



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 18

1<sup>st</sup> Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, October 20, 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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, October 20, 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. Mostyn:** I have this afternoon a long list of introductions for the tribute this afternoon. I beg the indulgence of the House and also the folks in the Chamber. With their masks on, I hope I don't miss anyone.

I have for introduction this afternoon: Devin Bailey, the acting chief of Yukon Medical Emergency Services; Damien Burns, who oversaw much of the flood and fire response this summer; I have Mike Sparks, the senior operations advisor; I have his son Tristan Sparks and his partner, Franziska Lux, in the Chamber this afternoon — Tristan Sparks, I should note, is also a stores person; I have Mike Sparks' daughter Cayley Sparks here as well; I have Luke Bibeau, who is a FireSmart and fuels management specialist; I have Vern Marshall, who is the telecommunications supervisor; I have Jocelyn Thompson, who is the finance and admin clerk; I have Nicole Charbonneau, who is the finance and administrative clerk; we also have Ben Asquith; Fred Koe; Chad Thomas; Jesse Latoski; Corey Riemer, who used to work with us — it's great to see you again today; and David Johnson. If I have missed anyone with their mask on, I do apologize. Welcome everyone to the House this afternoon.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, today for our tribute on workplace bullying — or against workplace bullying — please welcome to the Chamber Paul Moore, the Public Service Commissioner, and Ken Schamber, the manager of Corporate Health and Safety. We also have a few folks from Respectful Workplace Office. We have Patrick Gardiner, Jan Malfair, Rob Horne, and Morgan Settle. Can we please welcome them all?

*Applause*

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Workplace Bullying Awareness Week

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise today in recognition of Workplace Bullying Awareness Week from October 17 to 23. For years, we have taught our kids not to bully in our schools. It turns out that we also need to address bullying in our own workplaces. Workplace bullying generally involves a pattern of behaviour that can cause either emotional or physical harm. It

includes tactics such as verbal, psychological, and physical abuse. The intention is to intimidate, degrade, humiliate, or offend a person or a group.

The negative effects of workplace bullying on our well-being are extensive. People who experience workplace bullying may begin feeling frustrated and vulnerable. They may also start to have physical symptoms such as loss of sleep and lessened appetite. Beyond these already serious issues resulting from workplace bullying, victims may also experience psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating.

Within the workplace, not only may employees notice a decrease in job satisfaction, bullying and harassment can also cause lower productivity and increased absenteeism. For all these reasons, we must work to end workplace bullying.

Unfortunately, bullying in the workplace remains too prevalent in many Canadian workplaces. In 2018, one in six Canadian workers reported experiencing harassment in the workplace — one in six. Women experience more bullying than men. The most common type of harassment is verbal abuse. This is an issue that affects individuals who work in the territory. If you have never experienced workplace bullying, I am sure that you know someone who has. This is why it is important to recognize Workplace Bullying Awareness Week. It's imperative that we work together to end workplace bullying.

Here in the Yukon, organizations such as All Genders Yukon Society and the Yukon Human Rights Commission, as well as Yukon First Nation governments and the Public Service Commission, offer support to people experiencing violence and harassment in the workplace.

I would like to give a shout-out to the Northern Safety Network Yukon, which provides resources to workers and employers, like information, training, and safe work procedures on bullying, harassment, and violence.

A safe workplace protects our physical and psychological well-being.

I would like to thank the Northern Safety Network Yukon for their exemplary work in educating and providing assistance and resources to all Yukoners. We must work together to end workplace bullying.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for your efforts to make this Legislature — our workplace — a more respectful place.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise today, on behalf of the Official Opposition, to pay tribute to Workplace Bullying Awareness Week, October 17 to 23.

At all stages of life, we have all probably experienced bullying. From grade school to one's working life, we have encountered some form of behaviour that is questionable, but today we focus on workplace bullying. On the stage of a work environment, bullying affects many: the victim, the employer, the one accused of being a bully, and investigators. The situation can affect the whole atmosphere. Some incidents

might be subtle and others encounter very blatant — that one is being marginalized in their workplace.

We wonder how this can happen in our information-laden world where we know about social issues and hurtful actions that are not acceptable. Sadly, it does happen — but remember, the systems that have been in place can enable and protect those who have behaviours and values that are resistant to change and those individuals in need of control or power. Employers and leaders should ensure that the subject is front and centre, hand out tip sheets, have presentations and talks, and welcome the chance to change whatever is harmful to the whole. Most importantly, there should be no retaliation for speaking out or complaining about the workplace — no fear of losing a promotion or a job change — and this is a real fear.

If workplace bullying is in your space, it is probably one of the most harmful health issues to one's mental and physical wellness, and it also has a ripple effect, right into your personal and homelife. We must work on workplace safety every day of the year. It seems so simple. Help each other gain experience and knowledge by encouraging and offering assistance when needed or asked for. Be the support person who will do just that.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Workplace Bullying Awareness Week.

I often think about how much of our lives we spend with our co-workers. We don't choose them, and yet they play an enormous role in our lives. Many of us spend about a third of our waking hours at work. What happens during those hours can be life-changing.

Working with kind, thoughtful, and friendly people can make being at work enjoyable, even when the work itself is challenging or stressful. Unfortunately, that is not the reality for everyone, and far too many people go to work afraid of the cruelty they will face.

I want to speak a little bit about the role that we, as bystanders, play in bullying. I know that I have been in the situation of watching something unfold that I knew was not okay but not knowing how to intervene. It's easy in these kinds of situations to be paralyzed by doubt or to be afraid of making things worse or to be afraid of becoming a target yourself.

Last summer, as part of Pride, Queer Yukon sponsored a bystander intervention workshop where I and others received training on how to intervene with more confidence. I really believe that most people want to support their coworkers. They just need the tools to do it in difficult situations. I would encourage all workplaces to make training like this available and all employees to take it.

Kindness at work is an individual choice, but it is also a product of the culture, support, and resources that a workplace provides. So, today we pay tribute to everyone who works to create workplaces that make kind and compassionate behaviour the norm. We want to pay tribute to everyone who goes out of their way to be thoughtful, kind, and compassionate to their co-workers.

*Applause*

## In recognition of Wildland Fire Management

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise today to pay tribute to another successful season of Wildland Fire Management in the Yukon. 2021 is a notable year for Wildland Fire Management branch; it marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was founded by Canada in 1946.

Since then, a team has been developed with First Nation governments and Yukon government crews. Their focus is to protect Yukoners, their property, and to mitigate risk by creating more wildfire resilient communities. I congratulate the Wildland Fire Management branch on 75 years of protective service.

With this year's addition of the White River First Nation to the initial attack program, the wildland fire program now has agreements with all 14 First Nations in the delivery of initial attack wildland fire services in the territory. This incredible collaborative partnership has created some of the most highly trained and well-respected crews in the country.

The Wildland Fire Management program forged a relationship in recent years with Yukon First Nations Wildfire, creating a unit crew program, also unique in the country. The unit crew provides more capacity as we face fires and floods. The unit crew is well-trained and hard-working, and they have proven themselves to be committed stewards of the land. As we continue to build capacity to better protect our communities, these important partnerships also provide employment and career opportunities in our communities.

All of the amazing work is done at the direction of an incredible group of technical experts, meteorologists, fire scientists, finance and procurement experts, and wildfire management officers, who plan, strategize, and ensure that the crews are supported to keep Yukon safe. This summer, these resources were needed; 112 fires burned more than 118,000 hectares of Yukon forest, some of which were close to communities and people, resulting in an evacuation alert in the Dawson district.

We were not just dealing with wildfire, Hon. Speaker. Much of the success that we realized in our 2020-21 flood response was thanks to the professionals at Wildland Fire Management. Over the course of the summer, fire crews, officers, and support staff led the incident management and coordinated the response on the ground. Above all else, Yukoners in flooded areas remained safe while responders protected critical infrastructure and as many private properties as possible.

Wildland Fire Management's teams were critical in this success. Their professionalism was also noted to me by the military officers who worked under Wildland Fire Management's incident command, with much kudos and respect. In addition, later in the season, our wildland fire team responded to the call for help from our neighbours in BC. Together with Yukon First Nations Wildfire, our crews and officers deployed south. I was there to see them off, and in all, 49 firefighters and officers were airlifted by the 435 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force to assist in what was one of BC's worst fire seasons on record. Crews were deployed to the Garrison Lakes fire near Princeton, the White Rock Lake fire

near Vernon, and the Mount Law fire in West Kelowna. They did us proud as they battled these large, complex fires and worked alongside firefighters from across Canada and beyond.

One of our Yukon air tanker groups was also deployed to Revelstoke to help with aerial suppression. The air tanker group included three Air Tractor AT802 aircraft, a Bird Dog plane, pilots, an Air Attack officer, and an Air Attack officer trainee. They not only served the response, but this opportunity also gave our team valuable experience on the fire line.

So, on behalf of Yukoners, thank you to the management staff, crews, and First Nation partners of the Wildland Fire Management branch for your efforts at home in fire, in flood, and on export, and congratulations to you on 75 years of Yukon service.

Hon. Speaker, as the fire season comes to an end, I would also like to make an important salute to a long-time operations manager, Mike Sparks, who is hanging up his boots after 40 years of service to the wildland fire community.

From his earliest days in the late 1970s as a fire lookout in Alberta, Mike became a crew leader before driving up the Alaska Highway in 1988, the year before me, to join the federal government's wildland fire program in Watson Lake. Later, as a resource management officer, Mike worked countless fires — of note, as leader and as a Yukon duty officer — and was instrumental in safeguarding our responders, communities, and limiting loss of property and values.

Mike was instrumental in developing nation-leading firefighting agreements with First Nation governments, including the first signed on to with the Liard First Nation, some 25 years ago. With Mike's leadership and guidance, Yukon firefighters are renowned for their ability to manage wildland fires across a vast geographic area, with a relatively small team of professionals that is Yukon Wildland Fire Management.

Thank you for your years of committed service, and Hon. Speaker, I thank everyone involved in our wildland fire service across the territory — extraordinary.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to join the House in recognizing and thanking our Yukon wildland firefighters and staff for their role in supporting British Columbia this summer in their efforts fighting wildfires. The Yukon sent 40 firefighters and four supervisory staff in August to assist BC, which saw a wildfire season that has been recorded as the third worst on record in terms of area burned — over 8,700 square kilometres of land over the season.

The 2021 fires in BC were disastrous. Thousands were displaced in central Okanagan, and the Lytton Creek fire burned through the town of Lytton, leaving two dead. Yukon firefighters were deployed to the Garrison Lake and Mount Law fires near Princeton and West Kelowna on August 16 for a 19-day deployment, assisting on the active fire line for 14 days.

Our territory saw its share of wildfire activity this summer. Hot and dry conditions saw a number of blazes ignited by

lightning strikes, and more were found to be human-caused. We are fortunate to have such incredible homegrown crews — both in Yukon wildland fire and the Yukon First Nations Wildfire team — to not only defend our beautiful Yukon against wildfire, but that are willing and able to help our neighbours in their time of need.

I would like to note that the Yukon First Nations Wildfire initiative that has grown so much over the years has been doing exceptional work to incorporate innovative strategies and traditional indigenous knowledge in a way that is reshaping traditional wildland firefighting not just here in the Yukon, but around the country and the world.

A special thank you to Chad Thomas who negotiated the deal with BC to get the Yukon First Nations Wildfire crew to BC.

We've had fire seasons in the Yukon that have varied in severity over the years. We have seen the importance for the government and municipalities to take precautions and to ensure that each community has an emergency plan and adequate fire breaks. Firesmarting efforts have ramped up over the years, and I'm happy to see community associations and other organizations making the effort to clean up areas and mitigate wildfire risk.

So, thank you to our local wildland firefighters for your efforts in Yukon and BC this summer. Your dedication and expertise were appreciated by crews and residents in BC, and I understand the opportunity to gain expertise on new ground is always welcomed. Thank you.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to celebrate Wildland Fire Management and firefighters — these dedicated teams of first responders who protect the lives and property of Yukoners, our infrastructure, and our natural resources.

These individuals work hard, walking toward situations that most of us would run from. They work long hours without knowing what the days or weeks ahead may look like, but they are always ready to do what is asked of them.

From the advice and experience that was shared on the ground with their colleagues in Australia to their calming presence at intense moments like the residential school teardown in Lower Post and to the able and willing help provided at this year's flooding, Wildland Fire Management does it all.

In recognition of all the great things that we heard today, and to the million other things that we will never hear about, Wildland Fire Management and firefighters deserve our thanks. So, it's with that gratitude and respect in mind that I wonder why wildland firefighters do not enjoy the same benefits afforded to other firefighters under Yukon's WCB act. Changes are long overdue to include wildland firefighters in this legislation. We need to recognize the hazardous nature of the occupation and provide support for the people involved in this aspect of public safety. In order to truly honour those who show up for us, it's time that we show up for them.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter addressed to the Premier in regard to the Yukon education review of inclusive education, 2021, from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon Teachers' Association, Autism Yukon, and LDAY.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling here today an open letter addressed to the Premier from a parent at Hidden Valley school.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 12(3) of the *Arts Centre Act*, I have for tabling the Yukon Arts Centre annual report.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees?  
Are there any petitions?

### PETITIONS

#### Petition No. 3 — additional signatures presented

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I have additional signatures to add to those signatures already tabled for Petition No. 3, regarding Hidden Valley school.

**Speaker:** Are there any bills to be introduced?  
Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with the Association of Yukon Communities as well as directly with municipal governments before making regulatory changes or introducing further amendments to legislation to facilitate the creation of a new home energy retrofit program that will be operated by the municipal governments.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately reverse the cancellation of remaining individualized education plans for students with special learning and neurodiverse needs as the government was obligated to do within 30 days of the implementation of the confidence and supply agreement under the terms of that agreement with the Yukon NDP.

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address the housing crisis by urgently implementing *Putting People First* recommendation 5.7 to create a guaranteed annual income program for Yukoners.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement *Putting People First* recommendation 5.5 by urgently conducting a review of social assistance rates.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide the resources to reduce wait times of up to three years for psychoeducational assessments of students.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to resolve the urgent need for commercial wood permits by issuing a decision on the Quill Creek timber harvest plan.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to honour its 2020 commitment to the Friends of Mount Sima Society by providing the funding for the electrification of snow-making operations at Mount Sima ski hill.

**Speaker:** Is there a statement by a minister?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Emergency medical services

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have a beautiful territory with a great economy, and that's drawing more people to the Yukon. It has been for a few years. That has many implications for the territory, including for our emergency medical services. They are incredibly efficient; however, as the territory has grown, so has the number of emergencies that they have had to respond to. Emergency Medical Services has struggled with this growing call volume for years without complaint. Now, we are investing in this vital service that helps Yukoners and alleviates pain and suffering and saves lives every day.

It is important for Yukoners to know about the incredible and, in some cases, nation-leading services that our Yukon emergency services have pioneered. The Yukon EMS is a diverse team of professionals that responds to crisis. They see us at our worst and always respond with care, compassion, and empathy; 125 emergency responders are bolstered by a crackerjack support and administrative staff, but one dispatcher working 12-hour shifts alone can only do so much, so, this year, EMS added a second emergency response coordination officer. This dual-operator system will better support responders across the territory and dramatically improve employee and patient well-being and safety.

Responders are the backbone of the EMS community operations, and they are in high demand in Canada. Recruitment and retention have to be our focus, so we are funding a new clinical educator position that is dedicated to community emergency responders. The clinical educator will tour the territory with a state-of-the-art mobile training unit to ensure that responders have access to timely training programs for their own professional development and to improve the delivery of emergency medical services to Yukoners.

Additional investments are being made to support employee well-being, on-boarding, quality assurance, and quality improvement.

We are also improving services in rural Yukon. One of our most challenging response areas is in the southeast Yukon, which sees many calls over an enormous geographic region. We are making a new staffing model in Watson Lake permanent. In 2020, Watson Lake EMS responded to 491 incidents. This volume, combined with the extended transport time, made it unsustainable to rely solely on our valued community responders. This new model decreases the burden on community responders and supports public safety for the residents of Watson Lake, the surrounding region, and thousands who travel through this gateway to the Yukon.

Hon. Speaker, this year, Yukon EMS also launched the new SKY — sick kids Yukon — flight team. This is an innovative and nation-leading program that expands the territory's air ambulance service to include obstetrical, neonatal, and pediatric critical care transport capabilities. This new multi-departmental program provides highly specialized care to expecting women and the youngest Yukoners, resulting in shorter response times for patients to arrive at southern jurisdictions, cost-savings from reduced use of southern air ambulance services, and, just as importantly, enhanced obstetrical, pediatric, and neonatal services in rural Yukon communities.

In partnership with the University of Maryland, Yukon Emergency Medical Services is the only licensed educational site of the pediatric/neonatal/critical care transport training program in Canada, providing ongoing education to our critical care paramedics.

