



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 186

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, April 17, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Spring 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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

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
Lane Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 17, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Chair: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion has not been placed on the Notice Paper, as the motion was out of order: Motion No. 951, notice of which was given by the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, we have a few guests with us today. I can almost feel the House is tipping a little bit with all of these great guests. They are here for our tribute to the Fiddleheads.

Could we please welcome — and there may be more coming, so I will check with you later, Mr. Speaker — Nicole Prevost, Adelle Sternbergh, Chloe Sternbergh, Jinhee Park, Karen Baxter, Isla Tower, Sam Tower, Josh Tower, Jack Walcher-Wegmann, Simon Crelli, Keitha Clark, Chloé Cashaback St-Laurent, Camille Cashaback St-Laurent, Sandra St-Laurent, Zoe Isaak, Jen Moran, Colin MacDonald, Margaret MacDonald, Luka Krauzig, Sylvia Preto, Lisa Preto, Ava Faulkner, Jeff Faulkner, Nicole Morgan, and my lovely neighbours Juniper Middler and Anne Middler — if we could welcome them all, please.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Canadian Film Day

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the National Canadian Film Day, presented by Reel Canada.

Reel Canada's commitment to showcasing the rich diversity of Canadian cinema is evident in the events taking place not only across Canada but also around the world, with screening and festivities spanning almost every continent. Dubbed "CanFilmDay", this event is a coast-to-coast celebration of Canadian cinema and an opportunity to honour the rich tapestry of stories told by Canadian filmmakers.

Yukoners can celebrate National Canadian Film Day by attending events throughout the territory. In Dawson, the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture will have a free screening of *Enter the Drag Dragon* at 7:00 p.m. Here in Whitehorse, the Yukon Film Society invites attendees to enjoy four feature film

screenings on a pay-what-you-can basis. Additionally, four Yukon short films will also be screened alongside the feature films: *The Sandwich*, directed by Salix Madson; *Draw Us In*, directed by Julie Robinson; *Datran: Raven*, directed by Douglas Joe; and *Ungulatide*, directed by Jake Armstrong.

For those seeking more adventurous cinematic experiences, visit www.canfilmday.ca to download the checklist for the 2024 spotlight films watchlist and embark on a journey to discover the films in this year's theme "Films that A.I. could never make".

Cinema serves as a universal language uniting people from all walks of life to share in the joy of storytelling. Yukoners deserve to have spaces where they can participate in this aspect of worldwide culture.

I want to recognize the efforts of the Yukon Film Society and the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture for their dedication to offering accessible and enjoyable avenues for Yukoners to engage with stories from our territory, nation, and beyond. In addition, we are so fortunate to have a vibrant, local screen media industry supported by the Screen Production Yukon Association. Because of these individuals, our Yukon stories are being told.

Thank you to all of the organizers, sponsors, and volunteers for their efforts to bring the celebration to Yukon audiences. As we gather to watch and appreciate Canadian films, let us embrace the power of storytelling to unite, inspire, and ignite a sense of belonging. Here is to a bright future ahead where Canadian cinema continues to captivate audiences on the world stage. Happy National Canadian Film Day.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition on this National Canadian Film Day to give special recognition to the Yukon Film Society on their 40th anniversary for the work that they do to assist and promote local media art creation in the territory and so much more.

The Yukon Film Society is an incredible NGO with great big ambition. When the Yukon Theatre closed its door at the beginning of the pandemic, it was the Yukon Film Society that had a vision and determination to keep the iconic building going and give it a new direction. After a brief period without a movie theatre altogether, Yukoners are now treated with not only the biggest box office hits but access to some of the finest films in Canadian and international cinema.

The variety and the service are incredible. The society produces the annual Available Light Film Festival and runs Available Light on Demand, the curated home of outstanding and award-winning works by northern filmmakers. My family and friends always look forward every February to go to the Available Light Film Festival — what a treat to see northern, Indigenous, and international films in the dead of winter in Yukon.

When I was a kid growing up in the Philippines, films were the windows to my outside world. When I was preparing to emigrate to the Yukon, I was imagining Yukon would look like Vancouver.

The society showcases and supports artists and filmmakers working at all levels and is the partner organization in the Jenni House artist residence, offering studio space to artists from around the circumpolar north.

