asking them what we, as a government, can do to improve their well-being. If the member opposite can't see how that relates to a better economy, to a better way of life, and to a better society — you know, I don't see this as convoluted.

I think that, when we saw a previous government that relied heavily just on — and I am not saying that there is anything necessarily wrong with GDP as an indicator, but it is just not the full picture. I'm sorry if that is convoluted by explaining how we have changed as a government, but I won't apologize for the good work that we have done to balance the budget over the forecasts and put away some money for COVID that isn't attached with strings — being very open and transparent — that money is set aside, and if it wasn't there, we would have had a surplus — but also the importance of the index of well-being.

Mr. Dixon: I certainly don't think the index of well-being is convoluted; I think the Premier's explanation of it is.

What I asked was whether or not there was a clear fiscal anchor as recommended by the Financial Advisory Panel. It suggests perhaps either the targeted debt-to-GDP ratio or a certain net asset position. It sounds like those have been rejected as concepts to use as a fiscal anchor. Instead, the Premier is using, among other things, the index of well-being.

That was my question: What is the fiscal anchor? From what the Premier has said, the fiscal anchor is the index of well-being.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Dixon: Off-mic, the Premier says that this is not the case. I will let the Premier explain. What is the fiscal anchor for the territorial government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I have said — this will be the third time now — is “returning to surplus”. Returning to surplus, returning to surplus — that is the anchor that we believe is the most important.

Debt to GDP — yes, we could have gone that way, but really, when it comes down to it, making sure that we are spending within our means, and having modest surpluses moving forward, is the debt anchor. I can’t be any clearer.

Mr. Dixon: If the surplus is the fiscal anchor, are we currently tied to the anchor? Are we in surplus?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, if the member opposite would listen to the answer — if it weren’t for COVID, yes, we would be, but we are not.

If you take a look — and I would ask the member opposite to take a look at the mains and take a look at the forecasts — we are forecasting surpluses.

Again, \$15 million of a COVID contingency fund — I am not talking about applications to the national standard or national dream type of programming that we have and services that we had to help businesses during the pandemic. No, that is all budgeted in the Department of Tourism and Culture and the Department of Economic Development. I am not talking about paid sick leave. I am not talking about all of the different programs that we have put out there and budgeted for. I’m talking about another \$15 million — not attached to anything specific — put in the budget with, I believe, a \$6.6-million deficit at that time, with a \$15-million COVID contingency fund in it.

Is that considered a surplus? No, that would be considered a deficit of \$6.6 million, during COVID, with a \$15-million rainy-day fund, not attached to anything. It is integral math — simple integral math. So, on the papers, yes, it was a small deficit, but if you took that contingency out, that would have been a surplus when a lot of other jurisdictions in Canada are grappling. I wouldn’t have wanted to be Newfoundland in that year; that is for sure.

Looking at the forecast moving forward, we are returning back to those forecasts. That is the answer to the member opposite. The pandemic made things very expensive. We made sure that we had enough money for folks where we needed it. The ministers did an excellent job of working with stakeholders to make sure that our programming hit at the right time and was determined by the right people with the right need at the right time.

Again, just so I don’t have to repeat myself, no, we are not in a surplus right now, but we are in an excellent financial position. I would ask the member opposite to read the fiscal updates that we have with the budget and also the forecasts.

Mr. Dixon: Based on the Premier’s words there, it sounds like whether or not the Yukon government is in a surplus or not is the fiscal anchor that he uses. If that is the case, can he commit that, in the spring — despite the increased spending anticipated to fulfill the CASA, despite the increased spending to anticipate the additional needs of the COVID response and the many other types of spending — the spring budget will be a surplus?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the member opposite wants me to speculate, but we have forecasts that the member opposite has access to. It is public information. Again, it is a plan to get to balance. That is our fiscal anchor.

Mr. Dixon: If the plan is to get to balance, when do we get to balance?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have forecasts available in the budgeting process. We can’t speculate on the unknowns that are going to happen from now until we have our mains tabled in the Legislative Assembly in March. I don’t know if the member opposite has a crystal ball as far as fourth, fifth, or six waves or different variants, so I’m not sure that, if he was in my position, he would think that he would have the ability to know some of the unforeseen costs coming at not only this jurisdiction, but all jurisdictions in Canada — or a forecast as to what federal funding is going to be coming and how well that will suit the needs of the territories. We know that it is always challenging as smaller jurisdictions.

We hear this from Prince Edward Island and other places — to make sure that you get your amounts correct from the federal government when it’s usually this per capita funding. So, yes, I’m not going to sit here and say that I have a date when we know that the future is going to be a surplus. However, I will say that, with all the work that we’ve done as the Department of Finance, as a team, as a platform of the economy and the environment, all these bode very, very well for us getting to a position where we will be at a surplus position again. We have forecasts, but we don’t have a crystal ball.

So, I do know that one of the most important things for our economy is to make sure that, if we’re going to say that we’re going to put out a certain amount of capital projects — well, let’s talk about that. Let’s make sure that we get that money put out in the mains, and let’s try our best to not then have a secondary budget where we add a whole bunch of more projects, like the Yukon Party used to do, and then not deliver on a massive amount of those assets. That is not the way that we would move forward, but I will say that the way we now do our budgeting and the way that we make sure that we have that information up front, and the five-year capital plan — all of these bode very well for business development in Yukon. A First Nation procurement plan is going to help make sure that we have those dollars stick around longer in the Yukon. It’s going to help the development of local businesses. So, I don’t have a crystal ball, but what I do have is a long list of programs, policies, and procedures that the Yukon Party didn’t do. That

definitely helps us to have a better fiscal position and to weather the storm of the pandemic and to make sure that we have this money stick around longer, because it's one thing to balance a budget — that's extremely important — but it's another thing to make sure that we help develop local businesses.