Currently, there are 13 critical care paramedics in the Yukon. We thank the dedicated team of public servants behind Yukon Emergency Medical Services' program for continuing to provide professional care for patients throughout the territory.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement. This statement focuses on a very important aspect of all rural communities — emergency medical services. With great distances between communities throughout the territory, if something happens, we understand that it may take a bit of time for first responders to arrive. They are often putting their lives on the line to make sure that help arrives in a timely manner, no matter how remote the location, and for that I thank them.

I hope that these announced changes have resulted from officials meeting with rural EMS providers who are delivering these vital services and the residents who need them. We are pleased to hear about the new SKY — sick kids Yukon — flight team that expands the territory's air ambulance service. Improving access to EMS care and air response is something that we can all support. I would appreciate if the minister could indicate how many additional cases this program will be helping and how many cases were identified as having needed it previously.

We have heard how EMS workers, particularly those in rural Yukon, need access to training to do their jobs. In rural Yukon, we've heard of volunteers turned away or giving up on the program as they are being asked to undertake additional training for credentials to maintain their roles. That's why I'm pleased to hear that a new clinical educator position will be available to support rural EMS staff and volunteers.

Can the minister tell us how this training module unit will address challenges that we've heard about, including credential requirements, time expectations, and lack of volunteers?

There are questions that remain with my community of Watson Lake and southeast Yukon. The minister says they are making — I quote — "... a new staffing model in Watson Lake permanent."

Now, does the minister mean that the current staffing model, which has been in place for years, is what is being announced in his statement? Because during a departmental briefing, we were told that there will be an increase of 3.2 FTEs to EMS in Watson Lake. Now, does that mean that Watson Lake will have 6.4 full-time positions? Because three of those FTEs have been in place for a number of years.

The minister just said that, in 2020, Watson Lake EMS responded to 491 incidents. He also acknowledged the increase in call volume and a growing territory. I know that there have been many times that there have been gaps in service lasting many days.

So, when the minister says that the model decreases the burden on community responders and supports public safety for the residents of Watson Lake, residents might not know what he is talking about.

I congratulate the minister's work to date to improve EMS for Yukon, and southeast Yukon in particular, and I hope that these changes reflect the reality of what is happening on the ground. The minister does have a track record of failing to consult with rural Yukoners, and his solutions don't always align with what residents need.

I look forward to his clarifications on this.

**Ms. White:** Our Yukon EMS team is often on the front lines of a crisis. As first responders, they are there no matter what, and we thank them for that.

The opioid crisis that we are experiencing in the Yukon has added a whole new dimension to the work of emergency responders. Providing new opportunities for training will help to keep them and their patients safe.

Working through the COVID-19 pandemic has been a particularly difficult time for first responders, adding more layers of risk and stress and also literal layers of uncomfortable PPE to an already tough job.

The new SKY team and critical care paramedics play a critical role in connecting Yukoners to southern health services that can't be provided locally, and I'm so glad to see improved services for our youngest Yukoners and their parents and caregivers.

I know that dispatch at EMS has been stressful and am pleased to see the addition of a second full-time dispatcher. This will improve services and safety for the dispatch team, for

Yukoners, and for our EMS teams on the ground, particularly in rural areas. We recognize that staffing in EMS is a national issue, and we thank all of our EMS teams for working such long hours and frequent overtime to help keep Yukoners safe.

The Yukon NDP caucus is hopeful that these changes will help to address the chronic staffing challenges faced by Yukon EMS going forward.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for their gracious support of the work that our government is doing to expand and enhance the service delivery by our EMS folks and to increase the staffing. That's very important, and I think it's a worthwhile investment for our territory.

Strong leadership has guided us through the pandemic and kept our economy going. We are working to make sure that all Yukoners benefit from our territory's economic growth. We're building a brighter future for our territory by improving the Yukon's Emergency Medical Services' vital services that help Yukoners in critical need and save lives every day.

In my early remarks, I noted the addition of a second emergency response coordination officer to the EMS team. This dual-operator system will better support responders across the territory and dramatically improve employee and patient well-being and safety.

The addition of a new clinical educator position dedicated to community emergency responders will ensure that responders have access to timely training programs for their own professional development and improve the delivery of emergency medical services to Yukoners.

We're also improving services in rural Yukon, as I mentioned. A new staffing model in Watson Lake will support the response team that covers one of the largest and busiest areas in the southeast. The new model decreases the burden on community responders. It will expand the support to those areas and close the gaps that we have seen in this very large geographic area with a lot of calls.

I also mentioned the new SKY flight team that has expanded the Yukon's air ambulance service to include obstetrical, neonatal, and pediatric care transport capabilities.

Partnerships are important to improve service delivery throughout the territory. I didn't have time to mention the partnerships that are improving services at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Yukon EMS is participating in a multi-departmental pilot project that embeds paramedics directly at the shelter. This project helps clients and relieves pressure on the emergency system, allowing for improved responses to urgent care calls. The results of this pilot project have been dramatic, and it's really great to see us thinking of new ways of serving the Yukon public.

Paramedics interact directly with clients at the shelter and divert non-emergency cases by referring clients to the appropriate resources. They have built relationships with staff and local residents while they manage treatment plans and work toward enhancing the well-being of clients. Since October 21, 2019, one paramedic has been on-site for 10.7 hours per day, seven days a week, covering peak hours. This

may evolve as we learn through the pilot initiative that is set to continue into the spring.

By investing in the services and supporting our dedicated team of first responders, our government is improving service and saving lives. Mr. Speaker, all Yukoners owe a debt of gratitude to the dedicated people who make sure that Yukon's Emergency Medical Services are available around the clock and when they are needed most. I want to thank them on behalf of our government, and we will continue to support their vital work.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

**Mr. Cathers:** I have more questions for the Deputy Premier. In an attempt to deflect questions about why the Deputy Premier did not notify parents about sexual abuse of children at Hidden Valley Elementary School, the Liberals have created a smokescreen of a so-called "independent review". The review looks at a small period in 2019 and specifically does not look at what the Liberal Cabinet knew or didn't know. It is clear that this is nothing more than an attempt to deflect and ignore the real concerns and questions raised by parents, the media, and the opposition and to prevent a true investigation of what actions ministers took and did not take.

Will the Deputy Premier stop hiding behind this smokescreen and just tell us why she made the decision not to notify parents?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to once again rise and speak to Yukoners about these very serious incidents that happened in 2019 within the Hidden Valley Elementary School and our Department of Education's and other departments' response to this.

I have stated over and over and over that I have launched an independent review of the Government of Yukon's response to the situation at Hidden Valley Elementary School. Again, this is a strong commitment that I made to parents of Hidden Valley Elementary School. The independent review will, of course, look into our internal and interdepartmental processes of 2019 and beyond. I have asked the investigator — the person doing the review — to go where the investigation needs to go, which is that we want this to be a broad and comprehensive review of established government policies and procedures around operations, reporting, and communication to address serious incidents in our Yukon schools.

It will include reviewing how the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Department of Justice work together to respond to incidents in schools and how they interact with the RCMP.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Education knows, the review excludes ministers. We are seeing an appalling lack of ministerial accountability from this government.

Earlier this week, I tabled a petition with signatures of nearly 350 Yukoners who want the Deputy Premier to stop



hiding behind this farce of a review, and her colleague, and just start answering the questions.

Parents know that this is an attempt to avoid answering questions about why the Deputy Premier didn't notify parents of the sexual abuse at the school after she learned of it.

According to CBC, one parent said — and I quote: "... he wasn't interested in waiting to get answers via a review ordered by the government into his handling of the situation, describing it as politicians 'kicking the can down the road, hoping it will go away'."

Will the Deputy Premier listen to parents and stop trying to hide this by kicking it down the road, hoping it will go away? Because this is not going away.

When did the Deputy Premier find out, and why didn't she ensure that parents at Hidden Valley school were informed?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, again, I want to focus on the steps that we are taking now to get answers to the questions that are on the floor and have been on the floor for the last seven days. 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 the time to better inform and support families.

I, and the former Minister of Education, have apologized to parents for that, and we are taking action to improve our system going forward.

I am the Minister of Education now, Hon. Speaker, and I am working to get to the bottom of these questions. This is why I have launched a review of our government's response. This is a commitment that I made directly to the parents of Hidden Valley Elementary School. I tabled, in this House, the terms of reference for this independent review, which will have a full fact-finding relating to the responses of the Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Education, and the Department of Justice to the incident in 2019. It will also include recommendations that we will follow.

**Mr. Cathers:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier continues to insult parents by dodging questions. The so-called "independent review" is nothing more than a smokescreen designed to try to kick the issue down the road. It does not look at what the Deputy Premier knew and why she did not share information with parents. It doesn't look at why she was briefed over a year and a half ago and didn't tell people about it, nor does it look at why she kept the new Education minister in the dark. Nearly 350 Yukoners have signed a petition demanding that the Deputy Premier come clean and start explaining what she did at the time and why she didn't tell people. They don't want to wait for this farce of a review for the Deputy Premier to explain why she chose not to inform parents. They want answers now, and the minister can provide them right now. She knows that she can answer these questions now.

Will she stop disrespecting parents who have been waiting for answers and just tell us: Why did the 2019 letter not get sent, and why did she not live up to her responsibility to inform families?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to continue to rise to again talk to Yukoners, the families, the children, and the

school community about these important and devastating incidents that happened in 2019. I want to focus on the work that we're doing. I take exception to the comments of the Member for Lake Laberge in casting a shadow over a really important process that is underway right now.

Our department is participating in this as we speak. We have our families and those directly impacted by these incidents in 2019 participating in this review as we speak. They deserve the respect of this House to allow this process to proceed in a respectful way. We have ensured that we have a very qualified individual who is doing this review in an independent way. That is what is happening. I have committed to releasing the findings by January 31, 2022.

### **Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school**

**Mr. Dixon:** Over the course of this legislative Sitting, we have asked several questions about the incidents at Hidden Valley school — in particular, the role of the Liberal Cabinet in that scandal. The response from the Liberal government has been to stonewall, ignore, and hide behind the so-called "independent investigation". Parents have been seeking answers and have made it clear that they want those answers to come from the minister who was in charge, because ultimately it is that minister who is accountable for the decisions of the department.

The unwillingness of the Liberal government to answer many of these questions has been disappointing and disturbing to many.

Does the Premier recognize that Yukoners are losing confidence in this government due to their unwillingness to provide answers, to take responsibility, and to accept accountability for what happened under their watch?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We are taking this extremely seriously, and the process that the minister and our teams have put in place is going to answer the questions — absolutely.

The Minister of Education has been on her feet countless times explaining exactly that. She has launched an independent review of our government's response to this incident, as well as the internal processes and protocols to respond to this incident in kind. We will be answering all questions through this process, this independent process, as the member opposite casts aspersions on the independent review of this.

The review will involve parents; it will involve guardians, as well as partner agencies and organizations, with the goal of understanding what occurred and to make sure that improvements are made in our education system. The minister today even said that, as we speak, these conversations are starting. This process is moving forward. The commitment is there for the educational community; the commitment is there for the teachers and for the parents.

**Mr. Dixon:** What parents have told everyone, including the public, the media, and legislators, is that they want answers from the former minister. They aren't interested in a review of protocols within the department.

Parents and families are feeling ignored by the Liberal government. They have reached out to the former minister and

have been ignored. Some have been forced to speak publicly about their desire for the minister to answer questions, and they have been ignored. Hundreds have signed a petition demanding that this minister respond, and they have been ignored. They have faced questions in the Legislature and have refused to answer them.

Surely the Premier must recognize that they cannot continue to ignore these direct requests from Yukoners. How long does the Premier think that the former Minister of Education can ignore this before even the NDP loses confidence in this government?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** As I started this Sitting, I spoke about how there is nothing more important, of course — and I have said it many times — than the well-being, safety, and protection of our students when they are in our care. I want to go back to that value. This is an absolutely devastating situation for everyone involved. We know that folks have been impacted, particularly the children and the families, the school community, and Yukoners.

We acknowledge that there has been a breakdown in trust between families of Hidden Valley and the Department of Education. Once again, our children are at the heart of this, and that is the most important aspect of this. We are absolutely committed to rebuilding that trust and strengthening our education system, which is why I have launched this independent review. I have tremendous faith that the answers will come through that.

We are also working with families to ensure that they have the supports that they need. If they are not receiving those supports, I really want to hear from them, Mr. Speaker. I want to ensure that they have the supports that they need.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, since the election, the Liberal government has been hanging on by a thread. They were forced to make considerable concessions to the NDP in order to stay in power, but now they aren't even answering the serious questions that are put to them by the NDP. The Leader of the NDP even said to the media last week — and I quote: “The truth of the matter is, had this not been mishandled from the very beginning, we wouldn't be in this position right now. Families would have support. Children would have support. And those other kids who were part of the allegations wouldn't have been 21 months without support...” — that they needed — “And that is a failure of the Department of Education, and that is a failure of the Liberal government.”

How long does the Premier think that the Liberals can continue to ignore this issue before even the NDP loses confidence in his leadership and his government?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that the fact is that we are not ignoring this situation. We are taking active steps to get to the bottom of the questions that have been posed during this Sitting, and we are committed to getting those answers. We have three reviews underway. One is an independent review that is being conducted by Amanda Rogers. I have spoken about the terms of reference. I tabled them here in the House earlier in the Sitting. We also have the Child and Youth Advocate conducting a review. We are supporting this work to happen.

Something that hasn't been spoken about a lot — and it is really interesting that the opposition hasn't asked a lot of questions about that aspect of it — is in terms of the RCMP's role in this situation back in 2019. They have admitted that things were not done correctly in this investigation. They have also launched a comprehensive review of their role in this situation in 2019.

#### **Question re: Health care services**

**Ms. Tredger:** Over a month ago, the Yukon lost its only walk-in medical clinic. For over 2,000 Yukoners who don't have a family doctor, this was their only access to primary care. This was their only place to get prescriptions, checkups, and referrals. Now all these people need to go to the already crowded emergency room for non-emergency care. This is a massive waste of health care resources.

What immediate action is the minister taking to close this giant gap in health care services?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. This is, of course — and I say “of course” because everyone knows that, during the course of the pandemic and before, physician and nurse recruitment has been an issue all along.

What I've learned recently is that not everyone knows that physicians' clinics here in the territory operate as private businesses, so we don't have notification that they are going to close or that they are going to stop taking clients or stop providing services to Yukoners. That becomes something that needs to be responded to through, I think, physician and nurse recruitment.

Through the *Putting People First* report, we found out that approximately 21 percent of Yukoners do not have access to a family physician. That's a serious matter. As we implement the recommendations from the report, we're continuing and committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to primary care health services. The entire *Putting People First* report focuses on just that fact.

The pandemic has significantly impacted our ability to recruit nurses and physicians and other care providers, and I will continue, I hope, in the next question.

**Ms. Tredger:** While I appreciate that the minister would like to put the blame on private clinics, providing primary health care is the responsibility of the government.

There are over 2,000 Yukoners on the wait-list for a family doctor. This wait-list didn't appear overnight. It wasn't caused by the closure of the walk-in clinic, but without a walk-in service, the people on this list have nowhere to go but the emergency room.

Can we really say that our health care system is universal when there are over 2,000 people waiting for a family doctor?

Health care workers at the ER are already burned out and overwhelmed. Now they are left dealing with this government's lack of vision and leadership in health care. This could have been avoided, but here we are.

Does the minister expect the hospital to be the primary care provider for an extra 2,000 people who have nowhere else to go?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As I was noting, the pandemic has significantly impacted our ability to get folks to move around the country and come to new places to work in many, many areas. We continue to explore options to connect Yukoners to primary health care services. Previously, we have connected over 1,000 Yukoners with a physician through the find a family doctor program, expanded access to virtual care alternatives, and increased the number of resident pediatricians and psychiatrists, all important elements of the description that the member opposite has given about the health care system.

As we implement *Putting People First*, we are looking to hire additional nurse practitioners. We are meeting with the Yukon Medical Association to address a physician recruitment and retention plan. Soon to be opened in January 2022 will be the bilingual health centre. We think that will help with some pressures, and that primary health care setting in Whitehorse is expected to reduce some of the pressures on the primary health care system.

**Ms. Tredger:** Even before the pandemic, Yukoners have been dealing with a shortage of health care providers. This government knows the solution; the road map *Putting People First* is in their hands. It is not a lack of solutions; it's a lack of political will. Right now, Yukoners need nurse practitioners, we need dietitians, we need registered nurses, we need midwives, we need psychologists, and we need doctors. It is the government's responsibility to make sure that people in Whitehorse and people in rural Yukon have proper access to primary care.