I encourage Yukoners to celebrate this day at the movies. There are a number of Canadian selections offered today — pay what you can.

I would like to give a special thanks to the entire board of directors for their continued dedication and passion for the film industry here in the Yukon. Thank you to the film society staff and all partners for what you bring to the industry and to the Yukon. You can support the society by purchasing a yearly membership for only \$10, which allows you a discount on Yukon Theatre tickets and Yukon Film Society film screenings, including the Available Light Film Festival and Available Light Cinema.

Congratulations on 40 years and a continued job well done. Here's to National Canadian Film Day.

Salamat po.
Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to National Canadian Film Day.

Here in the Yukon, we are lucky to have a thriving film industry. Thank you to the Screen Production Yukon Association and Yukon Film Society for their work in building the industry and supporting filmmakers. Whether it's gear rentals, training, mentorship, or networking, these organizations provide amazing opportunities that open up the possibility of filmmaking to a wide audience.

I also want to thank the filmmaking community who, in my experience, are so generous with their time and expertise and so willing to offer advice and help to others.

I also want to talk about the Yukon Film Society's work on the Yukon Theatre. When this beautiful and iconic building was in danger of being torn down, they stepped in to preserve it, and they did so much more than preserve it; they have made it into a community space — a place to watch everything from the most recent blockbusters to hidden gems. Whitehorse is richer, more creative, and more fun because of it, so thank you.

Happy National Canadian Film Day, everyone.
Applause

In recognition of the Fiddleheads

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Fiddleheads, which I would like to dedicate to the memory of Joe Loutchan. I would like to begin by welcoming Jasper Caudle, whom we didn't get to introduce earlier — so, welcome.

In 1998, Trish Barclay had a vision to establish a confidence-building outlet for youth to express themselves creatively through song and performance. For 25 plus one years, this rotating cast of young maestros has been plucking and bowing their way into the hearts of audiences across the Yukon and Canada.

The Fiddleheads is a collaboration and supportive incubator where budding musicians and performers take the

stage, learn from mentors, and hone their craft. As numerous talented Fiddleheads alumni can attest, over the years, the group has become a beloved and respected fixture of the Yukon arts scene. From community tours and celebrations, outdoor concerts under the midnight sun, cozy winter gatherings, no venue is too big or too small or, well, too unorthodox.

In their 25 plus one years, the Fiddleheads have rocked barn dances, concert halls, living room shows, school gymnasiums, kitchen parties, parades, and on a boat. Just last week, the group travelled to Vancouver Island to represent the Yukon at the West Coast Youth Fiddle Summit.

Thanks in part to their "Stradivarian" reputation, the Fiddleheads, along with its esteemed Gwich'in fiddler Boyd Benjamin, are proud to be bringing Canada's national fiddle competition to the north for the very first time. This August, the Fiddleheads will host the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Competition, featuring the crème de la crème of fiddle players from across Canada. The Canadian Grand Masters has been a launching pad for Juno and Canadian folk music award winners for 30 years. As if that's not enough, at the same time, the Fiddleheads will host a Pan-Northern Youth Fiddle Summit, bringing together some 100 youth fiddlers from across Canada's north to catch the grand masters and share tunes, traditions, and techniques. Leading up to these events, the Fiddleheads will be collaborating with the youth fiddle groups from the territories to create and perform a body of work that represents northern experiences through fiddling. It will be a festive fiddling fiesta for all Yukoners.

In rising today to acknowledge this wonderful organization, we pay tribute to all of the performers, board members, mentors, organizers, and volunteers past and present. I would like to give a personal shout-out to artistic director Keitha Clark and past president Anne Middler for their passion and dedication in recent years.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating the Fiddleheads for all the joy that they have given us over these 25 plus one years. Cheers to the melody makers, the young at heart, and old souls. By the way, Mr. Speaker, if this tribute whets your appetite to hear the Fiddleheads play, you are in luck, as they are performing at the Yukon Arts Centre tonight at 7:00 p.m.

The Yukon government salutes the Fiddleheads, the red-hoodied pride of the Yukon.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Fiddleheads, an amazing group of fiddling youth under the direction of Keitha Clark.