Mr. Dixon: I'm only responding to the facts that the Premier puts on the floor. So, he told us earlier that our plan is to get to balance. I asked when will we get to balance. Of course, the Premier says that they don't have a crystal ball and they are not able to tell us that. If that's the fiscal anchor that this territorial government is using, balance or no balance, then it's a bit surprising that the Premier can't even commit to that fiscal anchor.

If the Premier were to direct the government to achieve a balanced budget next spring, the Department of Finance and others would go off and make it happen. So, I'm asking if the Premier will direct that the spring budget be a balanced one with a surplus.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think that I'm making some assumptions. The member opposite has read the fiscal summaries and the Budget Address and those types of things, but a plan to get to balance is exactly what we do have. If he wants to take a look at page 4 of the Budget Address speech, then he would see, in Table 1, the fiscal summary, there is a plan to get to surplus, and that plan is 2022-23.

The member opposite is challenging me to say on the floor of the Legislative Assembly — to balance the budget this year. My comments about crystal balls is that we don't know, from now through this year, what else is in front of us, as far as these anomalies and these pressures. However, with all things being equal, we do have a plan to return to surplus.

The member opposite wants me to commit to making it earlier than what we have planned out, but the plan is a \$65.8-million surplus in 2022-23. I don't know how much clearer it could be, but I guess I just made the assumption that the member opposite actually saw the documentation that shows that we have a plan to get to a balance. That is our anchor. The plan, according to our documentation, is 2022-23. The numbers there are \$65.8 million.

Deputy Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: When we left off, the Premier was just confirming his commitment to a \$65-million surplus next year. I would like to hear more about the level of that commitment from the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, again, the member opposite just needs to look at the forecast to see the plan.

We spoke about that a lot. It is rich that the member opposite of the Yukon Party — who has, in his government time, delivered deficits here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, but is now quick to criticize us in the fact that we have a deficit now and is trying to pinpoint when we are going to get back to surplus. He is quick to criticize deficits, suggesting that — I guess — that deficits mean wasteful spending. I think that this government's record over the years has proven that false. We presented a surplus budget in March 2020, only to be immediately hit with the pandemic crisis. We have spent according to need and circumstance, not according to the balance sheet.

The member opposite wants me to commit to the day on which we turn into a surplus. He knows that this is not something I can do on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, especially after almost two years of spending during a pandemic. The pandemic does not have an end date right now. We targeted money to people in need through the sick leave program, rental assistance, educational assistance, money to businesses, cancelled-event funding, and more. I spoke about business relief measures as well. We are very confident that, with effective program management — and I talked about this today — we would get money into the hands of those most in need.

We are confident that our collaboration with the federal government will ensure that a substantial portion of that spending will eventually be recovered from Ottawa. We spoke at length in the Legislative Assembly already this Sitting about recoveries from Ottawa through funding assistance there. Both of these assumptions were accurate. We have been recognized nationally for early action. We have been recognized for our sound management of this crisis from day one.

The member opposite is pressing all afternoon about when — when do we get to a surplus? It is complicated. There are lots of unknown factors with COVID. I will ask the member opposite: How many waves of the COVID variant, such as Delta or other variants, does he forecast into the future? What kind of spending would he do to accommodate? We heard yesterday that he is not in favour of mandatory vaccinations. I guess he's not in favour of advice from the chief medical officers of health.

I don't know what his response would be from a budget perspective, when it comes to dealing with COVID, but I think that this Yukon Liberal government has, so far, provided the services we need while we are being criticized for deficits here in the Legislative Assembly, with a plan and a financial anchor to get back into surpluses in the future, with those dates established in our documentation for this budgetary process.

Also, that sound fiscal management and dealing with a crisis meant, from the start, with supplementary estimates in 2020, that we needed to forecast a deficit. The member opposite is telling us, I guess, that this was not our best plan. To us, that was not surprising, given the circumstances.

Again, before COVID, we were in surplus. During COVID, we had modest deficits with money put into the open

and transparent budget — \$15 million. Again, it is not surprising, under the circumstances, that we went into a deficit situation. Again, through that sound management and with federal cooperation, we were able to reduce the size of the deficit from a projected \$31.6 million in October 2020 to a much-improved \$7-million deficit in the second supplementary estimates that were introduced on May 13 of this year.

The picture for 2021-22 — in the mains — shows a further improvement with a forecast deficit of \$6.6 million. Further, that \$6.6 million, as I mentioned time and time again here, included \$15 million in COVID contingency spending. It was not attached to any program or service. We went over all the other programs and services — the rental assistance, the educational assistance, the business assistance, the cancelled-event funding, the business relief measures — all of that is separate to the \$15 million that was included in the \$6.6 million deficit. One could argue that, in that budget, with those two numbers together, simple integer math, with the rainy-day funding —

Well, it was a deficit, but that is really good fiscal management. That is us being prudent, being cautious, and also being realistic.

Now the member opposite is saying, “Give me a date for a return to surplus.” Well, that is not necessarily being realistic.

But again, we’ve shown our ability to weather quite the storm and included a cautious, pertinent, and realistic approach to our budgeting into this deficit area.

After spending in this supplementary estimate, we have included in that — \$4.5 million of the contingency is drawn down. Okay, so of that \$15 million, we have drawn down. We’re talking about that in the Legislative Assembly today in this supplementary estimate.

The deficit is still only \$18.2 million, including \$10.5 million in contingency spending. Again, this is a reasonable increase, considering the level of effort required for COVID relief and recovery. We haven’t even talked about flood relief yet. Yet the member opposite is saying, “When are you getting back to surplus?”

For the implementation of priority initiatives, such as early learning and childcare, *Putting People First, Our Clean Future* — again, the member opposite: “When are you getting back to surplus? Deficits are bad. We put deficits in as a Yukon Party, but you can’t.”