When is the government going to open a public walk-in clinic?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think it's important to note that, during the 2020 calendar year, Yukon was supported by a total of 75 resident physicians and an additional 20 specialists, as well as 95 visiting physicians and specialists. Physician counts are calculated at the end of each year. Between 2019 and 2020, Yukon's supply of resident physicians increased by approximately eight percent. This does not count locums or visiting physicians. There were 14 nurse practitioners, 529 registered nurses, nine registered psychiatric nurses, and 227 licensed practical nurses regulated to work in Yukon in 2020, according to our Canadian Institute for Health Information. This represents a number of providers in the Yukon, and not just within the Department of Health and Social Services.

We are certainly recruiting for vacant nurse positions, for physicians to come to this community and to build their lives here and to increase the availability for individuals to have a family primary caregiver through *Putting People First* implementation.

### **Question re: Student behavioural issues at Jack Hulland Elementary School**

**Mr. Kent:** I wanted to follow up with the Minister of Education on questions asked yesterday about safety concerns at Jack Hulland Elementary School. Yesterday, the minister mentioned the Grove Street handbook. She said it — and I quote: "... 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."

My question is: Where can Jack Hulland staff and families find a copy of the reviewed handbook that was completed in September?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I did speak yesterday about the commitments made to the Jack Hulland school council, and particularly, there were three things that we brought back to have in place by the time that meeting happened on October 6. One of them was a communication protocol. The other was the reviewed Grove Street handbook. My understanding is that it can be found on a website of the school. I will check that information, though, and ensure that this is accurate.

During these discussions with the school council, we also committed to meetings with the staff. I'm looking forward to those discussions later this week. We are very committed to the well-being of that school and ensuring that the commitments that we have made are adhered to, of course, but that we are focusing on the safety and well-being of not only our students, but of our entire school community, including our staff.

**Mr. Kent:** I checked the school website this morning, and I couldn't find this reviewed handbook, so I am glad that the minister is going to look into that. If it's on there somewhere, she can direct us to it.

The minister also mentioned a new communication protocol in terms of how matters are communicated to parents and the school community. She said that this came from a council meeting that she had attended in September. Has that protocol been completed? If so, where can it be accessed by the school community?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am following up on the questions that were posed yesterday. I did talk about the communication protocol. That was a commitment made at a September meeting that I was not in attendance at. I was in attendance on October 6 when we brought forward the discussion around these three commitments that were made in a previous September meeting. I just want to be clear about that.

Again, the communication protocol — when we discussed this at the October meeting, it was a commitment that was made to have that available as well on the school website. If that has not in fact happened, I will follow up on that and I will ensure that folks have that information. This is a very important tool that is going to make a huge difference for the understanding and expectations between parents, the school community, and educators in how matters are communicated and when they are communicated.

**Mr. Kent:** That is great that the minister will ensure that the Grove Street guidebook and the communications protocol — if they are not already there — are uploaded to the school website as soon as possible.

After we raised these issues yesterday, I had heard from others in the school community about incidents of violence, bullying, and vandalism at the school. As mentioned, many of these incidents involve students attending the Grove Street school, which is housed within Jack Hulland.

Yesterday we mentioned an April 5, 2021, Yukon Liberal election press release regarding supportive education. In that

press release, the Liberals said that they would look at behavioural support programs, such as the Grove Street program, to ensure that they are meeting the intended purpose.

We asked if this review had started, but the minister did not answer that question, so I will ask again: Has this review of the Grove Street program started, when will it be completed, and can we see the terms of reference for the review?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did speak yesterday a little bit about the importance of this Grove Street program and that it was established in 2011 and is a significant program that helps to support children with diverse learning needs.

I'm going to talk about the 2019 report of the Auditor General of Canada on K to 12 education in 2021, and the review of inclusive and special education and the child advocate review on attendance highlights that there are many things that our education system can do better. It took many decades for the Yukon's education system to become what it is today.

However, right now, we — I as the minister and all the staff of the Department of Education and schools — are certainly assigned and carrying a huge amount of responsibility to make the systems change and to be better. We are collaborating with Yukon First Nations Education Commission, and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, on the implementation plan for the inclusive and special education, looking forward to digging into this on November 12.

#### **Question re: Sexual assault cases**

**Ms. Clarke:** Earlier this year, the Yukon Status of Women Council and other Yukon women's organizations criticized the decision to halt the Yukon advocate case review that was set up to examine sexual assault cases. This was an important project, as Yukon's sexual assault rate has been reported as 3.5 times the national average. The rate of cases deemed and founded is 25 percent in the territory, compared with 19 percent nationally.

Yukon women's groups have asked for the decision to be reversed. Can the minister tell this House: Will they reinstate the Yukon advocate case review that was set up to examine sexual cases in Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** This is certainly a subject near and dear to my heart and work that I've spent decades working on in the Yukon. As I came into my position in 2017 as the then-Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and now the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, it remains a very high priority.

I am very well aware of the high rates of violence against women — even more so against indigenous women. One of the key initiatives — and I will speak about this first, and perhaps the Minister of Justice will stand and speak more about this — I am going to talk about the sexualized assault response team. This is a major initiative that our government undertook. It was launched in March 2020. We have worked hard to increase the coordination of existing services, while also building public awareness of new services for all victims of sexual assault. Key components of SART include a 24-hour confidential, toll-free,

Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault, victim support workers available during the week and after hours, and many other system changes. This is a huge accomplishment for the Yukon, and I am proud of this work.

**Ms. Clarke:** The Yukon advocate case review was set up to examine sexual assault cases that police labelled “unfounded” or where no one was charged. We know that the review was halted due to legal advice citing privacy concerns. Women's groups are concerned that the system is failing victims of violence and sexual assault. It is important that privacy concerns don't bar victims of sexual assault from access to justice.

Can the minister indicate if the Yukon government will work with the Yukon RCMP M Division to reinstate the sexual assault review process that was recently halted?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would be happy to rise to address what has probably been an issue in my life and my work career for — I don't want to say how long — probably 30 years or more, and that is the importance of having victims of sexual assault have justice. Our government has taken many steps to improve the response and the way in which victims of sexual assault are, in fact, treated.

Back in March 2020, SART was launched — the sexualized assault response team — and we have worked hard to increase the coordination of existing services so that any victim who enters the process at any place will have respect, compassion, and information that they might need.

We are also building public awareness of the new services for all victims of sexual assault.

Key components of the SART include a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault. Victim support workers are available during the week, and for after-hours support, if necessary. There is a roster of physicians at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and I hope to be able to give more information if there's a next question.

**Ms. Clarke:** The system may have failed Yukon victims of sexual abuse. In a February 12 CBC article, the Minister of Justice was quoted as saying: “... we are limited in our ability to directly influence the national operational policies and procedures of the organization...” However, in the same article, the Yukon RCMP said that they would like to have a Yukon version of the RCMP's review process with the participation of local women's groups.

Will the minister please tell this House if they will develop a made-in-Yukon version to help vulnerable Yukoners access the justice system?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will respond as the Minister of Justice, just because of the nature of the question — that's fine. I want to make sure that the member opposite understands that the program she is speaking about is a federal program, that there have been objections across the country for the ending of that program, and that there has been much pressure placed, by those who are unhappy about that happening, on the federal minister and on the RCMP federally, because it is a program that was done by them.

I can indicate that we do partner with the RCMP with respect to our SART program, or sexualized assault response team. The RCMP is a key part of that organization and that program for the purposes of making sure that individuals — I should say that it also includes training and the concepts — if they go to the RCMP, if they go to a nursing station, or if they go to the hospital, or if they call a friend who helps them get to the sexualized assault response team, they will have a compassionate response, and they will have the help that they need.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 9: Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021) — Second Reading**

**Clerk:** Second Reading, Bill No. 9, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pillai.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I move that Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission that Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This government is pleased to bring forward this amendment to the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act* for second reading. I will start by saying that these are fascinating times for Canada's cannabis industry, which is now just under three years old. Across the country, the industry is facing dual catalysts.

Firstly, the cannabis market is maturing. Statistics Canada estimates that, in the second quarter of 2020, the market share of legal cannabis overtook illicit cannabis for the first time. This gap is widening across the country, thanks to an increase in legal stores and a diverse and consistent supply of legal products. Despite these gains, there is still work to be done. The illicit market continues to exist as a source for cannabis. It is convenient and accessible, both online and offline.

The second catalyst is the pandemic. It has accelerated consumer and business demand for the flexibility and physical distancing offered by e-commerce. All Canadian jurisdictions offer e-commerce — the majority through government-run platforms. We know that licensees appreciated the ability to temporarily offer online payment to support physical distancing during the pandemic.

When the legislation's framework is finalized, the Yukon will be the fifth Canadian jurisdiction to offer private retail online sales and delivery.

The proposed amendment to the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act* is short but represents a significant first step. It paves the way for the development of comprehensive

regulations and ensures that licensees can deliver efficiently to homes in remote communities, far from their retail stores. Three of our five licensed retailers are in Whitehorse. They should have authorized ways of selling that help them to reach Yukoners over the age of 19, no matter where in the territory those adults live.

With this amendment, a person performing functions in relation to e-commerce and delivery will now be able to possess cannabis provided to them by a licensee. The person can possess the cannabis, as long as it was originally provided directly to the licensee by the Yukon Liquor Corporation. The amendment, together with the regulations, will ensure that the Yukon's private retail e-commerce system can combat the illicit market effectively.

Requirements for licensees to check for age and intoxication when making a sale are already present. The ongoing work of the regulations will finalize the overall e-commerce framework and ensure that it meets the needs of the current business landscape. The goal is to avoid red tape while introducing appropriate safeguards to prevent access by youth. The proposed amendment supports what we heard from Yukoners at legalization. Approximately 58 percent of respondents said that they strongly agreed, or somewhat agreed, that, regardless of whether stores are privately or publicly operated, services such as online sales and home delivery should be allowed for cannabis. Eighty-eight percent of respondents said they strongly agreed, or somewhat agreed, with a policy approach that focuses on developing legal and controlled access, while displacing illegal and criminal activity.

Three years on from legalization, the new sales option will allow the Yukon Liquor Corporation and licensees to continue accomplishing this policy approach.

In the 2020-21 fiscal year, total cannabis sales through the Yukon Liquor Corporation exceeded \$6 million. There is every indication that the industry can continue to grow.

This summary represents the highlights of the bill that I have tabled.

In conclusion, the government is pleased to bring forward the proposed amendments to the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*. We believe the amendments will support the rollout of a robust e-commerce framework and will pave the way for regulations that balance the needs of business and the protections needed for youth and public health.

I look forward to discussing the bill with all members of this House.

**Mr. Dixon:** It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this Bill No. 9, the amendment to the cannabis act. I am pleased to speak about it as well, not just because of the content of the bill itself, but what it means for the industry as a whole.

To start, I think it would be useful for me to note, at the outset, that we certainly agree with this piece of legislation and we will be supporting it. I have a number of thoughts about its arrival here in the Legislature today and some of the background though, and so I have a few comments.

When the government first introduced the emergency provisions of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, one of the

OICs issued under the state of emergency was the short-term allowance of private retailers to utilize this very e-commerce platform that Bill No. 9 enables.

At that time, the Yukon Party had asked that it be made either permanent or facilitated for a longer time, because it was really an important new sales channel for private retailers to access. It allowed them to connect with their customers online and limited the face-to-face contact necessary in a normal retail interaction. It also protected their staff, as fewer individuals needed to enter the store at a time when there was obviously great concern about the growing pandemic.

Earlier this year, that OIC was removed, and the decision was made by the government to stop that practice and to cease the operation of private retailers offering e-commerce. Instead, what they did was indicate that they would consider legislative options to do that, and that's what we've seen here today.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what many in the industry found was that it took a great deal of time, much longer than it needed to, and it was at a time when the ongoing support and ongoing access to e-commerce was of great importance to the industry and those retailers.

I note that, for the period that the OIC was in place that allowed this, the retailers accessed it readily. Once the OIC came off — and this was ceased — I noted that one local retailer posted something on their website that read as follows: “Due to YLC repealing an emergency ministerial order allowing e-commerce for cannabis, we are no longer able to process payments for orders online. However, we are working with YLC to develop a permanent policy to allow e-commerce in the future. Photo ID, age and impairment restrictions will still be applicable to anyone picking up your order.”

So, as that particular private retailer noted on their site, they were no longer able to offer that sales channel. They will now be, eventually, able to access that sales channel, once the regulations are brought forward pursuant to this legislation. Before going any further, I should note that I very much appreciated the briefing earlier today from officials from the cannabis corporation, and I appreciated the brevity of that briefing because of the fact that this legislation is so short.

Where the real rubber will hit the road will be with the regulations, and the department noted to us that the regulations are being advanced as quickly as possible, but they were reluctant to offer a timeline as to when we might expect them to be in force. Those regulations are obviously needed by the industry to know when to begin planning for their own e-commerce platforms to repopulate the websites and get their systems back in operation.

I hope, in his response to me, or perhaps in Committee later in this Sitting, the minister will have the opportunity to update us on the development of the regulations and the prospective timelines that we may expect to see for those regulations.

The department officials also indicated to us that, while there wasn't specific consultation on the legislation at hand, the legislation was the result of ongoing discussions with retailers over the last year. That was a very polite way of saying that the industry is pushing very hard for this, ever since the OIC under

CEMA came in and then was terminated. So, this is of great interest to those retailers.

The Yukon Party has raised questions about the decision to cancel the OIC over the course of the last year or so. One of the reasons that was given earlier is that the effect of that decision was that it allowed the government retail store to have access to e-commerce when private retailers weren't given private access to e-commerce, which was obviously an unlevel playing field for a private industry that needs to compete with government. Other than the period when the emergency order was in place that allowed for e-commerce, private industry found itself in the position where their customers could go online and purchase cannabis through an e-commerce platform operated by the Yukon government, but private retailers could not. Private retailers were quick to point out that this was unfair and that it put them at a clear disadvantage when it came to their competition with the government-owned retail store.

Mr. Speaker, while I am very supportive of this bill and I am happy to see it come forward, I would like to see more. We have been pushing for changes to the legal cannabis retail model here in the Yukon for some time. It was an issue in our platform in the spring, and even before that — going back to the original introduction of cannabis here in Yukon — the Yukon Party has taken a bit of a different position than the Liberal government.

I noted that back in April 2018 when the initial consultations were underway, the Yukon Party, prior to my time as leader and when I was not even an MLA, put out a release on the subject. They noted at the time, on April 20, 2018, that the proposed Liberal *Cannabis Act* would considerably grow government, and they expressed a concern about that. The Official Opposition at that time had proposed an alternative approach for the regulation and control of cannabis that limits the growth of the territorial government while creating opportunities for the private sector. The model that they proposed at the time would have been similar to the Saskatchewan model. To achieve that goal, the Official Opposition provided its rationale and proposed constructive amendments to move sections of that legislation that would have created a new cannabis corporation and government-run retail store.

I know that this has evolved since then. I know that the government has made gestures that they would like to move out of the retail space. Of course, since then, they have sold off their previous physical space and converted strictly to an online platform for the delivery of cannabis from government retail.

I remain convinced that there are better models available to us, and I would push for further changes to the act to allow for that. I don't think that there's any one system in Canada that we would necessarily emulate exactly, but I do think, as a general guide, that Saskatchewan's legislative and regulatory framework is a good one for Yukon to consider. In documents produced by the Government of Saskatchewan, they lay out the general framework for cannabis legalization within Saskatchewan that guided the initial development of their legislation.

It laid out a wholesale, distribution, and retail sales model that focused on a number of key principles. Those included protecting public health and safety, including keeping cannabis away from children and youth, eliminating the illegal market, minimizing taxpayer exposure to risk, incorporating regulatory best practices, and building on experience from other jurisdictions.

According to the Government of Saskatchewan, in conjunction with feedback from public consultations, the government, at that time, concluded that the four principles are best served by a competitive private model for the wholesale, distribution, and retail sale of non-medical cannabis in Saskatchewan. This model minimizes the upfront cost to taxpayers and has been successful in other jurisdictions in combatting the illegal market and protecting public health and safety by ensuring a safe, regulated supply of cannabis to those of legal age.

In that case, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority acts as the regulator. In addition, the SLGA established a licensing regime for wholesalers, distributors, and retailers with strict qualifying criteria, including criminal background checks and inventory tracking and reporting capabilities. Wholesalers, distributors, and retailers in Saskatchewan are required to purchase non-medical cannabis from a federally licensed producer.

That's important. In that model, retailers are allowed to go directly to a federally regulated wholesaler and purchase their product directly. The model here in the Yukon is that they have to purchase the product directly through the Yukon government wholesale system. I'm of the view that we should consider allowing individual retailers to connect directly with wholesalers that are, of course, federally regulated and following the federal laws to procure their supply of product.

The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is that it allows local retailers to really hone in on the kinds of products that they want to offer themselves, the kind of experience that they want for their customers, and it allows them to reach the kinds of deals that we see in other supply chain-oriented businesses.