The Fiddleheads were founded by Trish Barclay in 1998, bringing Yukon youth together for 26 years to foster the love of fiddling. The Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Competition will be heading north for the first time in August. This will coincide with the Pan-Northern Youth Fiddle Summit, bringing together youth fiddlers from across the north to learn and play together. What an incredible opportunity for these young

musicians to meet new friends, showcase our beautiful territory, and compete right here at home.

Fiddling has a long history here in the Yukon. Archie Linklater, a Scottish-born man living in Old Crow in the very early 1900s, Mr. Speaker, married a Gwich'in woman, Katherine Netro. He brought with him a small piece of his own heritage — the fiddle — and helped the beautiful art of fiddling gain popularity throughout the Yukon. So, I would like to give a special thanks to other incredible musicians who have shared their love for the fiddle with us over the years: Peter Menzies, Keitha Clark, Boyd Benjamin, Ben Charlie, Harold Routledge, and Joe Loutchan — just to name a few. These individuals and, like I said, so many more musicians have contributed so much through their music.

I would also like to put a shout-out and a thank you to Ken Mason and Whitehorse Toyota for ensuring that fiddling greatness continues to be a major part of the Yukon tradition by bringing us the Rendezvous Fiddle Show year after year.

I would also like to highlight that we have some young Fiddleheads in my community of Haines Junction who are in school today. They play at the concerts at home, the Kluane Bluegrass Festival, and — one of our favourites for the last couple of years — they have been playing *O Canada* at our Remembrance Day ceremonies.

When I was just about to read this, that Charlie Daniels song popped into my head; you all know the one I am talking about. So, I want to thank all the Fiddleheads who are here today and to all of you who work so hard to keep the beautiful art of fiddle alive and well in the Yukon.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I am delighted to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Fiddleheads. I first encountered Fiddleheads when I was just starting music lessons. I had graduated from my practice violin made out of a Kleenex box, known as a “boxolin”, but I hadn’t gotten as far as *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* yet. I was in need of a little inspiration, a little convincing that this was what the cool kids did, and that is when I first encountered Fiddleheads. I can still remember that first Fiddleheads show I saw. It told the stories of ghosts rising out of their graves to play fiddle tunes together. I remember being wowed by the music and the story. It was such a joyful show, full of creativity and energy, and what impressed me the most was that it was all kids and teenagers. I thought that maybe one day I could do that too; I better start practising. As it turned out, I switched to cello and never did join the Fiddleheads, but I did get to grow up alongside many of them, cheering at their shows and joining the gaggle of kids united by our love of music.

As with all long-standing creative endeavours, Fiddleheads has gone through many iterations over the years, through many incredible directors and many talented and enthusiastic participants. What has always been there, and is still there today, is a love for music — fiddle music in particular — and a whole lot of fun.

Music lessons can sometimes be a bit of a solitary experience, practising for hours at home, but for many of us,

music comes the most alive when we can make it together with others. There is many an adult musician out there who might not have stuck with it if it wasn’t for Fiddleheads, and that is an incredible accomplishment.

So, I want to give a huge thank you to all of the people who make Fiddleheads happen: the directors, the parents, the volunteers, and most of all the amazing fiddlers. Thank you for sharing your music with us. I can’t wait until this August when the Yukon will be hosting the Pan-Northern Youth Fiddle Summit and the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Competition. Tickets are already on sale, so don’t wait.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter to the MLA for Whitehorse Centre regarding concerns with homelessness in the Yukon.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today the board/authority and First Nation authorized course requirements and procedures guidebook, updated in 2023.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today 15 letters to chiefs and councils, including one to Grand Chief Johnston, with regard to Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, and I have e-mail communication between me and the director of education for the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation between the dates of March 4 and April 3.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 23

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

I have for presentation the following petition to the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT the rising cost of electricity and unexpected jumps in people’s power bills is increasing financial hardship during the ongoing affordability crisis;

THAT electricity bills are complex to read, and that multiple riders containing costs for both Yukon Energy Corporation and ATCO Electric Yukon are not clear and transparent;

THAT political decisions made by the current Government of Yukon have resulted in tens of millions of dollars in unnecessary spending by Yukon Energy Corporation; and

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon Government to take the following actions:

(1) End the reliance by Yukon Energy Corporation on 22 rental diesel generators, and install new dependable generation capacity to fill that gap;

(2) Ensure that future political direction to the Yukon Government and its corporations, Yukon Energy Corporation and its parent corporation Yukon Development Corporation, doesn't continue to drive up the cost of electricity with unnecessary high-cost studies, inefficient projects, and expensive projects that add unreliable generation capacity to the grid while needing diesel generators to provide backup power;

(3) Urge the Yukon Utilities Board to require ATCO Electric Yukon and Yukon Energy Corporation to provide clearer information to customers on their power bills, including moving away from the use of multiple complex riders and customer charges; and

(4) Work with both ATCO Electric Yukon and Yukon Energy Corporation to manage the growth of electrical demand, and seek solutions to prevent more power rate increases.