So, they like to criticize the current forecast deficits, and also the resulting debt, without commenting on the nature of the spending that is contained in the budget. We’re not hearing that. The only time that they reference particular spending for items, when we talk about the O&M or capital budgets, is when they want to criticize us for not spending enough money in certain areas. How exactly they would propose to cut the proposed spending in this budget so that they could spend more on priorities and still have a surplus? That, again, would be very interesting.

I think we’ve been very clear. Our plan is to get back to a balance. This is our anchor. We’ve also expanded on this narrative to talk about how important the index of well-being is, and it’s not just only Yukon that is doing these things; it’s

other jurisdictions. I would hope that the Yukon Party, in their fiscal analysis of how to budget, would maybe consider a similar thing.

We also talked about floods, fires, and pandemic response and how we’ve compared to the rest of Canada, but the member opposite needs a specific date of when we’re getting back to the surplus. I would say, with all due respect to him, that I don’t have a specific date in mind, but I think that I have been more than open and accountable about our prudent approach to the Yukon’s fiscal situation and planning.

Mr. Dixon: I believe the Premier must have misunderstood my question, because he answered a lot of — he said a lot of things that had absolutely nothing to do with anything I asked him.

It seems that perhaps he has been scarred by the past few years and my colleagues asking questions and his answering questions that they have asked in years past, but it certainly was not what I asked of him. I certainly didn’t ask him to pick a date for tabling the budget. What I asked was: “What is the fiscal anchor?” His answer to that was that the fiscal anchor is a deficit or surplus position, and so I asked when we can expect a surplus position. He said that they are forecasting it for next year, but he said that it is unrealistic to commit to a surplus in the spring. I guess I would ask the Premier: How can the fiscal anchor be the surplus/deficit position? And yet, the Premier says that it is unrealistic — that is what he said, and those are his words — and that it’s not realistic to commit to a surplus. How can that be the fiscal anchor and the crux upon which he makes these decisions if he can’t commit to there being a surplus?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The fiscal anchor is a plan to balance. In our documentation that we tabled during the Legislative Assembly, we forecasted that surplus, so we have committed to that.

What I am being asked — and maybe I’m misinterpreting the member opposite — is to say today that we are guaranteeing that we are going to get to this plan. I can’t do that, and I have explained a few different times why. We are in the middle of a pandemic, and there are flood considerations and different things. There may be other circumstances from now until our forecasts that would deter us from — as it has in the past — achieving the forecasted numbers. I would hope that the member opposite would give a grain of sand on that and say: “Yes, you can’t predict the future. You have forecasts. Your fiscal anchor is a plan to get to balance. You have tabled documentation with those numbers about best forecasts.” But I am just very careful — yes, maybe I am scarred a little bit by the Yukon Party and the current leader because he will also use these words against me, and so I do have to be very, very clear. My response is that I can’t predict what is going to happen in the future, but we do have a plan to balance and we have those numbers in the documentation that he has readily available at his fingers, and he is still asking me: “But when?”

The forecast is the forecast, and it says that, in the fiscal year 2022-23 — so there is your “when”. But what I’m picking at here is that I am not going to predict that there aren’t going to be any other unforeseen circumstances. That is my point. I

believe that I have answered the member opposite's question a few different times now. I apologize if, as I respond — I may be once bitten, twice shy in Committee of the Whole, but I think if the member opposite took a tour through Hansard, he would understand why.

Mr. Dixon: Well, to respond to the Premier, I think that it is important that he be accountable for the words that he says. He seemed to be shocked by that — that we would hold him to what he says in the Legislature — but I would remind him that, when we say things in the Legislature, they are on the record. That means that we are accountable for what we say.

I will move on with that, and I have another question that I wanted to ask, simply because the Premier raised it in his comments today. That was in relation to the budgeting for Wildland Fire Management. Can the Premier tell us how he currently structures the budgeting annually for Wildland Fire Management, and how the uncertainty with the reality that we can't know exactly when fires will occur and the amount that we will need to spend to put them out or manage them affects our overall budget?

I know how it was done in years past. I am curious if the Premier can offer us some insight as to how the current government is approaching budgeting for Wildland Fire Management.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't think that there is much change with how we budget compared to how the previous government budgeted. What does change from year to year is how much money is spent. We know that 2019 was a monstrous year for forest fires. The Wildland Fire Management crews did an impeccable job of keeping people safe, but as the member opposite knows, it is hard to budget when, in one year, you don't have as many fires as the next year. We do know that the frequency of fires is increasing, but to be able to predict is something that his government would have grappled with, as would ours. We do budget fixed costs, and then we pass variable costs on that five-year average. Supplementary budgets would be where you would have either the good news or the bad news in terms of budgeting when it comes to Wildland Fire Management.

There are always internal costs when it comes to training, when it comes to working with First Nation fire crews, when it comes to contracting. There are always going to be costs that the department can — and I'm sure that the member opposite can ask the department, when they appear here, more specific questions about those fixed costs versus a variable cost over a five-year average. That's very specific stuff that I wouldn't necessarily have the information here for.

I would say that work is underway to develop community wildfire protection plans. It takes an assessment of fire risk to communities and provides guidance for fuel mitigation and community FireSmart initiatives. That might be something new that the member opposite might not have done as much on. I'm not really sure how much of that fire mitigation they budgeted for — or FireSmart initiatives.

Wildland Fire Management began public engagement on a draft community wildfire protection plan for six communities that were co-developed by staff and also by community

stakeholders as well. These plans will provide communities with fuel management priorities and guidance, as well, to assist with hazardous materials and hazardous considerations on private property. Completed plans will enable communities to access funding to address these hazards.

Again, there are costs that we can forecast and plan for, but to know how many square hectares of land are going to be decimated during a bad season is something that has to be considered usually in a supplementary budget.

Back to the fuel breaks — just for a little bit more context for the member opposite — 180 hectares of the Whitehorse south fuel break is under construction right now. That project, created by the Government of Yukon and the City of Whitehorse, will reduce and remove forest fuels across almost 400 hectares over the next several years. I'm not sure if they are continuing as we speak right now, but this was work that was being done into the late summer and into the early fall. Maybe the minister, when he gets to his feet, can explain the dates of that programming.