I know that, in my time working in the mining industry, one of the features of a retail industry is the ability to go out and seek product that you want to sell to your customers and that you think your customers want. Right now, the way it works is that retailers need to go to the Yukon government. If they want a product that is not currently available to them, they need to convince the Yukon cannabis corporation to go off and sign a deal with a company. What that then means is that any retailer in the Yukon has access to that very same product, so no individual retailer can become an exclusive supplier of a certain kind of product. For instance, if I were to open a business in Yukon that solely wanted to focus on a particular type of product that was available on Vancouver Island and be the sole supplier of that product in the Yukon, I wouldn't be able to, under the current model.

There are some benefits to the government being involved in the distribution, and I recognize that. Some of the smaller retailers have indicated that they do appreciate the purchasing power of the government-run distributor, and that is fine. I think

that both can happen, but I do think that, if retailers are interested in it, they should be given the freedom to reach out to those growers and producers of cannabis and reach those kinds of commercial arrangements that we see in other types of supply chains.

So, all of that is to say that I think there is a better structure out, and the better structure, I think, would achieve a few different things. First of all, I think that it would create private sector opportunities for these retailers. I think that the industry would grow and thrive in a situation that is less controlled by the government. Some of that is a function of my political leanings, but I also think that there is some empirical evidence of that as well.

I also think that it will help us to allow legal sellers of cannabis to compete better with the black market, because that was one of the goals that was stated right from the beginning about the legalization of cannabis — that having legal, regulated cannabis in Canada will allow for legitimate operations to displace private black-market operations. Unfortunately, over the course of the last few years of legalization of cannabis in Canada, we haven't seen that as much as any of us, I am sure, would like.

I think here in the Yukon, we really could go a long way to improving our private retailers' ability to compete with the black market if we are able to carve back and pare back some of the red tape and regulatory burden that exists on them.

So, it's not just about creating business opportunities, although I believe those are important; it's about enhancing our ability to drive out and suppress the black market here in Yukon.

Following that, I would note that it's not just me who believes that. I know that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce has taken up the cause and developed a specific cannabis working group. One of my colleagues and I had the opportunity to be briefed by the policy advisor for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce cannabis committee. That was some good insight into some of the federal machinations on this file.

Obviously, when the Canadian Chamber of Commerce is representing the issue, they're looking at a lot of different types of businesses than we have here in the Yukon. They are much bigger, and there is much more money involved in some of the clientele and businesses that make up the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, but I thought that there were some important lessons that we can learn here.

In December 2020, just about a year ago, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce put out a policy piece that they entitled *New Years Resolutions for the Canadian Cannabis Industry*. There are a number of aspects to that, but one of the important suggestions that they made — and I'll quote from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's *5 Minutes for Business, New Years Resolutions for the Canadian Cannabis Industry* at this point, December 15, 2020.

Number four on their recommendations is: "Keep investing energy in educating governments and advocating for sensible policy changes. In a new, highly regulated, and stigmatized sector, all orders of government have been cautious and reluctant in their approach to cannabis policies. Issues such

as retail restrictions, marketing and branding limits, licencing challenges and all kinds of red tape have frustrated cannabis entrepreneurs. The industry must continue to speak strongly with a unified voice to help governments improve the most problematic policies that are holding back the regulated industry and indirectly prop up the illegal market.”

Mr. Speaker, I thought that quote was great. I thought the Canadian Chamber of Commerce really hit it on the head there. I think that, here in Yukon, that very much rings true. I think that we have the opportunity to take some of the red tape and limits on current cannabis entrepreneurs here in the Yukon off and let them grow and thrive.

Another thing the chamber noted — and I will just note this at this point, because we are in second reading. I probably won't mention it in Committee, but I would note that we are very much aware that the federal government is currently reviewing their federal *Cannabis Act*, and Health Canada is required to start that review right around now. It was supposed to be commenced by October 2021 originally. I haven't heard an update from the federal government as to whether or not that is the case now.

Speaking of that, there are a few other issues I wanted to note that aren't included in this bill and were referenced by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce but are things I have heard directly from retailers here, and that is some of the red tape and limits on them in regard to advertising. Currently, cannabis retailers are very restricted in the amount of branded material that they can offer. When I say “material”, Mr. Speaker, I mean non-cannabis retail products. A good example would be things like a T-shirt, a hat, a water bottle — things that we would consider under the term “swag”, I believe. They are really limited in their ability to offer those types of products.

For instance, if a retail cannabis store wants to sell a T-shirt with the name of their store on it, they can't do it in their store; they have to sell outside of their store. An example would be — I will pick on one — I won't say it by name, but it will be obvious to all of us. If you operate a cannabis retail store in Carmacks, you cannot sell your branded T-shirts in the cannabis store. You can sell them in the gas station next door. That kind of thing, I think, doesn't make sense to a lot of folks in the retail industry — why they can't just advertise their products in their store, appreciating the fact that some of those regulations are intended to limit the ability of targeting cannabis products to youth and to promoting the use of cannabis to a greater extent.

I think there is a middle ground that can be found there. I think that some thought needs to be put into how we can reduce some of that red tape and burden that currently exists for cannabis retailers.

Another important aspect, which is one mentioned by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, as well, and is something I've heard here in the Yukon, is the inability of Yukon retailers to offer rewards or loyalty programs. Some of the bigger national cannabis retailers — and we have a few here in the territory that have franchises set up here in Whitehorse — are able to offer national rewards and loyalty programs. So, if you purchase a certain amount with a store, you could get tickets to

a hockey game or a free water bottle or something like that as a gift. It's a royalty rewards program that we see commonly in a variety of industries. We certainly see it in the airline industry, coffee shops, and other types of smaller retail stores, where a retail store will offer a rewards or loyalty program.

Cannabis operations in Yukon aren't able to do that, so the locally owned cannabis retailers are at a bit of a disadvantage, because their counterparts that are national chains or franchises are able to offer those loyalty programs through their national operations. It is just a little bit different and I think it would go a long way to improving the ability of locally developed businesses and local entrepreneurs to enter this market and compete on a level playing field with bigger businesses.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that I would like to put on the floor today is the issue of pricing. I think that there is no bigger issue holding the legal sale of cannabis back against the black market than pricing. I think that, if the legal market is able to even come close to competing on price, they will have success, and they will displace the black market, but they need the tools to do that. Onerous markups and onerous tax structures that drive up the cost of legal cannabis only serve to promote the black market. I think that we really need to give some thought to a comprehensive price review of cannabis products here in Yukon. I have been told that this could be underway, but we are years in now and we really need to get moving on that.

I am also aware that Yukon has by far the highest markup in the country of any province or territory. That markup is what drives up the cost for the purchaser of the cannabis. Again, all of this just sends a price signal to consumers that they should be buying from the black market, and I don't think that this is right, Mr. Speaker. We should be encouraging and supporting our legitimate legal retailers of cannabis.

I could go on and on about my thoughts on this. I have tried to make a few points about concerns that I have with the current model. The reason I have done that is because those kinds of things aren't captured in this bill, and while we certainly support what is being proposed in this bill and the legislation that it will change, I do want to just put on the record that we would like to see further change. If we can help with that — if we can help the minister — we would be happy to do that, because I think that it is something that would really — especially as we emerge from COVID and we are trying to grow the small business and entrepreneur sector, this is a perfect industry for that. I think that getting government out of the way of this would go a long way to supporting that economic recovery that we need, following what is hopefully the decline of the pandemic.

A final piece that I will say is about the regulations. I do know that the regulations will set out much of the details of this. I hope that, in the course of looking at those regulations, the minister and his colleagues give some thought as to what the government has been operating under so far and making sure that what we impose on the private sector doesn't become more onerous than what the government had. What I mean by that is that, right now, there is a fairly loose system between the corporation and Canada Post, whereby, if I go on to the Yukon cannabis website, purchase product, pay for it online, and have



it delivered to me — it is delivered by Canada Post — that is a sound system. I think it works fine, but I know that some private retailers are worried that, if they are required to do delivery, which they want to do, that there will be additional burdens put on them — things like unrealistically high liability insurance and unattainable training — those types of things that can really burden a small business that is trying to break into this.

So, I hope that is something they consider, when they start looking at these regulations, that we try our best to make sure that we meet the standard when it comes to making sure that it is people of age, that it is not people who are under the influence, and it is meeting all of those safety issues that need to be met, but also recognizing that these are small businesses and that they need to be supported and not held back by unreasonably difficult burden through red tape.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I am very pleased to support the bill, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward. I know that this was a case that we made previously, to the previous minister. At that time, he was not interested in bringing it forward and instead opted for the regulatory tool of the ministerial order.

I think that this is something that could have been brought forward earlier. I think that it could be more broad and that there could be more things included, but it is something that we support and we will be voting in favour of it here. I'm happy to have a bit of a discourse with the minister when we get into Committee.

**Ms. Tredger:** I wanted to first start by expressing my appreciation for the briefing that we had this morning — to the officials for their time for that briefing. We're happy to see this amendment coming forward. We're happy to see the concerns of small businesses being responded to by this government.

We are interested, like my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, in knowing the timeline for the regulations as this is what it will actually affect when businesses are able to compete on an equal footing with the government. We look forward to hearing a timeline for that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back a little bit in time, but I would like to begin by thanking the Leader of the Official Opposition for his position around cannabis. It's a welcome change.

When we first introduced the act to legalize cannabis here — so, cannabis was legalized, I think, in October 2018, but the act came through in that spring. My recollection is that the Official Opposition voted against legalization. When they stood to speak about it — and I would have to go back and read Hansard more closely, but I heard that there were aspects of legalization that they supported and there were aspects that they didn't support.

The concerns that they seemed to be talking about at that time were that they had heard from members of the public that legalization would lead to extra use, that there would be problems because cannabis is an intoxicant, and they were worried. Our position, at that time, was that we felt this could

be done well and safely, so we were happy to bring in the legalization.

Of course, there are two levels of laws that we have to work through. I heard the Leader of the Official Opposition refer to it often as “red tape”. I think that some of those laws have a real purpose. I take his point that we want to try to make sure that we support businesses to do well, but I think that we also shouldn't just lump all things around the legalization of intoxicants to be just “red tape”.

I heard on the radio yesterday discussions around vaping and youth. It was how vaping was originally brought forward as a way in which to help people quit smoking, but really it has had a lot of impact on our youth. We need to be very careful around the way in which we set up both acts and regulations so that we are achieving the ends that we wish to achieve.

Just a day or so ago, my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and also the cannabis corporation, tabled in this Legislature the 2020-21 annual report. I am just going to quote from it on page 2. The Leader of the Official Opposition was talking about Saskatchewan and the principles or goals that they were trying to achieve with their legislation. Ours has goals as well, which is to displace the illicit trade in cannabis and to protect public health and safety, with a focus on youth. It sounds pretty similar, except that the Leader of the Official Opposition says that, in Saskatchewan, they have a better model around dealing with wholesale and retail. I am going to talk about that in a moment, but what I want to point out is that, three years ago, when cannabis was legalized here, there were still a lot of questions. How would this unfold with us as a territory and as a country? We wanted to make sure that the way in which it unfolded grabbed the positives of the legalization while not grabbing the negatives of the black market. That was the goal.

Let me talk for a moment about online versus not online. I am looking at page 10 of the report that was tabled in the Legislature a couple of days ago.

Total sales, as the minister said in his opening remarks on second reading, over the last year, around \$6 million — just over \$6 million. How much of that was for online sales? \$12,000. That is 0.2 percent, so this is not a big chunk of the market. Most of the market is in place. But when I talk with private retailers of cannabis, they feel that they can do better at that, and I think they will do better at that, but, of course, we should acknowledge that this includes that period of time when the order-in-council was brought into place to allow for online sales for the private retail market during the start of the pandemic. I just want to put it in context. We are talking about 0.2 percent this past year.

So, what happened with that order-in-council? Why did we bring it in? We brought it in because, at that time, we believed that it was part of the pandemic response — that there was a way to allow citizens to purchase their cannabis online, which would reduce or minimize the amount of contact at stores. As we were trying to navigate at the beginning of the pandemic, it was a way in which to support Yukoners so that we didn't get as much contact with people and we could keep people safe. It was about keeping people safe. Those OICs were always about

public safety. Sorry, I keep saying “OICs” — orders-in-council, regulations.

That is why it was brought in, but we need to recall that it was brought in under the state of emergency, and the members opposite criticized the orders-in-council broadly, largely. They just said, “Hey, you shouldn’t be bringing in all of these regulations. It’s not right.” We kept asking, “Which ones don’t you want?” We said that these were to help protect public safety. There was criticism that there were too many. I still wonder which ones were not wanted. We also said that, once some of the restrictions were starting to lift and people were able to go back to retail more safely, we should not use a state of emergency to bring in regulations unless they really were in support of the state of emergency.

When I talked with retailers at the time, I explained to them, “We hear you — that you want to get online sales for private retail. Let’s see if we can do that. Let’s work toward that, but let’s not use the state of emergency.” I think that for the government to use the state of emergency to just say, “Well, this is good to have. Let’s use that...” — no, we have always said that the state of emergency should only be used for those things that were urgent and part of that whole public safety side.

All right — that work began. I will say that, whenever I have talked to the private sector, they sure would like us to move as fast as possible — so that was a year ago. I think that the order-in-council was rescinded in September 2020, and here we are a year later. Yes, it took a year, and what I want to say is thank you to all those folks at the Liquor Corporation and the Department of Justice who work on a ton of legislation. There is a lot of work that goes into it. I don’t in any way wish to minimize that. I appreciate the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition that industry would like it to be faster; I get that. I am very glad that the diligence has been done and that we’re here today.

Let me talk for a moment about retail and how it is going. There have been a couple of times here in this Legislature when I have stood up to report on how we are doing with the legalization of cannabis and how sales are going — a couple of times when the Official Opposition has said to me: “Oh, you’re just promoting the sale of cannabis” and I have said: “No, I am promoting the sale of legal cannabis.” One of our main goals has always been to displace the black market. I have stood up here and talked about all of the data that is available through Statistics Canada on cannabis sales. I have talked about how we are doing compared to, for example, Saskatchewan. One of the things that Statistics Canada tells us is that, overall, since the legalization of cannabis, we don’t believe that the usage of cannabis by all Canadians has gone up. It has stayed pretty steady. This was one of the things that the Official Opposition said might happen. We said that we didn’t think so, and now, three years in, the statistics show it to be correct — that the usage of cannabis has stayed the same. It might have changed through the pandemic. We will have to see how that change has happened, but generally speaking, legalization didn’t change usage patterns.

What that also helps to do is to say that now we can look at the sales and we know that those legal sales are therefore displacing the black market.

We now know that, across the country, the legal sales are exceeding black market sales. Here in the Yukon, we think it’s even better. How do we know that? Because we can see sales here on a per-person basis compared to other jurisdictions and say: How are we doing? Well, it turns out that legal sales here in the Yukon are highest on a per-person basis compared to all other Canadian jurisdictions.

Let me look, for example, at where we are against Saskatchewan — Saskatchewan, which is doing not bad, but still, we are one and one-half times better. So, when the member opposite says we should use the Saskatchewan model, I wonder if there isn’t a legislator in Saskatchewan saying that they should use the Yukon model, because it is out-performing.

Having said that, that doesn’t mean that there aren’t ways to improve, and I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition is correct, that we should we always look for ways to improve the system. I think that is a good thing, and that’s exactly what’s happening here. That came directly from talking with the private retail market here.

I don’t characterize all those things — the other things — as being just about red tape. I think it’s very important that we maintain those original goals around making sure that we keep the public safe, especially our youth, and making sure that we’re working to displace the illicit market.

I made some suggestions today. I know that I’ve had conversations with the minister, where I know they’re working on some of those things and working closely with the private sector.

Originally, when we legalized cannabis, I heard from the members opposite that we would never get out of the business of selling cannabis. Then, was it a year later that we sold off the store? I think it was a year, to the day, that we sold off the one government store that we brought in, in order to try to establish that the way in which we would do this would be to keep the public safe and to displace the black market. One year later, we closed that store, and we’re pretty much on to a couple of years after that, and we’re now going to allow the private sector to take over that portion of the online sales. I think that’s a great thing.

I appreciate that the members opposite are supportive of this, and I appreciate that now they feel that cannabis is not the same threat to the public that I heard them debate when we first brought the legislation forward. I thank them for all of their suggestions around how to improve the system. I note that the Yukon is leading the country in displacing the black market. I think that this is down to our great private retailers and the choices that we have made together on working to displace the black market.

I thank them for their great work, and I think that the choices that we have made so far have been really well done in the territory.

**Acting Speaker (Ms. Tredger):** If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thanks to all members of the Assembly for their contributions to the debate around second reading and the conversation around second reading. I appreciate the comments from the opposition, as well as from my colleague. I think it's important to make note of the commitments that were made three years ago during this process and then fulfilled by the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the cannabis corporation.