This petition was signed by 170 individuals.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the release of 136 new lots in Whistle Bend phase 7.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports increased funding provided to Sport Yukon to enable the organization to prepare for upcoming major games and launch the sport enhancement fund.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to improve the ditches and drainage on Five Mile Road.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the immediate return of the full report done by Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd. prepared for the Government of Yukon regarding the location options for École Whitehorse Elementary School on the Takhini Educational Land Reserve.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Northern Community Land Trust on the opening of their homebuyer application process for the permanently affordable housing project known as Project 1096 in Whistle Bend.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Federal infrastructure funding

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, now that the federal budget has been introduced in Ottawa, Yukoners are taking stock of what this means for us. What was notable for the Yukon communities was that there was no new infrastructure program that would succeed the Investing in Canada Infrastructure program, otherwise known as ICIP. The budget did re-announce the news from last year that the current ICIP fund would simply be extended for the next 10 years but no new money would be added. Unfortunately, here in the Yukon, we have already allocated 100 percent of our ICIP money.

What does this lack of new infrastructure money from the federal government mean for Yukon municipalities and rural communities that have important projects that are currently unfunded?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, it's really a pleasure this afternoon to talk about all the work that this government has done investing in Yukon communities from the north to the south to the east to the west. We have invested in every single community in the territory and made strategic investments to make sure that lives are better for Yukoners. Yukoners are seeing more recreation centres. They are seeing better roads. They are seeing investments in their airports. They are seeing investments in their fire halls. They are seeing investments in housing. We have spent strategically to make sure that Yukoners' lives are better and we're going to continue to invest in Yukoners.

I was just talking to the minister of highways this morning and he noted that our spending was 40-percent recoverable from the federal government this year and we'll be recovering close to that next year. We are going to continue to invest in Yukoners to make sure that they have the best lives they possibly can in this territory.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, the question that I asked was about the lack of new infrastructure funding and how that is going to affect our municipalities and rural communities with some of the projects that are currently unfunded.

Last week, my colleague asked about the new Canada housing infrastructure program that was announced by Canada, and the Premier did say that he thought it was inadequate. Based on what we have seen, we agree with the Premier's assessment. The \$5 billion that is set aside under the CHIP for provinces and territories is planned to be spread over 10 years. This means that, each year, only \$500 million will be available for all 13 provinces and territories.

Can the minister tell us how much of that \$500 million per year will be coming to the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Just to be absolutely clear for Yukoners — they need to know this — not all the ICIP funding that we got from the federal government has been spent yet. We are going to be continuing to spend the money we received from Ottawa for years to come, and we are still going to make

sure that we're making those strategic investments, as I said earlier.

In Old Crow, we are making, this year — this is in the highlights of the budget this year — a 10-unit mixed housing use project in Old Crow; a 34-unit Korbo multiplex in Dawson City; we are getting road upgrades in Pelly Crossing; public works fire hall and an EMS building in Carmacks; a lagoon in Beaver Creek and a solar farm project; in Burwash, boat launches — which the member opposite and I spoke about when I was highways minister — we have the school that is being built in Burwash, the Kluane First Nation wind farm project; in Teslin, we're getting energy retrofits and the Nisutlin Bay bridge, of course, that my good colleague has been shepherding through and has been the subject of conversations here in the House but is a tremendous asset strategically for North America. We are going to continue to build that project.

We have a tenplex Housing First project in Watson Lake, Frances Avenue, and all the lots we are getting in Watson Lake; we are building in Carcross; we are getting school repairs and upgrades in Haines Junction and a biomass district heating program.

Mr. Speaker, this year and into future years, we are spending for Yukoners to make sure that their lives are better, that their communities are stronger, and that we are making those decisions.