The second round of public tenders is being offered for the Whitehorse south fuel break, and improvements are made to increase the information available to potential bidders to make sure that we meet the requirements of the First Nation procurement policy, which is extremely important to us.

I do know that, specific to this supplementary — it is always good to be able to relay some information to the public about this budget that we are on general debate in — \$250,000 in this supplementary is 100-percent recoverable. This is Wildland Fire Management, emergency management assistance program. That is funding from Canada to ensure First Nation FireSmart projects, so that is a great partnership as well.

I am not sure if I answered the member opposite's question. Maybe I am a little perplexed as to the question. As the Minister of Community Services and the minister of other departments, he would be privy to some of the information about how hard it is to predict how many forest fires are going to happen in a single year.

Mr. Dixon: I am well aware of how challenging it is to budget. I was simply asking if the Premier had many changes to that. I know that, during my time in Community Services, the Department of Finance was keen to see the Department of Community Services adjust the way it budgets for wildfire management. I was curious if any of that had come to fruition in the past few years, but it is clear that the Premier doesn't have an idea about that right now.

I did commit to my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, that I would allow her to get to their questions. Before I do, I did want to note one final thing. It came up earlier, and the Premier indicated that it wasn't in their 2016 platform that deputy minister severances be included. I have to correct the Premier on that. Of course, he did make that commitment, and if he doesn't mind, I will just read him back his quotes. He said at the time, "When the Premier hires deputy ministers and then fires them, there's a cost to the taxpayer." He said that it is very unfortunate when the government refuses to tell the public what this major turnover at the highest level of the public service is costing the taxpayers. He then said that a Liberal government

— or his officials said that the Liberal government would do things differently; it would change that policy.

I know that this is something that the Premier has indicated that he did not change. I believe that it was on the same page as the commitment to electoral reform, so perhaps that page didn't make it in this year either.

I just wanted to leave the Premier with that. He did, in fact, make that commitment in his time in opposition. Among other things, he wasn't able to deliver on those. I will let him respond to that or let the Leader of the Third Party go — either way, I will look forward to asking some more questions when I get a chance again.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I did answer the first question of looking into it and it being a personnel issue. We definitely decided that this is not something that we can do from a government perspective. I think I answered that question. Thanks for the clarification as to the quote. I will take a look at that.

As far as electoral reform goes, it takes three to tango these days with electoral reform. I guess my question to the member opposite would be — we were all a little bit shocked the other day when we thought we were going to have unanimous consent — there are some people talking off-mic right now, so I'm not really sure that they are listening.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Deputy Chair: Order, please. The Premier has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Deputy Chair.

We were perplexed that, when we asked for unanimous consent, it sounded like everyone in the Yukon Party, except for the leader, said "agree" to extending, but it was one of the members — maybe the member can clarify what happened there. We assumed that we were going to get unanimous consent, because this was important, as we are trying to move forward on electoral reform. The member opposite asked this question — why unanimous consent wasn't granted for that extension. With that, if the member opposite wants to answer that question, but otherwise, we will turn back to the NDP.

Mr. Dixon: I apologize to the Leader of the Third Party, but I do need to respond to that. Of course, we have for some time opposed the government's and the NDP's plans for electoral reform. As the Premier will recall, we voted against the motion to establish the select committee. Yes, indeed, unanimous consent was not granted recently to debate the motion to extend the deadline. Of course, the first time that came forward, it was the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who disagreed. The second time, it was indeed me who disagreed, and I'm happy to say that this was the case.

I continue to think that the select committee on electoral reform is a cynical attempt by the Liberals to push this issue down the road. They had four years and a commitment to do electoral reform when they had a majority, and they did nothing. The only changes they made to the *Elections Act* were ones that they guillotined to bring in a fixed election date, and the Premier then broke the promise for that, of course, by calling a snap election earlier this year.

I did want to respond to that simply because the Premier did, but with all due respect, I will pass it along to the Leader of the Third Party.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would just say that it wasn't necessarily the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources alone who, the first time this came up, said "disagree". It was a surprise to us at that time. We didn't even know that it was coming, and so, again —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you. We are very respectful of trying to listen to the members opposite when they speak; we would appreciate the same coming back.

Just to clarify that point, it was all of us at that time — not just one member — who said "disagree". It was more about that we did not really know that this was coming up at this time, so we were surprised. As the member opposite was reading the actual item, a lot of our team members were hearing it for the first time. It wasn't the content — it was just a misunderstanding — but it was interesting that, I guess, maybe a dissent in the ranks, or maybe differences of opinions, when it comes to the member opposite, as they make fun of the way that I pronounced a word — and I apologize for not being so great with my words as the member opposite — but it is interesting how that is what we get criticized for over here.

Just to correct the record: It wasn't just one of our members; we were in a situation where we just weren't sure that was actually coming forward — it wasn't the content. To say that — we believe that we have moved the needle on electoral reform. Have we gotten down to where we wanted? No, we haven't, but it's hard to work with the Yukon Party, when it comes to electoral reform.

Ms. White: Thank you, Deputy Chair. It is always fascinating. I have so many social commentary comments to make at this point in time, but I will keep them to myself. As a person who has tried to move that motion twice now, or I had it moved twice, it is always a surprise.

I have questions actually about the Department of Justice, and the reason for that is, of course, that it's not up for debate this time around. I have questions about the John Howard Society and the transition house — the home that is in the jail. Are there any plans on moving that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't have that information with me right now, but I can get back to the member opposite with it.

Ms. White: I thank the Premier for that. I am just going to add other questions to that then, at the same time, just so that they are all on the record.