First of all, I thank my colleague who, at the time, was the minister in charge. It was a very new conversation to this Legislative Assembly and to all provincial and territorial houses of governance. There was anxiety around it for many. There was fear from others. I want to commend the folks who rolled out legislation, went out to the public and conducted what still may be one of the largest consultations, or feedback for consultation, that we have seen the Yukon government undertake. Essentially, the response from Yukoners was very significant. I think that is important to note.

The minister of the day and the department didn't look to another province or territory; they looked to Yukoners to understand what Yukoners wanted. When we get into Committee of the Whole and we have an opportunity to debate some of the points, we will get into the data that we have and statistically why we made those policy decisions.

I heard previously in the last mandate — and we are hearing it again — that Saskatchewan always seems to be the choice of the Official Opposition as the best model. We heard that on COVID, and I'm certainly glad that my colleagues took the decision they did. Now we are hearing it again. I think part of what was just touched upon by the former minister is providing the analytics to show why we believe that the work that was done by the good public servants at the Liquor Corporation and cannabis corporation should be something that is commended. As well, rolling out in the beginning stages of this, the largest percentage of Yukoners wanted to see a hybrid model. That's why we rolled out a hybrid model.

If you go back into that statistical information — I will provide that to the opposition from the "what we heard" document — you will see that — and I may be off by a percentage point — about 58 percent of Yukoners wanted to see that. If you break down to a private model only, or a government-controlled model, the percentages were much less.

Again, I appreciate the expertise at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce on this topic and how they look at it, not just from retail, but also understanding production. I will make sure I review the documentation that might be public, or reach out to the Canadian chamber, so I am equipped for that conversation and debate.

Inevitably, the corporation did a fabulous job. They had that store built; they brought in folks who were on term positions. They rolled out an option for Yukoners at the time and then fulfilled the commitment that was made. Now the bricks and mortar are in the hands of the private sector.

Similarly, we want to be able to walk through this particular process here. We want to amend this policy and then step back and remove ourselves from that online activity. We want that in the hands of the private sector.

We will likely try to keep the conversation in Committee to this, but I want to be flexible, and I think there were good topics that were defined by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I am looking forward to discussing those and debating that.

It was touched on, and I am excited about that. That is a change, and it is a change, because the folks who are sitting across the way voted against this legislation.

There was a period of time — and I have to go back and look at the voting record — but what I remember is that there was one member who voted in support of it. I don't know if the vote was whipped by the leader of the day or something else happened, but there was one individual in the Yukon Party who supported it, and then, when we went to the final reading, all the members of the Yukon Party voted against it. One of the most vocal on this topic, as I remember, was the Member for Lake Laberge. There seems to have been a sea change there in the view of this. I don't know — maybe as a good constituency MLA, some of the constituents of Lake Laberge have changed the mind of the member — I am not sure, but I'm glad to see that the member is now a great champion in ensuring that the private sector retail is supported, and I commend that — to be joining the rest of us in making sure that we see the sector blossoming as well.

I guess, the fact that, potentially, the first production will also happen in the Lake Laberge riding — and again, it is significant. When you take into consideration the agricultural sales in the territory and just the impact of one of these operations, and once they go through their process with Health Canada, what economic impact that is, which is pretty significant — not just the jobs, but the output and their ability to supply local.

I look forward to discussions around some of the other items, such as — we can talk a bit about the branding pieces and how we can support our local businesses. I certainly want to support them in the sense that many of these folks have invested significant dollars — both in Whitehorse and in the communities — into their operations. We will also have our technical folks here to touch on some of that, where Health Canada's regulation prohibits certain activity and what controls we have, and we will have an opportunity to talk a little about our participation on the legislative review working group at the federal level.

We will also have an opportunity to touch on correcting the record. There was a point brought up about the rewards program that some of these larger operations are providing, and, of course, that is something that is not prohibited in the Yukon, and if they are still conducting that, then we will have a discussion about that, but, again, we will clarify some of the information that has been tabled today.

We also — you know, I think that there is a good opportunity to have a debate. One thing in my role, I want to ensure — as Minister of Economic Development — is that our

local entrepreneurs have the best possible supports. This could lead to a potential debate. The leader of the opposition touched on the political view of the Yukon Party as a laissez-faire sort of free market; and I appreciate that.

But I also have a view that, when you do have large retailers — and there was an example made from previous work experience around when you're in that service sector and you're trying to provide particular lines of supplies and product, and then there are other players who can come in who have larger buying power — that was touched on. What can that do? Yes, you do have that ability, maybe, to get that one type of product and be able to really entice, but at the same time, your competitors are going to be watching — which they do.

We have probably one of the most active interfaces between the retailers and government, probably almost in the country; I can't speak for the other territories, but it's almost on a weekly basis that we're making sure that we're talking to our five retailers. Part of that is there is that concern from time to time that one of the bigger chains continues to buy up and have this very significant buying power and what that can do to others. Again, we know that there are differences of opinion on that concept.

We, as an organization, are trying to ensure that we're supporting the folks who have made this investment and that we're trying to make sure we're keeping folks safe, which we committed to, and it's one of our major pillars — that we're taking into consideration how we protect folks who are under the age of 19 and, at the same time, continue to move this out appropriately.

I think it's also important to understand that — or to share, I should say — as a previous minister identified, it was under the emergency CEMA orders that we had that opportunity to provide the online opportunity. Then that was removed. The leader of the opposition touched on the fact of how that was a big impact. I will take this as an opportunity, again, though, to touch on the fact that we had the most comprehensive business supports in this country — again, public servants all Yukoners should be proud of — working inside the Yukon government to support. So, not only was it that ability to pivot, for a period of time, to online sales, but also the fact that, for the companies or the businesses that were in a difficult position, we were truly there and, of course, it is probably important to note that, in areas such as tourism, we are continuing to provide those programs.

I appreciate that there are other jurisdictions that folks think we should look to. We didn't do that when we walked into COVID and we put business supports in. We listened to Yukoners, and Yukoners came up with solutions. Folks should be proud of that because, a year later, provinces that are much bigger with larger resources were calling the Yukon government to get our templates to understand programs.

Whether it is our sick leave, which some folks from the opposition have supported us on and put their hands up as champions of that, it is understanding that this work was done very quickly, and we did it based on what Yukoners told us. That is why I think that, even as we go forward, it is really important to respect the comments of what Yukoners wanted to

see in the beginning of building this legislation. We do feel that there are some pieces from across the country that you can always learn from, but we think a made-in-Yukon solution has been very successful here.

I look forward to some of the other discussions on concerns that may arise as we get into regulations and timing of those regulations. I want to make sure that I have a good conversation with my colleagues — that what we end up doing when it comes to any of this work is that departments can lead it. We are conferring with the Justice department and working with them.

We also found ourselves in a position where, historically, there has been legislation passed that Yukoners wanted to see, with maybe not as much focus on making sure the regulations are in place; therefore, what tends to happen is that you might have a backlog of work for drafters, who are highly sought after and provide great expertise to us, but, at the same time, that is one of the things we have been really focused on over the last four years — making sure that we address the backlog on regulations and, at the same time, make sure that we have a very robust approach to the legislation that we want to see put in place.

We will have an opportunity to talk about that and truly be open to learn from folks in opposition and their findings. They seem to have done some pretty significant research on this conversation, so, I think it is appropriate for me to learn where I can do better in this role and where I can bring those ideas back to the cannabis corporation, when it comes to maybe some of the smaller decisions and operational changes that we can make to ensure that this is supportive and that the private sector can absolutely thrive in this environment.

Again, I am always happy to rise during Question Period on this topic when it comes to the pricing models. We may get into a number of those things, but there is not a supplementary budget, so, if the opposition wants to dig into some of those items prior to general debate or the spring budget, I would certainly wish to rise — or, if the questions are tabled, I am more than happy to get back with written responses — either/or — to some of those questions that might be outside of the scope of debate during Committee of the Whole, when it comes to this amendment to legislation.

With that, I thank everyone for their comments today. I look forward to getting this in place. We all know it is very important to those retailers. We are happy to move away and not occupy that space as quickly as we can get this amended and get regulation in place and let those folks who are doing a really, really good job, and a very responsible job, continue to flourish and to continue to grow an already very significant, growing economy.

**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. Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 9 agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** 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 Hon. Premier 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:** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

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

**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?

**Mr. Cathers:** I would just like to recap briefly, before handing it over to the Premier for answers, that yesterday when we left debate on the budget, I had asked a number of questions,

including pointing out the fact that, although the government, with great fanfare, has a habit of doing in the spring — bragged about the size of the capital budget, including the land development budget — we saw \$32 million budgeted this spring for land development. Most of that was due to the continued development of the Whistle Bend subdivision.

The Minister of Community Services told this House in May 2021 that we would see 171 lots later this year. In fact, most of those lots have now been delayed, and we see just 70 residential lots in Whistle Bend and four in Logan, according to the information that we were provided with by department officials. There is a total of 74 residential lots in the Whitehorse area that are being released by government this year. They have trouble getting land development done, but the Premier has no trouble growing government by hiring hundreds of additional staff that he also has not been willing so far to explain the need for.

Of those 74 residential lots in comparison to the fact, as I mentioned, that, according to the government's own numbers, the increase just this year alone is north of 236 full-time equivalent staff that, as I mentioned yesterday, with the information that I had at my fingertips from the spring — the increase was related to just two departments, Health and Social Services and Justice, and excluded other departments. It's a lower figure than the total number, but when you combine that with the 110.5 new full-time equivalent positions being added here in the fall, we see an increase in just this year of 236 new full-time equivalent staff positions.

As I tie it to land development, the point is that, when you already have a housing crisis and when the government is hiring 236 new staff and releasing only 74 new residential lots, it shouldn't take much of a math whiz to figure out that government is a significant cause of the continued pressure on the housing market and that in fact, because of their continued increase to the rate of hiring of government, the largest single contributor to the housing crisis is the Yukon government. If the Premier is wondering why we have a housing crisis, he needs to look no further than in the mirror.

With that, I wrap up my recap, and I look forward to answers to the questions that I asked at the tail end of yesterday.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I am going to start today by again welcoming Scott Thompson, Deputy Minister of Finance, to the Legislative Assembly. Upon reflection on some of the questions of the previous days, I want to add some information to some of the previous questions, plus to the questions offered by the Member for Lake Laberge at the end of the day yesterday.

I am going to start with the Committee of the Whole question from the Leader of the Official Opposition on the *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*. I will just quote him directly. He said that the Premier mentioned funding for air carriers. Can he elaborate on the funding and whether the decision was made by YG, or was it based on parameters from the federal government? We were talking about funding for aviation.

Some of the information provided is that \$5.256 million was provided to Government of Yukon under the agreement to

ensure air services to remote communities with Transport Canada. The purpose for that funding under this agreement is to provide assistance for operational deficits incurred from January 2021 to June 2021 to air service providers to maintain essential services like medevac in Yukon. We talked about how the program was oversubscribed, and the full \$5.256 million was allocated to 11 eligible operators — this is new information — including both scheduled service providers and chartered fixed-wing and rotary operators that provide critical medical services and essential services in the Yukon.

The funding provided is 100-percent recoverable from the federal government, and all expenses put forward were eligible for that funding.

Also, priority for that funding was required by the federal government to go to schedule services and medevac to ensure essential services; that's how it was prescribed. Remaining funding was allocated to charters based on the amount of essential services that they were providing.

Future details on the calculations of the final amounts can be provided to the folks opposite when the Department of Highways and Public Works is called.

I also had a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition about — the government currently reports on ministerial travel: Is the Premier aware of any travel in 2021? I did respond, at the time, that there was nothing necessarily budgeted for ministerial travel. Then, just to be clear on that, due to the pandemic, out-of-territory travel was suspended, and once travel resumes, we will continue to publicly report ministerial travel outside the Yukon — just to clarify.

The Member for Lake Laberge started yesterday with — he would like some more detail on the cost for flooding. Earlier this week, I spoke to some very high-level estimates for flooding costs in the territory. I would like to now provide a further breakdown of these costs borne by the Department of Community Services where I'm able to provide total allocation numbers in the supplementary estimates, as well as actuals from October 1.

Again, a great place to continue this conversation would be with the Minister of Community Services when they appear in Committee of the Whole.

For imported teams, cost to date — actuals to date — is \$372,000. Cost examples would have been contracts from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Personnel — YG Community Services personnel — is just under half a million dollars, so \$462,404.64. That's overtime. That is for casual hires — those types of things.

Contracted workforce — this would be Yukon First Nations Wildfire crews. It is great to see those folks in the gallery here today. That would have been at \$712,506.

Equipment rental, which we talked about in the Legislative Assembly yesterday — that would be heavy equipment, and that is \$1,172,494. That was the actuals to date. Then we had a commitment from those actuals — another \$1,358,708, for a total in the heavy-equipment rental category of \$2,531,202.

Equipment replacement — that is purchasing of hoses, pumps, et cetera — that was \$210,655.

Transportation — the total, if it's actuals to date, or commitments to date — this is vehicle rentals to the tune of a total number of \$241,406.50. Transportation for the military — this is buses to transport military personnel to flood sites — a total of \$77,312.50. We had fuel, non-vehicle fuel, of just over \$9,044. We had a category of spend for meals and accommodations: meals provided to military, labour in the field, military accommodations provided at the cadet camp with no cost to the Yukon, just as a note, but travel, meals, and accommodation total \$547,371.

Materials such as sand, rock, poly — those types of things — totals \$2,166,410. Last but not least, services — and this is miscellaneous — rentals, pump-outs, for example, and other services, totalling, with the actuals to date and the commitments to date of \$782,620.

So, the total cost to date of all of those breakdowns in those departments is \$8,112,941.64. Remediation and recovery work is to the tune of \$2,860,058.36. These are high-level estimates, but funding will be used to support EMO to engage experts and engineers to evaluate options for permanent mitigations measures.

As we move from response, EMO will also be working with the Yukon Housing Corporation and across governments, as well, to help plan and get a program together to support the 2021 flood-impacted citizens. We spoke about some of the meetings that are happening in different parts of our community. Funding is also required for some ongoing berm and mitigation maintenance. These are berms that need to be removed before the winter, for example.

I think that is it for that particular question from the member opposite. We have a further breakdown of the 87.3 FTEs in the supplementary and all pandemic management FTEs, which is 159.2 FTEs total, as cited by our Finance handout. In the spring, \$30 million was budgeted for land development, and 171 lots were planned for release later this year. You can see that in Hansard on May 12, page 122. Phase 6 had been split into 6A and 6B. The only one that is going out for release this year, 6A, has been reduced from 171 lots to just 70 residential lots in Whistle Bend and four lots in the Logan subdivision, for a total of 74 lots.

Does the Premier see a problem with this? That was the preamble from the member opposite. In response to that, in total, the 159.2 temporary FTEs have been approved to address Yukon's ongoing pandemic management, which we have stated in the Legislative Assembly a few times this year and this fall. This made up 71.9 in the mains and also 87.3 FTEs in the supplementary estimates, all of which — all of which — are time-limited positions.

These 159.2 FTEs are temporary and have been deployed across the six priority pillars outlined in the *Forging Ahead: The Yukon's Continuing Response to COVID-19* document: 49.9 temporary FTEs under the vaccination pillar, which included immunizers and staff supporting the proof of vaccination credential; 14.0 temporary FTEs under the testing and surveillance pillar, which includes the ongoing staffing needs at the COVID testing and assessment centre; 2.0 temporary FTEs under the surge capacity pillar; 21.4 temporary

FTEs under the social supports for vulnerable populations pillar, including social workers and mental health workers; and 72.0 temporary FTEs under the public health measures pillar, which includes infection protection and control in long-term care homes.

Now, I know that the member opposite said that, without knowing what these are for, in his mind, we're just using COVID as an excuse to pad the government in employment. It's simply not the fact. These are temporary; they're identified under the plan forward, and they are necessary to deal with the pandemic. Our COVID-related needs continue to change, based upon evidence and the advice of the office of the chief medical officer of health and also the evolving challenges presented by COVID-19 and its variants. So, to say that, at the mains, we should have been able to figure all this out, I would disagree, respectfully, with my colleague across the floor.

The number of FTE supports that are supporting the COVID-19 response fluctuates. It's going to fluctuate based upon need, total numbers of infected people, information, necessity to get into communities and to go back into communities. This total represents the overall temporary FTEs needed in 2021-22 and is not representative of a single moment in time.

We continue to experience how quickly COVID-19 can spread, such as during the summer of 2021, when we had an outbreak, or during the current increase in activity that was connected to the Delta variant. It's essential that we remain equipped and prepared to respond to COVID-19.

Again, outlined in the *Forging Ahead: The Yukon's Continuing Response to COVID-19* document is exactly that. We need to make sure, as we move on from pandemic to endemic, that we have supports in place or, if we know that there is going to be a chance of outbreak or a chance of a variant, we also need to be able to respond very quickly so that we are not trying to figure out where the supports are going to come from in a quick time frame. The departments working together — Health and Social Services with its partners — working with the chief medical officer of health, I think, have done an extraordinary job of keeping people safe and preparing for whatever it takes to make sure that we keep Yukoners safe and protected moving forward as well.