Mr. Istchenko: It kind of sounds like the minister hasn't read the federal budget yet. I asked about the Canada housing infrastructure project and how much of that \$500 million per year is coming to the Yukon, and the minister couldn't answer the question.

For more than a decade now, the Yukon's position regarding federal infrastructure funding has always been that we need a model that provides what we call "base-plus per capita". Funding that is allocated strictly on a per capita basis simply doesn't work for smaller jurisdictions like the Yukon, so we have always pushed for there to be a significant base amount and then per capita funding on top of that. So, from our initial read of the new infrastructure programs, they seem to all be allocated on a per capita basis.

Can the minister tell us if any of the new federal infrastructure funds will be allocated on a base-plus funding model that the Yukon government has advocated for, for over a decade?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Listen, I want to be absolutely clear. We have not spent all of our Investing in Canada infrastructure funds yet. We are going to continue to spend the money in the coming years. You can look at the five-year capital plan to see all of those projects that we have on the books.

Mr. Speaker, there's a vast difference in this House between those on the opposition benches and us. We decided to spend the infrastructure money — the historic investment, the critical investment the federal government is making in the territory.

We decided to spend that money. The members on the opposite benches were not going to spend that money. We have an article here from 2016 showing the Leader of the Opposition saying that they did not want to spend that money. They did not

want to go into debt. We have spent that money and not gone into debt. We have not added to our debt through our infrastructure spending. We are going to continue to invest and make those critical investments to make sure the Yukon is well placed in terms of the changing climate, which the members opposite are doubtful about.

We are going to continue to work to make sure that the critical infrastructure in this territory is up to snuff and that Yukoners have better recreation facilities, more housing, better roads, better airports — that has been our legacy. We are going to continue that legacy into the future.

Question re: Recycling in rural communities

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, my colleague asked the Minister of Community Services about the recent announcement by Raven ReCentre and what it would mean for rural communities. The minister seemed a bit confused, so I would like to return to this.

Raven has announced that — quote: "On September 15, Raven ReCentre will no longer be accepting, processing or shipping most non-refundable recyclables (cardboard, paper, plastics and tin cans)."

At present, almost all rural communities currently accept non-refundable recyclables and ship them to Whitehorse to be processed at Raven. We understand that there is a decision to be made here in the City of Whitehorse about curbside pickup in this community, but what will happen to recycling in all other Yukon communities after September 15?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, again, we are given the opportunity this afternoon to actually talk about the discrepancies — the differences — between our side of the House and their side of the House. We have decided to modernize the way we handle waste in the territory, to implement tipping fees and invest in our rural landfills to make sure that they are better positioned to accept the garbage that society is creating.

The members opposite weren't prepared to do that. We are, and we are making those improvements to actually start to make polluters pay so we start to cut the amount of refuse and garbage we create in this territory.

As far as recycling goes, we have heard about Raven's plans. That is not new news. We await the City of Whitehorse's decision on what they plan to do on a curbside program inside Whitehorse. We know that we have extended producer responsibility — another initiative that this government brought into play to make sure that we free up the money that is being collected by producers and put it to work for Yukoners to make sure they get a good deal.

Support for recycling outside of Whitehorse is provided by the Yukon government through the recycling depot operating allowances as well as a recycling collection program that ships non-refundable recyclable materials to Whitehorse from all around the Yukon. Depot operating allowances provided in 2023-24 to municipalities are projected to be \$375,000. I will have more to say on this in the next question.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, perhaps in the next question, the minister can actually provide an answer to these

communities that are asking this question. He is correct; they provide funding to ship the recyclables for non-refundables to Whitehorse to be processed. Currently, the vast majority of communities use Raven ReCentre. As of September 15, Raven ReCentre will no longer be accepting non-refundable materials, including cardboard, plastic, paper, and tin cans.

So, my question is simple: What will municipalities do after September 15 when Raven ReCentre no longer accepts that material?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, we are aware that Raven ReCentre announced on April 10 that they will not be accepting, processing, or shipping most non-refundable recyclables, including paper and packaging, as of September 15 this year. The Government of Yukon is committed to continuing to work with the City of Whitehorse and community partners to find solutions and ensure that Yukoners have an option to recycle in Whitehorse.