I had the opportunity to tour the transition facility. I am not sure if it was last summer or previously — I have lost track of time — but there was the assertion that, when it was going into the block in the correctional facility, it would be different. There was talk about that there was a separate entrance and all these things. It is true — there is a separate entrance — you go through higher than 10-foot wired fencing, including razor wire on one side of it, and it towers above you. You go down kind of like a long trench, you make a right-hand turn, and then you walk into a door.

One of the concerns that I had at the time about that space is — and just to let folks know, before I was elected, I actually worked at Corrections. I was working for Corrections back in 2011 when I was elected, and so I had toured the facility when it was under construction just before it opened. The thing is that a correctional facility has very specific designs because it's a correctional facility. It has cinderblock walls; it is very specific with the way bathrooms are designed. So, in the case of the transition home, there are bathrooms on each floor. At one point in time, there were toilet and sink units that were in each of the living units, and they were one-piece moulded stainless steel. Those were transitioned out, and that's great. They put in something that was a bit less institutional, but the challenge was that it doesn't actually change the physical space.

There are multiple units at the correctional facility, and they are very much the same. The colours are different. They had one piece of art on one wall. It's mostly more of a sound-dampening thing, but they look the same. If someone had been in E block before it was changed into a transition home, they would be going back to what very much felt like the correctional facility.

I know at the time, when I was there, there was an indication by the folks working for the society that there was an intention to change the physical space so that it was a little less institutional. The question I have is: What changes have been made, aesthetic or otherwise, to make the transition home feel less like a jail?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just to confirm, is this the supervised housing and reintegration program with the John Howard Society that the member opposite is speaking directly about?

I'm just getting a nod of confirmation. Thank you. I wasn't sure, with the second part that you added to.

Again, I will get back to you with some of the specifics about the question, but I can say, in general, that the John Howard Society has been operating the supervised housing and reintegration program for justice-involved men, and that has been since May 1, 2020 — providing programming for 65 clients. The society is a very respected international agency, with a history of delivering services across Canada, and has significant expertise in supporting justice-involved individuals — so, thank you to the John Howard Society.

As far as program evaluation, we have been working to strengthen accountability related to the supervised community housing for justice-involved men.

There is a transfer payment agreement between the Government of Yukon and the John Howard Society Pacific which requires regular reporting and data collection on the program components. Specifically, the John Howard Society Pacific provided both qualitative and quantitative information on programming with indicators related to cultural programming, life skills and program use, client satisfaction, and operational requirements as well.

I don't have any specific details about the member opposite's question about when it is not going to look so much like a jail, but at the same time, the John Howard Society has undertaken extreme efforts, beyond those required by the transfer agreement, to establish a review process and to engage

an independent corrections expert to develop an evaluation framework as well. It then also hired three local independent reviewers to review program operations and provide the John Howard Society with a written report.

I could get into some costs, but that would be the extent of my content for today, but for any other specific questions, I will work with the specific department for the member opposite.

Ms. White: Just in mentioning the review that will be undertaken, will that review be shared with government, and then will that review be made public so that population can see what is going on?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will find out from the department.

Ms. White: Excellent.

How many contracts does the John Howard Society Pacific now have with the Yukon government, and what facilities are they running?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, that is specific information that I don't have here for general debate in Committee of the Whole on a supplementary budget with no budgetary items for Justice. I would have to get that information for the member opposite.

Ms. White: What a fantastic time to be able to put it on the floor because, with five questions a week, it's just not possible to get there.

Back when I was first elected in 2011, in my opening speech to this Assembly, I said that one of the most important things to me was that there would be a women's transitional housing unit and that it would be similar to, at the time, what was the Adult Resource Centre, which is now the John Howard Society transition housing — and that would be a place for justice-involved women to leave the correctional facility.

Are there any plans underway for a women's transition home?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Our government is considering options to provide that supervised community housing for justice-involved women. Program models that are under consideration include gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed services and supports for women who do not require high-security custodial care but need that support — safe, supervised community housing.

Any program development will recognize the unique needs of women involved within the criminal justice system and will aim to support them as they transition from custody to the community. We will provide for alternatives to custody or support their participation when addressing services through the Yukon's treatment courts.

Discussions with our partners and local stakeholders and subject matter experts increase our understanding, obviously, of how we can support the specific needs of justice-involved women in the Yukon. I don't have any updates as far as when we will be getting to the specific answers to the member opposite's questions as far as seeing this supervised housing.

Again, if there is a specific question from this debate that the Department of Justice wants to add to, then I will definitely get back to the member opposite on that.

I agree that this is a great opportunity to ask these questions in the Legislative Assembly. Again, when I prepare for general debate of a supplementary budget — that is kind of where my

brain is right now, and that is where we are. These are very specific questions for the Department of Justice.

We will get back to the member opposite if there is anything else that she might need on this particular file.

Ms. White: I would point out that justice-involved women needed that housing 10 years ago, and they still need it now. They have needed it for the last four years. They need it now. They will need it in four years. It is one of those critical pieces of infrastructure that we don't have in the community. Women leaving the correctional facility don't qualify for Kaushee's as they are not immediately fleeing violence. Women will often go back into the exact same bad situations that they left, because there is literally nowhere else to go. I saw it for two years when I worked there.

I saw people as the stress built up as they got ready to leave and were not sure where they were going to go. So, this is critical. If we want to talk about supporting people, this is critical. I just want to put it on the floor that this is one of those things that needs to happen sooner rather than later.

There was a report that — maybe I will just put a bunch of these on, as I understand that the Premier does not have these answers right now.

In 2018, 40 recommendations were made to change the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. This report was groundbreaking, and it was in response to the horrific and unacceptable treatment of a person who was incarcerated. I wanted to know if the department had any updates or reports on the implementation of these following recommendations. How does the department now define "separate confinement"? More specifically, how many people in the jail, if any, have been kept in administrative separate confinement and for how long? Is there an on-site mental wellness coordinator at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and what hours are they accessible? What addictions treatment services are being offered to people in the facility? Do all folks in the facility — sentenced or on remand — have access to the same treatment? What supports are there for people in jail who use substances for detox support? What mental wellness training is being offered to correctional officers and other staff at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre? Are folks at the jail currently being charged for local and long-distance phone calls? Are people who are re-entering their community after being at the facility connected with a doctor, a social worker, or a psychiatrist as follow-up to ensure that they continue medication and receive the right supports after their time in the facility?