The member opposite also spoke about land development. The Land Development branch is continuing to work extremely hard to increase housing stock right across the territory by planning and developing an adequate supply of building lots in Yukon communities for housing, as well as businesses and economic development opportunities. The branch is working with communities, with their stakeholders — supporting official community plans, for example — to develop a range of lots to meet short-term and medium-term demands — to plan for their land development needs for the short, medium, and long term.

The branch uses three different approaches to deliver their land development program, which is important to know: developing lots in subdivisions in Whitehorse and also in the communities; exploring and facilitating opportunities for private sector land development; and supporting First Nations

to develop their lands for citizen housing and for economic development opportunities. It is extremely important work. We know how hard they work and how seriously they take their occupation.

When it comes to Whistle Bend work and also the future lot availability, as I mentioned earlier, work is underway on phase 6 of Whistle Bend for partial completion this fall. The Land Development branch anticipates the release of 70 of the 171 lots, with release of the balance next year.

The tender for phase 7 required a redesign and will be retendered later this fall for targeted lot release of about 50 lots in each of 2022 and also 2023. A similar phase 8 in Whistle Bend specific will also be tendered this fall to deliver out about 40 lots in 2022.

Phase 9, as well as a lift station, will be tendered later in 2022, and 27 more commercial lots along Keno Way in Whistle Bend and four new serviced lots in Logan will be released later this year.

Whistle Bend lot sales in December 2020 — the largest Whitehorse lottery was launched, which was 147 single-family, which includes two duplex and five country residential, and there were also 91 townhouse lots, 11 multi-family lots, eight commercial lots, receiving over 780 applications.

The Land Development branch continues to invest also in trails and landscaping so that Whistle Bend becomes an even more beautiful neighbourhood. The summer of 2021 included work on boulevards in phase 2 and 3 and also 4a, as well as the completion of key connectors, trails — and seeding work on Cadzow Park was also started, and Casca Boulevard landscaping. Also phase 4 and 5 green streets — the remainder of phase 4 boulevards and more will be tendered over the fall and winter to make for a very busy summer in 2022.

The Whitehorse infill and periphery — there is servicing for four new Logan lots. That was completed this summer. They will be released in the fall/winter 2021 lottery.

The Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Government of Yukon master planning process for the Range Point Road area has been extended and should wrap up in early 2022. Subdivision construction could also begin as early as the summer of 2023 as well.

I see that I am running out of my time here. I have a whole bunch more notes on the development of lots and land availability. I would like to get out of Whitehorse for a bit and talk about some of the rural communities, but I have completed my time here, so I will cede the floor to my colleague across the way.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the partial answer.

In terms of the addition of almost 160 positions related to COVID, it was a start for getting more detail on there, although I would still appreciate more of an explanation because I do understand that the operations of vaccinations do require additional staff. That is an obvious one, but the addition of 160 positions is a lot of positions, so having a little more detail about whether these are ones related to backfilling due to vacancies or other operations would be useful. While the vaccination clinic is clearly an activity that we didn't have before the vaccines were available last year, most of the government's

activities related to COVID appear to be operating at about the same pace. Again, we're not saying that they aren't justified, but more detail would be appreciated because we haven't heard much of an explanation for most of those positions.

I would also note that the Premier is very fond of encouraging people to check yukon.ca for the most up-to-date information, particularly about the pandemic and vaccination clinics, et cetera, related to it, but one thing that I received complaints from Yukoners about recently was when the government began offering influenza shots at the convention centre and that information was not easily available on the website. I received a couple of complaints from people who told me that they had checked the website and it had looked to them like the clinic was open to get vaccinated for COVID, but they went there and found out that they couldn't and were turned away. I would just ask the Premier why the government didn't have it prominently displayed on the website that the COVID vaccinations were being temporarily impacted by the influenza vaccine clinic.

Related to that, I would also note that I did receive a complaint from one gentleman who was not that comfortable dealing with booking online. As the Premier will know, there are varying degrees of tech savviness and comfort in the Yukon public, particularly with some older Yukoners, but also those with literacy issues or who are just technologically challenged and may have difficulty or lack of comfort booking online.

In this case, the gentleman who contacted me told me that he didn't want to book online. He called to book an appointment and wasn't comfortable giving his health care number over the phone, but the person at the other end was not willing to book an appointment without that. I would just note that I'm guessing that it's related to the way they currently have their booking system set up — and I do appreciate the work that all of the staff are doing in offering the vaccination clinic.

I would flag that, not so much even as a criticism, but just a notation that I would encourage government to address that so that, if there are other people who call and either don't have their health care card handy or are concerned about the privacy of giving it out over a cellphone or other things of that type, it would be, as part of providing easy access to all Yukoners, regardless of technological capacity or comfort level with giving their information over the phone, et cetera — providing that easy access to bookings for a COVID vaccination appointment is, I think, important. I would hope the Premier and staff would agree.

I would just flag that and hope that they will address that so that, if there are Yukoners in the future who call wanting to book an appointment, as did my constituent, they are able to find some way to accommodate that. Then, of course, at the time when they actually arrive, understandably at that point in person, they will have to present their health care card.

The next — actually, I'll just turn it back to the Premier at this point.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** So again, there are three different questions really. Lot development was mentioned. As the member opposite keeps on saying that he doesn't get enough information, I have to make sure that I give all of the

information, and again, it's a great opportunity to dig down deeper into the Department of Health and Social Services when it comes to FTEs, and also, the departments of Community Services and of Energy, Mines and Resources will be presenting here in Committee of the Whole, but I will continue to give more information to the member opposite.

Again, in that 2021-22 first supplementary estimate, proposed funding for those 87.3 FTEs — more information — social workers and mental health workers through the territory to support the needs of individuals. We have screeners, we have greeters, and we have sanitizers who have to work in public facilities, such as the vaccine clinics, long-term care homes, and the shelter, to ensure that folks are properly masked and free of COVID-19 symptoms and to provide a high level of cleaning and sanitation, above and beyond the amazing work that these folks do, on a daily basis, without a pandemic.

Domestic aids and home support workers assist individuals in their homes by providing services to support those in self-isolation or who are unable to move safely in the community among others.

Immunizers and immunization support workers — they are absolutely key to the successful and efficient ongoing operations of the programming. But it's not, as the member opposite says — well, he says that he understands that there are more people needed for vaccinations — Team Balto, Team Togo, Team Fox — but it's more than that, as I'm outlining here.

It's extremely important that we have the testers to deliver the critical information and the screening of tests as well.

There are other operations, such as: communications staff to ensure that Yukoners receive important information from the office of the chief medical officer of health; IT staff to support the Panorama health system and the vaccination system; finance staff to ensure that the costs are managed in an accountable manner; administrative support, as well, to the vaccination clinic; and so much more.

Again, for general debate, I hope that the member opposite is satisfied that, in a general debate situation, we're giving a lot of information specific to the departments. If they want to question why we need this level of support to make sure of the health and safety of Yukoners through this pandemic, I would say that this is extremely important work. I would say that it has worked.

Compared to other jurisdictions, we've had to have a lesser amount of restrictions. To be able to have restaurants opened this summer, to not to have to shut down schools last year while other jurisdictions were grappling with many more restrictive situations, that was a lot of the good work done by the departments.

Again, all the way through this, we have been following the advice and recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. We will continue to do that. The opposition sounds like they are wavering on whether or not to support the most current recommendation from the chief medical officer of health, which I think it dangerous, but, at the same time, we will continue to do that. With that comes costs. Are we growing the government on a permanent basis with these jobs? No, these are



temporary positions. They are very important positions as well. We need to balance that.

I am going to go back a bit here to talk about — actually, I will stay in Health and Social Services for a second and address the most current question from the member opposite about how he or some of his constituents are finding it hard to get some of the information on the website. As he was speaking, I typed in “flu shot” into yukon.ca. Looking at the website now, Deputy Chair, I will just read through it. There are sections here about finding a flu shot clinic. It talks about why we are doing it at this particular time and how every person, six months of age or older, can get a flu shot. It explains — is it free? Yes, it explains that it is free for Yukon residents. The Yukon residence piece is very important. You are going to have to show your health card because we need to make sure that it is a service for Yukon residents.

If there is a specific concern about being on the phone versus in person, I will tell you what — the best thing to do is, if the member opposite can help us to casework this, give us some information about his constituent who is having some trouble, and we will walk that individual through this procedure with that specific concern. It is no problem at all. Just give us the contact information and we will make sure that this person gets his flu shot — and thank him for getting it.

The website goes on and says, “When can you get your flu shot?” It also states that some clinics are for those who are considered to be high risk. Some clinics are for the general population. It gives you a checklist about high risk, including seniors — people aged 65 or older. I am not sure if the member opposite’s constituent fits into one of those categories and maybe has some questions about whether or not they should go to the general clinic or some of those clinics that are considered for high risk. It then goes through how you can go to pharmacies. You don’t necessarily have to come to ours. There are pharmacies and opportunities here right online to book your appointments at Shoppers in the Qwanlin Mall or by booking your appointment at Shoppers on Main Street. It shows all of the times for all of these places. Again, as the member opposite mentioned, his constituent or person who reached out to him did know that there are phone lines to call.

You can book your appointments online. It goes through the communities as well — and not just Whitehorse — in alphabetical order — all available information online.

Also, there is what to expect as far as — you know, the flu clinics look different these days, during the pandemic. There might be a possibility of longer wait times; there might be screening for other illnesses or exposure to COVID-19, so there are other considerations. I think that the website is full of information here that is really pertinent to somebody who is preparing for and wanting to take the flu shot.

Last year we had a very successful inoculation session, and we hope that this year we are going to do even better.

There is also a section here about how to prepare for this year’s flu clinic and how to dress and be prepared to answer some screening questions. There is lots of great information here online and also e-mails and phone lines that you can reach out to. Again, if there are some specific concerns from the

member opposite or a constituent, please let your constituent know that we will absolutely casework his individual situation.

Deputy Chair, I am going to continue with answering some of the questions from the member opposite on land development. The Land Development branch recovers the cost of development through the lot sales and sets lot prices between market and development costs as per the *Lands Act* to keep them affordable. The development costs include the invisible infrastructure in a subdivision, such as all the buried work — the horizontal infrastructure there, the waste water, the storm water pipes, electrical, and the communications hardware. There is a lot that goes into this. It also includes the parts that make the subdivision feel like a community: roads, trails, parks, boulevards, and the detail on access to accessible curbs, low-light streetlights, and also traffic stops, traffic controls, and busing areas. There are also soft costs like planning, engineering, assessment, regulatory compliance, project management, and the list goes on.

When it comes to availability under the 2006 *Land Development Protocol* with the City of Whitehorse, YG and also the city have a mutual goal of maintaining a two-year inventory of lots within the city — a mutual goal. With high lot demand, the Land Development branch continues to strive to meet that goal.

The City of Whitehorse is now targeting the summer of 2022 for releasing their new official community plan, their OCP. That is extremely important work and will determine priority areas for residential, commercial, and industrial development here in this great city.

The City of Whitehorse also has a transportation study underway, with a March 2022 target for completion date.

The completion of both of these municipal planning and design processes is extremely essential for our branch, for Land Development, to further its development work, working with OCPs, working with the City of Whitehorse.

In the rural communities, Land Development is working toward achieving and maintaining a mixed inventory of urban and country residential, commercial/industrial lots. The rural land development program was transferred from Energy, Mines and Resources to Community Services a couple of years ago, in July 2018. The program now resides within the Land Development branch. We are trying to get those two departments together.

As part of this transfer, the branch continues to build on its range of work that Community Services is doing in the communities to strengthen and enhance the rural land development program. The Land Development branch is working to reframe that rural lands development program to support communities from the early staging plans right through to the development of lots and subdivisions to ensure a sustainable supply of land for residential, for commercial, and for industrial development.

This takes time, as they are working with individual communities on their land development priorities. Working government to government to government during the pandemic — and trying to be respectful of the recommendations of chief medical officers of health and to respectfully travel through

communities — adds a whole other level of burden, but I think the Land Development branch has done an exceptional job to be able to work with partner governments.

Some municipal project deliverables this year would include, in my hometown of Dawson — Dawson is determining how to advance the north end residential project after the 2021 landslide risk study identified a higher than previously known risk in that area, with the Yukon government committing to the design and the implementation of a monitoring system. We are working with the City of Dawson to advance the project, which includes installation of a monitoring and early-warning system.

I have to give a shout-out to the outgoing mayor, who basically loses his job in about a day. Wayne Potoroka did exceptional work on this. There are an awful lot of technical details, an awful lot of studies, and it has taken some time to develop that north end, which is frustrating, but his ability to work with us and to be completely informed and to have an excellent opinion on the ground floor, in the community, working with our stakeholders, and also bringing to the table, on different projects — not just the north end — a brain trust of individuals in the community who have had some historical knowledge or information to share.

That type of community-to-community, government-to-government work is extremely critical in solving some not-very-simple problems.

Also, in Dawson City, two urban lots will be released this fall, and an industrial lot parcel, targeting private sector development, will be released this fall or spring. A detailed review of mainly city-owned vacant lots was completed, which is great; however, the municipality determined that none were suitable for reconfiguration on a short-term release.

There is a master plan for the Dome Road, which should be finalized this fall, following YESAB, and detailed design work which could see tendering for off-site work on phase 1 lots to go out as early as late spring or summer 2022. That's some exciting work there. We also have Dredge Pond 2 planning, which will advance in early fall and wrap up in the spring. This design and tender of early phase lots is targeted for release in the fall of 2022.

The City of Dawson council redirected commercial infill 1 and 2 parcels to be partially residential, which will trigger an OCP amendment. That's going to take a little bit more time, but these parcels are on hold until this work has been advanced by the city. Hopefully, after the elections, we will have some folks to chat with on that, very quickly.

Moving on to Carmacks, the Freegold Road country residential lots are being prepared for release this fall. One or two of the five lots may be held back temporarily because of heritage findings. A small urban development tender is being prepared for release, and that's for early 2022.

Planning work for future residential and industrial parcels and some joint planning with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation will advance in 2022, and that's guided by the village and also Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation interests. In Keno, there is feasibility assessment work that has been completed for potential lots, but they are on hold due to some regulatory issues.

The Town of Watson Lake has approved the Land Development branch work plan of land development projects. The branch is working through Liard First Nation consultation issues, interests, and broader corporate issues.

The Land Development branch hopes to tender the Frances Lake serviced urban lot development in the fall this year to advance construction next year — 2022. The Thompson Drive and other country residential lot developments — Garden Creek industrial planning — will advance as soon as LFN consultation issues are resolved. Summer or spring 2022 tenders — that's the tentative target.

I'll move on to Mayo. Four to five of the 10 vacant upgraded lots will be released for the fall 2021 lottery to see how well they sell. The Land Development branch is hoping to initiate with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun joint or parallel planning of a country residential development on the upper bench above Mayo in early 2022.

Haines Junction — Land Development branch completed feasibility work on five parcels identified through the Village of Haines Junction OCP work. The branch will be working with them to develop a land development work plan and initiate short-term land development planning. The branch will also work on a vacant lots assessment tool. They will identify urban lots that could be released or reconfigured and released.

Moving on to Faro, the Land Development branch is working with the Town of Faro to service and possibly release three residential lots in the fall 2021 lottery. The branch will be working with them once they start their OCP work to identify future development parcels.

I'm going to speak, for the rest of my time here, on partnering with First Nations. It's extremely important as we see movement on their ability to offer housing for all folks. The Land Development branch is partnering with First Nations and providing dedicated supports to help them meet the growing housing needs for their citizens and providing economic development opportunities. It's exploring roles and responsibilities and next steps to support First Nations in developing their lands, which is pretty exciting work.

The branch and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, for example, are nearing the completion of a joint planning of the Range Point Road residential area in Whitehorse.

The branch is constructing the Yukon government's half of the Teslin Tlingit Council-YG Lone Tree country residential project. YG's half will provide 23 lots and provide the main highway access, the road through to the Teslin Tlingit Council side. The Teslin Tlingit Council side will provide an additional — around 17 lots for their citizens.

Construction is nearly complete on the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Marshall Creek subdivision infrastructure expansion. It will extend water and sewer services from Haines Junction to provide more than 30 new lots for Champagne and Aishihik First Nations citizens and some services to current residents on their land.

The Land Development branch initiated planning with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation for adjacent YG and Carcross/Tagish First Nation parcels. There is a bit of a hold there. The Yukon government parcel is undergoing an

assessment because of hydrocarbon contamination. The branch is trying to advance planning on a second access route into Carcross.

Also, the Land Development branch this year has initiated planning and discussions with Selkirk First Nation, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. As well, the branch will continue discussions with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kluane First Nation to identify and advance their land development needs.

So, lots going on — we talked up front in our second supplementary speech about some of the delays and some of the work that is happening writ-wide right across the Yukon, so I wanted to provide the members opposite with a brief summary of all of the different projects and opportunities for land development, not only in Whitehorse, but in the rural communities as well. I am happy to answer questions from the members opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** A question that my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, asked the Premier yesterday that he didn't get an answer to — I will give the Premier a chance again today to answer it.

When did the Premier find out about the sexual abuse that occurred at Hidden Valley school?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Deputy Chair, we have been asked lots of questions from the members opposite. We have been responding, saying that — as opposed to the Yukon Party being judge and jury — we are making sure that we are going to provide all of the evidence, all of the information necessary, to the independent reviews. The minister has been on her feet several times talking about three different reviews. We know that the Yukon Party is seeding a narrative of these reviews being — I won't even use the word that I was going to use. But again, we are launching independent reviews. They are casting aspersions on the independent reviewer. We have a child and youth advocate who is also working on an independent review — and the RCMP as well.

The minister has said countless times in the Legislative Assembly that all the pertinent information that is necessary for the kids, the students, the parents, and the school community will come out in those three reviews. We will be providing information to all three.

The Yukon Party has already decided what has happened. They have already decided the situation. We are going to do the independent reviews. The Minister of Education has launched an independent review with our government's response to this incident, as well as internal policies and protocols to respond to incidents of this kind. Again, this review is going to involve parents and guardians, as well as partner agencies and organizations, with the goal of understanding what occurred and to make improvements that ensure that our education system is protecting the kids, protecting the students, and supporting the school community as well. This is the commitment that the Minister of Education made directly to the parents of Hidden Valley Elementary School.

This is an absolutely devastating situation for everyone involved. My minister has acknowledged that mistakes have been made and that there has been a breakdown in trust between

families, the Hidden Valley Elementary School, and the Department of Education. They have both apologized to parents and the school community. Conversations are ongoing. The independent reviews are happening as we speak. The minister has said, time and time again, that this is where the information will flow.

The Yukon Party, as judge and juror, have already made their decisions about what has happened. We on this side of the Legislative Assembly disagree with the Yukon Party on that. We are absolutely committed to rebuilding the trust and strengthening our education system. This is extremely important work, and this is exactly what we need to see to answer all the questions that the parents and teachers have to make sure that we move this forward and strengthen our education system.

**Mr. Cathers:** I asked a simple question. I didn't get an answer. People have a right to ask when ministers knew and what they did when they found out and to expect an answer. The Premier read from his talking points, but he didn't answer the very simple question that I asked and that my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, asked him yesterday.

When did the Premier find out about the sexual abuse that occurred at Hidden Valley school? It's a simple question. Just answer the question.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, he can ask the question over and over again. I'm going to continue to answer the question the way I'm going to answer the question, which is that there are three independent reviews happening. We are going to absolutely respond to those independent reviews. We are going to make sure that all the questions are answered. The minister spoke today about a timeline of early 2022, and that process will determine what has happened and what we can do to fix things.

Scott Sheppard has already talked about the RCMP's involvement, to begin with, and some of the mistakes that were made there — all of this is going to go into the process. We do know that there is court action right now. We know that our Attorney General is being extremely considerate of that process. The ultimate goal is to make sure that we don't in any way interfere, but, at the same time, the questions that will be asked in the independent reviews will be answered by our team.

I can talk about the Minister of Education's response — which has launched the independent review. Members opposite are going to continue to make it seem like that review is — what were the words that they used today, Deputy Chair? — “smokescreen” — independent reviewer from away, not from here — again, casting aspersions about that particular individual. I think that approach is very interesting, but we believe that the best thing to be done is to have the three independent reviews, including by the Child and Youth Advocate.

So, all questions will be answered, and the Yukon Party has already, as judge and juror, decided what has happened, connecting dots that are not necessarily connectable, but the review will involve parents, guardians, as well as partner agencies and organizations, with the goal of understanding what occurred and to make improvements and ensure that the

school and students are protected — and supporting the school community.

**Mr. Cathers:** I asked a simple question; I did not receive an answer. People, Yukoners, have a right to ask when ministers knew and what they did when they found out about it. They have a right to expect an answer from their elected representatives.

So, I will ask again. It's a very simple question: When did the Premier find out about the sexual abuse that occurred at Hidden Valley school?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We can do this all day — no problem. Again, all questions will be answered in an independent review. We will work hand in glove with the independent reviewer, the Child and Youth Advocate, and also the RCMP, who are doing their own individual review.

We will answer the questions in these processes. The Yukon Party has already decided. They are making a narrative, and they are connecting dots that are not connectable. Again, we will make sure that these questions get answered through the appropriate streams. The Minister of Education has said time and time again how important this independent review is to making sure that there are policies and protocols that will respond to incidents involving students in these types of situations for all of our schools so we can move forward and make sure we have better access and better policies.

Again, this review will involve parents and guardians, as well as partner agencies and organizations. We will fully participate with this independent review. We will answer all questions in this process. Very early in the new year, as folks work through this, all of the answers that will ultimately — for the goal of making sure that we protect our students and that we have a better school system. That is the important work. We are going to do that through the independent review. The Yukon Party can continue to put their narrative out. We disagree with them completely, but we will be open, accountable, and transparent to the independent reviewer. We will absolutely make sure that the school system is better as a result of those actions.

**Mr. Cathers:** People have a right to ask ministers when they knew and what they did when they found out. They have a right to expect a truthful answer. That is about the principle of ministerial accountability.

The Premier is attempting to suggest that we are framing a narrative, but again, as I have done prior to this afternoon and as my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, did yesterday — I am asking the Premier a very simple question, and Yukoners have a right to hear the answer from him. The question is this: When did the Premier find out about the sexual abuse that occurred at Hidden Valley school?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Just because the member opposite doesn't like my answer, it doesn't mean that we are not answering the question.

All of these questions will be answered through the appropriate procedures. We are here in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, having general debate on the supplementary budget. I see that the opposition has no real interest in talking about the actual budget, but I do. I have an interest in making

sure that our school system is safer for our children as well. That is way we have the independent review, and that is also why we have the time in the Legislative Assembly today to talk about the supplementary budget.

The supplementary budget — the 2021-22 estimates forecast — increasing money spending — I don't know if the member opposite, the critic for Finance, wants to talk about this or not, but we will continue to talk about the budget and we will continue to answer their question on the Hidden Valley school. If the member opposite doesn't like the answer, okay, but we believe that the Yukon Party is forming a narrative, and really, we believe the most important thing is to make sure that we are transparent and open with the independent reviewer. We're working hand in glove with the Child and Youth Advocate. These processes will get the answers.

That's the answer to the question. The member opposite can continue to ask questions. The Attorney General has been very clear about ongoing legal actions that are happening, and how very careful we are to make sure that we don't impede that — again, answering the question.

But the member opposite doesn't like that. So, if he's going to continue to ask that question over and over again, I have given him that answer. The minister has given that answer countless times, and we will continue to give that answer, even though the member opposite doesn't like it. That's fine, but I will remind him about why we are here today: to talk about the supplementary estimates; to talk about the increase of \$72.2 million in spending appropriations; the \$58.4 million in O&M spending, with an offset increase of \$37.1 million in recovery; to talk about the \$31.8 million in capital spending, with an offset increase of \$12.3 million in recoveries; to continue to talk about the 70-percent rate of recoveries for spending that illustrates the collaborative approach with the federal government and how that is paying dividends — they don't want to hear about that.

Once recoveries net out, we expect an overall increase of \$22.8 million in new spending. Revenues are also expected to decrease by \$10 million, mainly to reflect timing of the release of the lot sales, which I thought the member opposite was interested in. He started down that road. When I started answering the question, he pivoted and didn't want to talk about land and lot development anymore — to talk about the changes in the supplementary estimates, the revised forecast of a deficit of \$18.2 million.

I think that this is extremely important information that Yukoners would expect questions from the opposition on, as opposed to asking the same question over and over again and not liking our answer but still asking that question over and over again.

A large portion of the increase in spending that we talked about to Yukon continues to be that response to COVID-19 for the safety and well-being of Yukoners. This includes continued vaccination and surge support. We talked about the FTEs that the member opposite was interested in earlier but has dropped off and they have changed their strategy. There is additional spending also for the local tourism sector to stay afloat with new economic recoveries. I don't think that we have heard one

question from the Yukon Party about the tourism industry this year — not one — or the mining industry for that matter, which is very interesting.

Thanks to the economic supports for this industry and the elimination of the public health measures, the industry is expecting to recover. Let's talk about the long-term plan for working in partnership with our tourism partners.

The supplementary estimates are also being extended into the aviation sector by providing funding to air carriers in order to maintain essential air services to the communities. Over \$11 million is included to support the response to the initial recoveries for the Southern Lakes flood costs. Like most emergency spending, they are difficult to forecast, and we have talked about that a bit too with the Wildland Fire Management and floods. The Leader of the Official Opposition asked if there was a new way of budgeting for that. We had a conversation.

I would like to talk as well in the budget about the almost \$10 million included in the early learning childcare initiative, as we move forward toward a vision in which all children have access to affordable, high-quality learning and childcare opportunities. Again, this is 100-percent recoverable from Canada. I am glad that we had a little of a conversation about this earlier, Deputy Chair. I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition was confused as to when that was budgeted, where that money came from, and how that related to CASA. He admitted that he was mistaken on that, so I'm glad that we had a conversation on at least part of this budget.

On this side of the House, we would like to talk about the increases in capital expenditures, mainly for the Mayo-to-McQuesten transmission line and battery-grid projects, which are 100-percent recoverable. Also, there are modular classrooms at the Robert Service School, the Whitehorse housing complex at 4th and Jeckell, and the increase to the innovative renewable energy initiative funding program — all some very exciting, extremely interesting, and extremely important initiatives, programs, and policies. Normally, if we didn't get this information out, the opposition would say that we are not accountable or getting this information out. This is important Committee of the Whole work in general debate to talk about what is inside the budget.

The members opposite want to continue to ask a question in the Legislative Assembly for which we said: "Yes, these questions will be answered, and they will be answered through independent reviews, not through the judge and jurors of the Yukon Party."

Also, talking about other changes to capital, there are some really important initiatives of the expansion of the IHealth information network. There is also really important information about other O&M changes, including those cultural activities for children in and out of home care, the repairs of highway washouts, and funding for the Pride Centre as well.

There is lots of information in this budget, as you know, Deputy Chair. We need to get through general debate to be able to then have further conversations in those other departments, and also on the bills that we put forth, but I don't know when we are going to get to those. I guess, if we are going to continue to ask the same question over and over and the Yukon Party not

wanting to move on to this important work, that is okay. What I will do is continue to provide more information about the budget, about the bills, in Committee of the Whole, as the member opposite continues to ask the same question over and over.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, Deputy Chair, the Premier — like the Deputy Premier — suggests that people should just move on from this. Those were his exact words. He said we should move on.

I would remind the Premier that we are asking these questions on behalf of Yukoners who want answers from the Premier and the Deputy Premier. It comes down to the very principle of ministerial accountability — to answer the questions that the public is asking about what you knew, when you knew it, and what you did about it.

I would remind the Premier that the petition that I tabled, signed by close to 350 Yukoners, said this, in part. I am not going to read the full petition, but I will conclude with a key action part of it to remind the Premier — and I quote:

"... the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the..." — Deputy Premier — "... to clearly disclose to the public when she was made aware of the 2019 sexual assault at Hidden Valley Elementary School, and what direction she gave Department of Education officials — including any direction regarding communicating about this serious incident to parents."

Clearly the Premier doesn't want to answer the question, but that doesn't mean that he shouldn't answer it. The question is simple: When did the Premier find out about the sexual abuse at Hidden Valley Elementary School?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I will answer the question the same way I have answered the question in the past. Again, if the member opposite doesn't like the answer, I must apologize to him. It's not about moving on; it's about moving on to the independent review. It's not about not answering the question; it's saying we will answer all questions that are pertinent to the independent review.

The members opposite can say what they would like to say about where we want to be. Where we want to be is we want to make sure we have a safe, secure, healthy place for our students to go to school. That is extremely important to us. We want to make sure that the independent review does the good work. What the Yukon Party wants to do is cast aspersions on this independent review: calling it names, making it seem like this is not what it actually is, which is answering the questions, getting to the bottom of all these issues, making sure that the parents and the school community all have the answers and ultimately a better school experience.

The members opposite can make it sound like, because we are not answering their specific question here in the Legislative Assembly directly about timelines, that means a whole bunch of other things. That simply is not the case, Deputy Chair. I have dedicated my life to educating the citizens here in Yukon. It has been one of the greatest opportunities of my life, not only being a math teacher, but having your door open after work as well. I couldn't imagine working in a larger centre somewhere else. The small school community is extremely important to

me. It is extremely important to the ministers. I have two ministers — both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Justice — who are extremely strong leaders, and they have dedicated their lives as well to advancing justice in our territory and promoting equity in our society. These are two of the strongest leaders I know in this community, and I have ultimate confidence in them.

Again, we will continue to answer the questions from the member opposite by saying that these appropriate questions will be answered in appropriate due time through the appropriate channels. The Yukon Party obviously wants to create a narrative. We disagree with their narrative. We will know very soon — in early 2022 — through a response from this independent review, focusing in on the parents and the guardians, as well as those partner agencies and organizations, with the goal of understanding what occurred and making improvements and ensuring that the education system is protecting students and supporting the school community. That is important to us.

What also is important in the democratic process is to use our time in the Legislative Assembly to talk, in Committee of the Whole, in general debate, about the supplementary budget.

I will continue, as the Minister of Finance, the Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office, to speak on the important issues around the budget — for example, our interim fiscal and economic outlook. I don't think that we're going to get a lot of conversation or questions about that in opposition, because, as a community, as a territory, things are looking good in the Yukon, but the Yukon Party doesn't want to talk about that.

This update has expectations for the Yukon's finances, for the economy, and its updates from the March fiscal and economic outlook. The 2021-22 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* is forecasting, as I said in the past, an overall increase of the \$72.2 million in spending in both operation and maintenance and in capital, with \$49.4 million in recoveries. A large portion of the O&M increase is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as we talked about, driven primarily by public health care measures, as well as economic and financial relief targeted to the tourism sector — an extremely important part of our economy and our culture here in the Yukon.

Approximately \$11 million in additional spending is to support the response and the initial recovery of the recent Southern Lakes flooding to ensure the safety of Yukoners — extremely important — and almost \$10 million being included to support for families accessing early learning and childcare programs. You would think that maybe the members opposite would talk about — have a conversation about — two different approaches — where the Yukon Party was going to campaign on a different approach to early childcare and how that approach would have mirrored up with a federal approach, which works extremely well to develop spaces, training, education — not just money, a tax credit, or a cheque into a pocket where we're not really sure if the actual pedagogy, the development of this extremely important profession, came alongside with the reduction in cost to parents.

We talked a bit about the index of well-being and how important that was to our policies when we developed our universal childcare position.

We talked a bit on the floor of the Legislative Assembly in the last seven days about the GDP growth. So, just to reiterate there, the estimated growth of 1.1 percent in 2020, and the real gross domestic product is forecasted to grow by six percent in 2021 and also by 8.1 percent in 2022.

Higher mineral production is a predominant driver of growth in both years — a successful rollout of vaccinations being key to allowing for the lifting of restrictions on capacity and social distancing. All of this has weighed on the economy, and so to be able to remove the internal border restrictions and to loosen those international restrictions to support the forecast of a recovery in local tourism activity is extremely important. That's extremely key. I didn't get any questions yet from the members opposite on any of that.

With visitation expected to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2023, we've been having some great conversations with colleagues and peers in Alaska, talking about tourism initiatives between Haines, Skagway, and Whitehorse. Governor Dunleavy is extremely excited to see the opening up of borders. We, of course, have concerns of the health and safety of Yukoners at every turn. We're working hand in glove with the chief medical officer of health to make sure that what we move forward on is based on those recommendations.

I heard some interesting comments on the radio from both opposition parties about whether or not we should be following that advice. That's interesting. I think that the reason why we are where we are is because of that advice. I remember the very first days of COVID and Dr. Elliot and I going out and having to cancel the Arctic Winter Games. At that time, it was very interesting. It was very hard; it was one of the hardest things that I've done. But we did know afterward how extremely important that was — how extremely important that was to the health and safety —

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

**Deputy Chair:** Order. The Premier has the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. I don't know why this is a laughing matter, but I guess the Yukon Party thinks this is a laughing matter.

But no, this is extremely important. How we move hand in glove with the chief medical officer of health is indicative to the health, not only of our citizens, but also our economy. The budget in front of us is a reflection of where we are in time, compared to other jurisdictions — where we are with our forecasts, where we are with our financial methods, but also our ability to use science as a determining factor as to how we move forward in a situation that is very unknown, not only in the Yukon, but in every jurisdiction. It is extremely important and pivotal to where we are, to the numbers on the pages here that the Yukon Party does not want to talk about.