The reason I am putting those on the floor are that those are important. We didn't have the opportunity to ask them this spring. It is signalling that they are important and we want it to go on.

The next question that I have is based on a briefing that we had during the flooding this summer. I, like many others in this House, went out and volunteered and did things, but we were surprised to learn in a briefing that people at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre would also fill sandbags for the Yukon government to use in flood prevention. It was explained to us at the time — and this is in quotation marks because we wrote this down because it was surprising — "an enjoyable activity

and fresh air for the inmates". That is what we were told in the briefing. So, my question — hopefully for the Premier to answer and just to put it out there — is: Did he have the correctional facility fill sandbags for Yukon government, and, if so, were they compensated for their labour?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, three questions — because I am going to go back to do some context with the member opposite, talking about the first question. Again, supervised community housing — supports for justice-involved men. I agree that this has been provided for over 20 years in the Yukon via non-governmental agencies. There have been no equivalent services for justice-involved women in the territory. We recognize that.

Concerns have been raised with respect to the recently established supervised community housing service for men, provided by the John Howard Society, which does not include those services for women.

A little bit of background, as well: Supervised community housing has been available for justice-involved men since the mid-1980s. Through a contract service provider, men had access to programming, community supports, housing, and alternatives to custody as a tool to support discharge planning and also a community reintegration.

Now, 15 years ago, the Salvation Army provided beds for justice-involved women. Since then, this gap in service has been filled intermittently through various solutions. These have included attempts by the Elizabeth Fry Society to set up housing as well as funding for two beds in the home of a retired social worker. Neither of these options currently exist for justice-involved women in the Yukon.

Case managers at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and at the Justice Wellness Centre work with clients to address immediate housing needs. However, no 24/7 supervised housing is available for justice-involved women who present a higher risk or who are vulnerable and need a structured or supervised, supportive environments.

Now, fast-forward — in August 2020, our government invited agencies and organizations to submit options for housing locations and program models. Some of the community partners and stakeholders engaged to date have included Challenge Disability Resource Group, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Safe at Home Society, the John Howard Society Pacific, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and also the women's transition home and Betty's Haven.

On July 5, 2018, in our mandate letter to two of my ministers, we've included a requirement to establish a program to provide supportive community housing to justice-involved women that will be gender responsive, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed with supports from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate.

The Department of Justice and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate are working together on Cabinet and Management Board submissions to seek approval for the supervised community housing for justice-involved women in Whitehorse.

The second question was about the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the 40 recommendations that the member opposite was asking about. Before we get to that, I will

say that the Whitehorse Correctional Centre residents — the inmates — did fill sandbags. I am not sure what the compensation was right now, but we will get that information for the member opposite.

When it comes to working on the 2018 Whitehorse Correctional Centre inspection report, those recommendations were made in the inspector's report. They fall broadly into four main categories of being related to mental wellness, segregation practices, programs and services for the First Nation communities, and justice system initiatives. The implementation working group has determined that, to date, 28 of the 40 recommendations made in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre inspection report have been completed. Work is currently underway toward completing and implementing a further nine recommendations.

The implementation working group will provide input and support the fulfillment of the inspection report's recommendations and has recommended that the continued oversight shift to the community advisory board. I will make sure that we check the Blues and check Hansard to see the specific questions as well and pass them on to the department or departments responsible. Again, just to end on this, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre inspection report provides very valuable guidance when it comes to how we can work with our partners to increase confidence in our institutional operations and enhance the administration of justice in the territory.

I think that the Department of Justice, working in collaboration with the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, First Nation governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and community-based non-governmental organizations — it is a lot of great work to improve the delivery of programming, recognizing — and I agree — that we have a long way to go on those recommendations and our support for justice-involved women as well.

Ms. White: Just a quick clarification — did the Premier say that he has directed his ministers in the recent mandate letters to —

Okay, there was a nod. I am just making sure of the timeline.

Are there any plans from the Yukon government to increase the funding or capacity at the Legal Aid clinic? We know that we get calls fairly regularly from folks who are looking for support and then they get told that the clinic is under-resourced. Is there any intention to increase funding or capacity at the Legal Aid clinic?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do know that our government increased that budgetary contribution in our last mandate. The legal aid cost-sharing by Government of Yukon and Canada between 2016-17 and also in the 2020-21 fiscal year — the total funding to Legal Aid increased from \$2,179,000 to \$2,640,000. Due to an increase in funding from Canada, the total funding in 2021-22 fell slightly, back to \$2,608,000 from that \$2,640,000. We recognize the importance, as the member opposite clearly does, for that stable and predictable funding to ensure that operations are stable and that the accessibility of this vital service to low-income Yukoners is there.

Both the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon are in the last year of a five-year funding agreement. We expect to negotiate a new funding agreement later this fiscal year. I will also say that funding for the Yukon Legal Services Society is designed to provide a stable core budget for its regular operations. Occasionally, certain cases require legal services that can be contracted due to conflicts with the Legal Aid staff council. These cases fall outside of the Yukon Legal Services Society's core budget and require the society and the Department of Justice to ensure that contract fees may be provided appropriately. These are unexpected costs, normally resulting in funding being covered through existing departmental funding as well. I just want to make a note of other avenues and other funding that does happen. We definitely have, in our bench strength here, the Member for Riverdale North, who would have a lot more to say about this particular Legal Aid Society and who has a breadth of knowledge therein, and I thank him for his service in that agency.