We had a few hints of a conversation with the Yukon Party about universal childcare and the importance therein and, I guess, a little bit of confusion from the Yukon Party as far as when the election happened, when the budgeting happened, amendment when CASA happened. I'm glad the Yukon Party

now understands and apologized for not knowing the difference between those things. Earlier there were questions that were related to that early learning and childcare on the mains and the supplementary estimates, so to be able to take some time to explain answers that I gave there — again, prior to announcing and implementing our universal childcare program in the spring, that childcare service was administered out of Health and Social Services.

If members opposite want to dig down further on this, then the Minister of Health and Social Services will be here to answer any of their questions, but I can give a general overview of that. When this responsibility was shifted to Education, for example, the budget for childcare, which was approximately \$10.4 million, moved with it. When we announced the implementation of universal childcare for the 2021-22 fiscal year, an additional \$15 million was allocated to the Department of Education to fund those enhancements, which included substantial reductions in the amount that families pay for spots in the licensed childcare programs and enhanced funding for operators to enhance their operations and to pay for their early childcare educators.

This move followed through on a commitment that we made much earlier. If we can think back to July 2020, I announced that the Yukon would be moving to a universal affordable childcare system. This followed many months of consultation and engagement during 2018 and 2019 with First Nation governments, childcare operators, early childhood educators, families, and stakeholders to better understand the needs of children and families.

Also, during that summer, the index of well-being — every year becoming more specific to indicators that are Yukon-specific, as opposed to where the University of Waterloo started us off. We wanted to make sure that the indicators were more Yukon-specific — and then, during a pandemic, having the chief medical officer of health's team joining us with those indicators to really bolster an already excellent survey and analysis of where we are. It really did help augment all of this important work that was done with these departments.

As we know, as we fast-forward, this past summer, the federal government offered to enhance spending to the territories and provinces to support an early learning and childcare program. Our government was very pleased to sign on to two different agreements: an extension to the Canada-Yukon early learning and childcare agreement, and also to the new Canada-wide early learning and childcare agreement.

As I mentioned, these two agreements will be providing the Yukon with over \$54 million over the next five years. The amount being provided in the first year of 2021-22 is \$9.9 million in O&M funding and just over \$515,000 in capital funding. This matches the amounts that were being requested in the supplementary estimates and explains why these additional amounts are 100-percent recoverable. With the addition to the funding in the 2021-22 main estimates, this new funding allows for enhancements or expansions to existing programs and many new programs that contribute to that quality childcare programming. Examples of enhancements are things like more subsidized spaces, the support childcare

worker program, enhanced professional development for early childhood educators, and more funding for the Child Development Centre.

Deputy Chair, examples of programming that we have been able to initiate because of the federal agreement are things like the establishment of a quality and analytical framework; we were able to hire a statistical analyst and an early learning specialist and support First Nation minority language and non-profit centres, as well. We are very happy that the federal government shares our commitment to quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and childcare. It is extremely important.

Again, as we had the conversation the other day with the Leader of the Yukon Party admitting that he is kind of catching up on things about the dollars and values and how this program augmented or beefed up what we already had as initiatives, here are just a few of those examples of some of the things we were able to accomplish because of the federal government's commitments.

I think that there was a question about other funding, but I think that was basically a good response for the member opposite and questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition when they asked a question that was actually pertinent to the budget. The continuing questions over and over again is one method, for sure, of keeping a government to task on one topic, I guess, while maybe leaving some of their other obligations at bay, but again, we will continue to answer the questions of the member opposite that are specific to Hidden Valley, and our answers are very specific.

They are, again, that the independent review will answer all the questions. We will be working with them. We will be answering all of the questions that they present to us. The review is extremely important work. The Yukon Party is trying to make it seem like it is a smokescreen, which I think is just nonsense. I would hope that the members opposite would want this independent review to not be tarnished with their words, with their opinions, or with their approach to a very devastating situation, but I guess this is what we have come to learn as the MO from the Yukon Party.

I will leave it at that and let the member opposite, as opposed to speaking when I am speaking, have the opportunity to speak while I sit.

**Mr. Kent:** I want to turn the Premier's attention to page 18 of his *Interim and Fiscal Economic Update* from October of this year, with respect to the mineral outlook. The document states that, beyond 2021, the outlook for mineral production value is strong, with annual totals forecast to exceed \$1 billion in all years, out to 2025. Of course, this includes placer production, but I am curious if the Premier can tell us which hard rock mines are included in these forecasts.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I am happy to speak on the floor of the Legislative Assembly on a very important industry to Yukon, a very important industry to my community of Klondike. Just to put a little context in here, the member is speaking from the *Interim and Fiscal Economic Update* and talking about forecasts. I want to talk a little bit about production, as well, as I answer his question.

We have seen increased production from the Eagle Gold mine, along with production from Alexco Resource Corp., the Keno Hill project. Those are extremely important drivers of growth here in Yukon. I had the opportunity to pour the first gold bar in the Eagle Gold mine. It is quite a thing to sit there with over \$2 million of gold in one bar in your hands and not be tempted to run out the door. It's really something to be able to go from the first shovel in the ground with the Chief of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Simon Mervyn, and then all along the project, watching it go from a dirt-turning to an amazing, world-class production and, during the pandemic, see the operators really hone in on local hire.

Some of the conversations I have had with leadership in that community and also with the president and CEO of Victoria Gold about folks who, if they weren't working in their home community with Victoria Gold at the Eagle project, they were not really sure where they would have been during a pandemic. It is about self-worth and being able to provide and being in their own community. That is extremely important anecdotal information to an extremely important mining project and an extremely important industry.

The production from both those projects is now forecasted to fall below those expectations from their March forecasts. The *Interim and Fiscal Economic Update* talks about offset — that stronger than expected production of the Minto mine, as well.

I have to say, expectations for the placer gold production is 84,000 crude ounces. We have seen a massive injection into our economics in these rural communities. We have invested heavily into exploration. We also have seen the spinoff of this industry — the grocery stores in my community of Dawson are still open and providing. There are enough family members in rural communities to have the assets to have high schools. I have said this so many times on the floor of the Legislative Assembly: Without the placer industry, there wouldn't have been a high school in Dawson for me to be able to teach in.

It's an extremely important industry, knowing that, from the placer and quartz industries moving in through the pandemic and looking at the forecasts of the overall value of mineral production in 2021 at \$780 million, up \$240 million from the year before, but below those March forecasts of \$900 million — in this topsy-turvy world of pandemic, it's extremely important that we give a shout-out to the placer mining families who, again, I saw a massive effort from in those early days — March 2020 — getting folks safely from all over the world into those placer camps and working away in our economy; we're very grateful.

The member asked specifically in these forecasts: Which particular projects? Those projects would be Minto, Eagle Gold, and Keno Hill, as well. A strong pricing environment continues to be a positive for that local mining sector.

Gold and silver prices — they've maintained and remained elevated in 2021.

Copper prices have seen robust growth, as well, which is extremely important, as we see some other projects, hopefully, on the horizon. Increased production from the Eagle Gold project, along with the production from that Alexco Resource Corp. Keno Hill project, will be primary drivers of mineral

production over the medium term, while output from both mines is contributing to very notable year-over-year production growth in 2021 and production of both projects and forecasts to fall below those expectations from the March forecast, as I just mentioned, from the *Interim and Fiscal Economic Update*.

Also, lower production from the Eagle Gold and the Keno Hill mines will partially be offset by stronger production at the Minto mine. I know that the minister had a tour of the Minto mine just prior to getting into session, and it was wonderful to see the production there in between Pelly and Stewart. It's kind of my halfway mark when I'm driving home — the road into the Minto mine — sorry, I'm going the wrong way, in between Carmacks and Pelly.

The current forecast has a value of mineral production in 2021, as I mentioned, at \$780 million, and now that's up \$240 million — I'm going to say that again: 2021 was up \$240 million from 2022 and that's at \$780 million.

Again, the forecast that came out in March had that figure at around \$900 million. Beyond 2021, the outlook for mineral production value is strong, with annual totals forecast to exceed \$1 billion — that is \$1 billion, with a "B" — in all years out to 2025. Again, it is an extremely important industry. I have to say that the three mines that I spoke about, those companies know how important it is for strong relations with the First Nation governments and communities in which they are mining and that their mines affect. When it comes to the environment and when it comes to the economy, we believe that we have amazing corporate citizens with these companies. We are going to continue to promote mining that works hand in glove with First Nation communities, respects the environment, and contributes to our economy.

**Mr. Kent:** The Premier mentioned the three existing mines — Eagle Gold, Alexco's property, and the Minto mine. Obviously, he left out the Kudz Ze Kayah mine. It has not yet gone through the permitting process, so taking what the Premier said, those numbers will not be reflected in this forecast here.

I just want to take the Premier back to January 25 of this year, when he released the following statement. I will quote from a press release on that day, entitled "Statement from Premier Silver regarding the Kudz Ze Kayah Project". He said — and I quote: "I am very disappointed with the federal government's decision to refer the recommendation for the Kudz Ze Kayah Project back to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) Executive Committee for reconsideration."

The news release goes on to say: "Following four years of regulatory assessment, this decision creates unreasonable and unnecessary uncertainty for the proponent and sends a troubling signal. The Government of Canada absolutely needs to take steps to streamline these processes going forward to ensure greater clarity and certainty for the mining industry."

I will continue to read, quoting the Premier: "I have written to the Chair of YESAB to inform them that the Yukon government was prepared to accept the recommendations and issue a decision document. Unfortunately, due to the Government of Canada's decision, we cannot issue a decision document accepting the recommendations at this time.



“The Government of Yukon does not agree with the decision to refer the project back to the Executive Committee for reconsideration.

“We feel the YESAA process has resulted in a comprehensive review and analysis of the project, and the recommendation to proceed with additional mitigations and monitoring as reasonable.

“We remain committed to consulting on the project to ensure potential impacts to Kaska Nation’s asserted rights are addressed and we will continue to work with all parties to best ensure that we can continue to move forward.”

That closes off the press release, and again, this was dated January 25 of this year. We are almost 10 months later. October 25 will be Monday, so still no decision document for this project — extremely disappointing. I have to say that, when the Premier first put this statement out, I was encouraged, because I think that it may have been one of the only — if not the only time — he has ever stood up to his federal Liberal cousins with respect to anything for the Yukon. But soon afterward, of course, that hope turned to disappointment, as this project continued to drag on. Obviously, there was a YESAA process that had to be undertaken with the referral back, but after that, I believe the executive committee with four members was split on this, so the recommendation was put forward.

I wrote to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources this summer, asking him for an update on this project and the decision document, and I asked him if the Premier was still disappointed and still sticking to the words that he put out in January of this year, but the minister seemed to water down those expectations somewhat and really can’t commit to a sense of when we can anticipate some sort of a decision document coming with respect to this.

The federal Cabinet, I believe, will be sworn in on Monday of next week, and how much longer after that does this project proponent have to wait until there is a decision document? Does the Premier still not agree with the decision to refer the project? Is the Yukon government still willing to sign off and issue a decision document for this project, and a positive one, as he mentioned in this statement? Again, these were strong words from the Premier back in January of this year, but 10 months later, this project is still in limbo.

It is something that we understand is coming up at investment conferences, where the investment community is asking Yukon proponents: What’s going on in the Yukon? What’s going on with BMC’s Kudz Ze Kayah project? The company needs greater clarity and certainty, as the Premier mentioned. I’m curious if he, as the Minister of the Executive Council Office, which would issue decision documents on these executive committee screenings, can give this House an update on where we’re at with respect to the Kudz Ze Kayah project and a decision document.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Well, I would disagree with a lot of the premise of the member opposite’s question. Like, for example, while he was the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, mining was ending, and we, in our tenure so far, have had mines opening. I think that’s what the shareholders and the investors should know — also, some of the most successful placer and

quartz years, in recent history, compared to the member opposite’s track record, which was subpar at best.

Again, I take a little umbrage on the whole concept of that the only time that we disagreed with the federal government — that’s completely not true. One just has to look at how we fought for more flexibility on the Canadian health transfer with the THIF funding, whereas it was a lot more flexibility locally than the member opposite was ever able to get with their buddies in the Harper government, I guess.

One only has to look at the pandemic vaccinations. We had to fight to get their vaccinations schedule back on. We had to use the NACI, National Advisory Committee on Immunization, and their recommendations, and the conversations from the Council of the Federation, to get back on to the commitment from the federal government. I went on national news. I guess the member opposite was asleep that time. So, to say that this is the one and only time, that’s just not the case, but again, the Yukon Party has a different lens than most.

I’ll also say that, from the letter that he quoted, I stand by every single word — absolutely. I absolutely stand by every single word. We continue to consult with Kaska First Nation on the Kudz Ze Kayah project in a way that meets our obligations and supports our commitments to build a strong relationship with the First Nation — something that the members opposite didn’t get very well when they decided to change YESAA through Bill S-6. I don’t have enough time to talk about that debacle that set back the industry by 10 years, for sure.

And if anybody is talking about uncertainty in the Yukon, to have to get back on track with a memorandum of understanding and then into a mineral development strategy, all really because we’re trying to get some of the abeyance and potential litigation from the actions of the Yukon Party to move forward —

I see, you know, there are some comments from the supporters of the Yukon Party about the percentage of land that’s withdrawn from staking and kind of blaming it on land use planning, but really, a lot of that is because of the Yukon Party and in this particular part of Yukon, as well, when it comes to class 1 notification and the debacle that has created.

When we are talking about stakeholders, talking about industry, and talking about what we are going to say, we are going to talk about the most successful years of placer. We are going to talk about the exponential growth of our exploration through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources under our leadership. We are going to talk about three active quartz mines in the Yukon. That is what we are going to talk about. We are concerned that the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board executive committee issued a referral conclusion stating that the four participants were deadlocked in its consideration of the screening report. We are absolutely concerned. We are considering the results of the executive committee’s referral conclusion and screening report and collaboration with the federal decision bodies to reach a decision on that project. That is extremely important.

We have had countless conversations with the federal government. The member opposite might not have known, but I am sure he does. There was an election that really — when

you have a writ period, that is another delay. But we were concerned about the delays that existed in the process, for sure, but our government remains very supportive of responsible mineral resource development and remains committed to finding efficiencies in the assessment and regulatory review of projects.

We have talked with folks in the industry as well about the Water Board and the changes there. We have worked with the Water Board for a memorandum of understanding to redefine the role and responsibilities, the quasi-judicial nature of the Water Board, but also the obligation of the secretariat government employees to the government. We have been working on that process as well.

Again, we are extremely interested in making sure that our regulatory processes are adhered to. That is a lot of our conversation with the federal government. This particular screening report and the recommendations from YESAB have very comprehensive considerations for the environment. A huge onus will be on the proponent, but I have to say that BMC, from the early days — even when I was in opposition — Scott Donaldson and his team — I remember the president and CEO coming to me very early, when I wasn't even in government. I was an MLA, Third Party. They were conscientiously reaching out to all political parties, I assume. We had a conversation with them and were asking right up front — not promoting but asking, “What do I need to do?”

I guess I was already in slogan mode, or I was already in campaign mode, because I said that the most important thing is the environment and the economy. We want to make sure that First Nation governments, whose traditional territory is going to be affected — it is an extremely important conversation. You need to go and talk to the First Nations in those communities first and foremost before you talk with me.

That is extremely important. I believe that BMC, as a corporate citizen in Yukon, has done everything that they need to do, in my opinion, as far as going through the process, being very respectful, engaging, and being present in the Yukon. I think that this is extremely important to note here as well. It is also extremely important to note that the former minister, the current minister — the engagement not only with Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Economic Development and how we support the industry — we have gone international. We have had conversations with folks saying that it is great to not only see just the ministers, but the Premier coming to these events, whether they be on a financial basis or the exploration basis — that it means a lot to see that support.

The Kaska, in this particular consideration, have identified concerns, and we are continuing to seek a pathway forward. That is extremely important.

Also working with the northern project management officer, Fisheries and Oceans, and NRCan — they are decision bodies. They are decision bodies. The feds are in caretaker mode. We are going to continue to consult with the Kaska First Nation to meet our obligations — that is an extremely important part of this as well — but also with the federal government. We know that there is a new minister coming, again furthering the

delay. We need to know who to specifically directly speak to. That is extremely important.

Again, the member opposite is saying, “My goodness, what would we ever talk about? What would the stakeholders talk about?” Well, it has been an extremely successful five years under a Liberal government in the mining industry. Our economy is booming. I think that there is lots to talk about.

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier 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 Hon. 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 Acting Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*

**The following sessional paper was tabled October 20, 2021:**

35-1-21

*Yukon Arts Centre 2020/21 Annual Report (Pillai)*