Ms. White: Are there any updates right now on the bilingual health centre that was committed to during our recent territorial election?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We are moving forward with a bilingual health centre in Whitehorse, which will integrate into our existing health care system. An advisory committee is in place to review options and to participate in the creation of the bilingual health centre, and the new health centre, to advance the recommendations of the *Putting People First* report, establishing the bilingual health care team.

In 2020, Health Canada approved \$400,000 in funding, which will be used to support the planning and establishment of that bilingual health centre. The French Language Services Directorate has also committed funding, through the Canada-Yukon agreement on French language services, to support establishing a bilingual health centre.

Opening the bilingual centre in January 2022 is expected to relieve stress from our health care system, as it provides more options and resources to Yukoners. That would be the update that I have for the member opposite right now. I don't have any more information for the member opposite. If she needs more, then we can direct her to the Department of Health and Social Services, which will be presenting in the budget process here in Committee of the Whole.

Ms. White: I thank the Premier for that.

A question, just because it falls under French language services and the French Language Services Directorate — it is my understanding that language classes are being taught at the Wood Street School.

I wanted to know if the government has a policy that allows other government departments to quarter off parts of schools for separate things, and if so, are classes being taught during school hours? Is there a requirement to use separate washrooms from where the students are? Do people who are accessing those classes have RCMP checks? Have they been cleared to attend the school that children are attending?

Hon. Mr. Silver: That is a very specific question in a supplementary Committee of the Whole general debate that doesn't have money set aside for the French Language Services

Directorate. The question is on the record, and I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite with the arrangements or agreements that have been made.

Ms. White: I appreciate the time with the Premier today. I think that it is important that, at different times, things just get put on the record. I know that there is an entire group of folks who have to listen to this every day, and I trust that the questions I have asked will get to the right departments.

With that, I look forward to getting into the departments. I will hand it back to my colleagues to the right.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise here. I notice that we unfortunately don't have much time remaining this afternoon, so we will have to resume at a later date.

I want to begin, first of all, with asking the Premier some questions about the growth in full-time equivalent employees. According to the handout that we were provided by the Department of Finance at the briefing on the supplementary estimates, there is an increase of 110.5 new FTEs in the supplementary budget. Again, according to that handout, we were told that 87.3 of those FTEs are new positions related to pandemic management. One of the questions that immediately arises from that is that the Yukon, of course, like the rest of the world, has been dealing with this pandemic since early 2020.

We saw a need for governments to ramp up in terms of resources dedicated to the pandemic through things such as the vaccination, management enforcement, and so on, but what is a little hard to fully understand in the absence of an explanation is why, this fall, the government is adding 87.3 FTEs for pandemic management on top of the ones that they added in the spring.

According to the handout in the spring, there were 71.9 FTEs being added, just this spring, due to COVID. So, in total, for a year when it would seem like the operational strain on government would not be dramatically different from 2020, between the spring budget and now, the government has added, according to the handouts that they provided us, 159.2 full-time equivalent positions related to COVID and pandemic management.

I would like to start by asking the Premier if he could provide an explanation of that, especially the new positions being added in this supplementary budget, but also explain why, on top of the 71.9 FTEs that they added in the spring for COVID, they have added an additional 87.3, which, I believe, works out to a grand total of just under 160 full-time equivalent positions added this year alone on top of what was added last year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As we know, in the revised 2021-22 main estimates, the government has 5,324.4 full-time equivalent positions budgeted for the fiscal year for the Government of Yukon to support programs and services. In the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, there is an increase to budgeted FTEs, including 14.7 permanent and 95.8 term positions, or a 2.1-percent increase from the revised 2021-22 main estimates.

Almost 80 percent of the increase is related to COVID in order to support Yukon's continuing response to the pandemic for the safety and well-being of Yukoners. As the member opposite knows very well, from spring until now, we have not

seen the end of this pandemic. We definitely need to make sure that we have the personnel to provide those programs and services. That's really important.

Again, while the state of emergency has been lifted, additional staff continue to be needed and required for initiatives such as continued vaccinations and also potential surge support as well. Remember that not all of these FTEs are necessarily full-time permanent; some of these are temporary as well. The remaining increase of the 23.2 FTEs are mostly related to emergency medical services, the supervised consumption site, midwifery, and also early learning and childcare. I think that, for a more fulsome conversation about the specific FTEs in those departments, the member opposite can ask those questions to the ministers when they get on their feet in Committee of the Whole.

I will say that, as a government, we are fully committed to providing a transparent and up-to-date account of the budgeted FTEs with the mains and the supplementary budgets. We regularly share these updates with the House and with the members during regular briefings or when requested.

The total that the member opposite mentioned of the 110.5 additional FTEs — I guess, from the member opposite — I didn't want to put words in his mouth, but it seems like a big number — I guess that is the question, but in the context of combatting a global pandemic, a mid-year FTE increase of about two percent does not, in my opinion, seem unreasonable. The fact that we have responded effectively and are still managing a COVID response and maintaining progress on other priorities, like early learning and midwifery, within departments is nothing short of remarkable, in my opinion.

The government is committed to providing these services that Yukoners depend on, and we will continue to ensure that we have the human resources that are necessary to assist and to protect Yukoners.

Just as another note of interest for the member opposite, the COVID-19 87.3 positions that we mentioned — all of those are term positions. All of these are for COVID specifically — again, these are term positions — not permanent, but term.

Mr. Cathers: What I do have to point out to the Premier, in looking at the handout that was provided by the Department of Finance and at the briefings here — and just to quote from that — is when they described FTEs, it says: "An FTE is a full-time position budgeted for the entire fiscal year."

In the section where it lists, by department, the additional positions, it describes 87.3 ascribed to "Pandemic Management" under Health and Social Services. Further, at the bottom where it describes the changes, it has under the column "COVID-19" and the column beside it, which says "Non-COVID", and then the column on the right says that it is the total of those two columns — under "COVID-19", it says 87.3. The Premier can talk about the percentage increase, but I am asking why these positions were necessary. It does seem that government may be at times using the pandemic as a convenient excuse to blame all new spending on the pandemic.

We, of course, do not for a moment dispute that there is spending required that is related to the pandemic. That is obvious. But how much those spending needs have increased

in comparison with the previous fiscal year — 2020-21 — is a little bit hard to understand in the absence of an explanation. What we don't have is an explanation.

Two words — “pandemic management” — are not an explanation for hiring 87.3 people. I am asking for details on why those additional positions were necessary and what those positions are. We are asking for details, not just a narrative ascribing those to the pandemic.

As I noted — and I have the handout provided by the Premier's government in the spring in front of me as well — the increase that was ascribed to COVID in the spring budget was 71.9 FTEs related to COVID. It was made very clear to us by officials, when we asked, that the additional FTEs being added in this fall supplementary budget are in addition to the ones that were added in the spring. We see a combined total of 159.2 FTEs that the government is describing as being related to COVID or pandemic management. That, of course, is on top of positions that were added last year.

The Premier can say, as he indicates off-mic, that they are temporary positions, but if temporary positions are carrying forward for a term, and then new positions are being added on top of that, the fact that the positions may not be permanent positions that exist for the next 10 years doesn't change the fact that they are new positions.

Again, as the Official Opposition Finance critic and as critic for Health and Social Services, I am not questioning that there are some additional needs, nor am I saying that these additions are necessarily unreasonable. I am asking the Premier for more details to explain — to not only us but to the public whose money is being spent — what those additional positions were required for and why that increase — when the Premier is comparing it to the government as a whole, it may not sound that large. But in terms of the total resources that are specifically being dedicated to the pandemic, an increase of just under 160 staff is a significant increase.

Again, Deputy Chair, I am not saying that some of those positions aren't necessary — perhaps even all of them. What I am asking for is a more detailed breakdown of what they are for. If the government has nothing to hide, then don't hide it.

I want to also just go on to another area, recognizing the limited time that we have available this afternoon. There has been a lot of discussion about the housing crisis. Ministers of that government have stood up — including today, I believe — and talked about the housing crisis. But what we don't seem to be hearing from this government is a recognition of how, through certain actions they take — such as increasing the size of government — they are the largest single source of pressure on the housing market.

I'm just adding up some numbers for the Premier and his colleagues. I am just looking at the numbers that they have provided previously through handouts or that, in a couple of these cases, I have written down in my notes from briefings provided previously by department officials. According to their own numbers, if you look at the increase in the spring of this year for just two departments — Justice and Health and Social Services — they added 125-plus full-time equivalent positions.

Adding on top of that are the 110.5 new positions that are being added here in the supplementary this fall. That combined total is over 236 new positions.

Now, contrasting that, the government this spring, with great fanfare in the Premier's budget speech and in the second reading speech by the Minister of Community Services, they talked about the amount of money that was being spent on land development and touted the creation, according to the Minister of Community Services, of 171 lots for planned release later this year.

Now, quoting from the Minister of Community Services, Hansard, May 18, page 122, the Minister of Community Services said — and I quote: “... we have work underway on phase 6 of Whistle Bend for completion this summer. It will create some 171 lots for a planned release later this fall.”

Fast-forward to today — we've been advised by the Department of Community Services that, in fact, phase 6 has been split into phase 6A and 6B and that, in phase 6A — the only one that is actually going out for release this year — that number has been cut down from the number of 171 lots that the Minister of Community Services gave us in the spring to just 70 residential lots.

The government budgeted \$32 million in the spring for land development. That included \$21.7 million for continued development of the Whistle Bend subdivision in the Whitehorse area, as noted by the Minister of Community Services on page 122, May 18, 2021, Hansard. So, from that budget, we see significant delays. Instead of the 171 lots that the minister promised in the spring, we see that number being cut down to just 70 residential lots that are actually being released from Whistle Bend this year and an additional four lots from the Logan subdivision. So, a total of 74 lots in the Whitehorse area is being released by government this year.

They have trouble actually getting land development done, but the Premier has no trouble growing government by hiring hundreds of additional staff that he is apparently not willing to explain the need for.

Those 74 residential lots that are actually being released in comparison to the 236-plus staff that government is hiring just this year — if the Premier is trying to figure out where the housing crisis is coming from, perhaps he should start by looking in the mirror.

I would note, Deputy Chair, for the record that the number I had at my fingertips for the increases in the spring were just related to two departments, so the total increase this year would be to over 236 FTEs. That is actually a lower figure than the total number. Just for the importance of members understanding it, when the government on the one hand, whether for the pandemic or other reasons, chooses to add 236-plus full-time equivalent positions in one fiscal year while there is a housing shortage, yet only get 74 new residential lots on the market — I should note that those lots aren't actually on the market yet, as they just expect them to be done before the end of the year — the Premier and his colleagues should take a hard look at how they themselves are driving pressure on the housing market.

The Premier is kibitzing off-mic as he likes to do, but the reality is that most of the Whistle Bend lots that they promised in the spring are actually being delayed. Hiring is going forward at a rate of over 236 full-time equivalent staff, 159 of which are being ascribed to pandemic management or COVID, and yet government, in contrast, is only releasing 74 residential lots — if they manage to get that done. Does the Premier see a little bit of a problem here with what they are doing on the one hand and what they are doing on the other hand?

With that, Deputy Chair, just to give the Premier time to think about that and to prepare a response, I will wrap up my comments on that part there. I would just note that, when we next enter debate, I would like more detailed costs for the flooding this summer. We have seen costs related to Community Services. We know that there are costs embedded in other departments as well as the Yukon Housing Corporation, for which we don't have a full breakdown.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Premier that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled October 19, 2021:

35-1-20

Cannabis Yukon Annual report — Yukon Liquor Corporation — April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 (Pillai)