On April 4, Department of Environment officials met with Circular Materials to discuss how we could further support the City of Whitehorse with recycling. On April 9, senior officials from the departments of Environment and Community Services and Circular Materials met with the City of Whitehorse to discuss options to integrate a possible short-term curbside collection program and the ongoing producer-led program.

During these discussions, the Government of Yukon provided assurance that the design of a collection program in collaboration with Circular Materials, which would be the producer responsibility organization for the entire territory, would be supported by the Department of Environment to ensure that it meets requirements in the stewardship plan review.

The Government of Yukon will continue to work with partners to find an interim solution to recycling in Whitehorse while continuing to work toward a producer-led program.

We know that Yukoners have no interest in recyclables going in the trash, going to the landfill. We will find a solution to this issue.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, over and over again, the minister said in his answer that they're going to work with the City of Whitehorse and find a solution for the City of Whitehorse. My question is not about the City of Whitehorse; my question is about rural Yukon.

Currently, rural communities collect recyclables in their communities at their solid-waste transfer stations or at their solid-waste facilities. Those materials are then shipped into Whitehorse and they are processed at Raven ReCentre. Raven ReCentre has announced that they are no longer going to be accepting those materials after September 15.

We know that the EPR is coming at some point, but it won't be available until 2026. So, in the meantime, what do rural communities do with their recyclables?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I indicated in my second response, Mr. Speaker, Circular Materials, which is the producer responsibility organization that is engaged in the conversations for the implementation of extended producer responsibility, will be the organization that is responsible for the entire territory. Over the next two years, we will work with

national producers, local businesses, municipalities, and industry representatives to establish the details of an extended producer responsibility framework and implement the programs.

The first step of the implementation will be producer-led stakeholder consultation to inform the development of stewardship plans. The stewardship plan review and approval stage will allow our government to ensure that the final plans align with service-level expectations, recovery targets, and our waste-diversion objectives.

To ensure that all concerned Yukon businesses and recycling stakeholders have the certainty that they need, the Yukon government has maintained an ongoing dialogue to address concerns and inform the development and implementation of the framework. We are currently in active conversations with producers, producer responsibility organizations, and other stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, Community Services has stepped up and offered interim funding to the City of Whitehorse, and the Department of Environment has provided assurances to the City of Whitehorse with respect to extended producer responsibility. We certainly want this plan to move forward and it is going to happen, in our view.

Question re: Yukon University funding

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the federal government announced a new cap on international student permit applications for a period of two years. The cap is expected to result in a 35-percent decrease in international students going forward. The news release stated that a portion of that cap will be allocated to each province and territory. It is no secret that Yukon University is on shaky financial footing thanks to this government. Like many post-secondary institutions in Canada, Yukon University relies on the higher fees paid by international students to cover funding shortfalls.

When questioned by media in January, the university did not yet know if they would be impacted. Does the minister know how many international students will be allotted to Yukon under the federal government's new cap system?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would start just by challenging the preamble about the support and funding for Yukon University. I think it's important to first note that, before we were in government, it was Yukon College, and now it is Yukon University.

The second thing I would note is that the capital budget this year commits to, again, very significant support as well as our O&M budget to Yukon University.

Lastly, I will say that, from the information from the department, this will have no impact on Yukon University in that the cap that has been identified for the Yukon would not limit the amount of students that we've seen trending over the last number of years.

Ms. White: So, it is frustrating to know that the federal Liberals have made this decree, but the territorial Liberals can't tell us what the answer is.

For many years, universities and colleges across Canada have made up gaps in their budget by charging international

students more for tuition. In the case of Yukon University, they are charged double what a Canadian student pays for the same education. If this new cap will limit the number of international students able to study at the university, that is likely to have an impact on the university's bottom line. A 35-percent decrease in international students, like the federal Liberals are aiming for, could result in more than a \$250,000 gap in the Yukon University budget.

So, can the Minister of Education confirm if the new international student cap will have an impact on the Yukon University budget and if she is planning to cover any potential funding shortfalls?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A little bit of background — I think that the member opposite's second question was hedging that I wouldn't have the answer provided in the first one, so, anyway, we will continue on.

Yukon University and — I also would like to share — the Alkan Air flight school are Yukon's two designated learning institutions that offer high-quality opportunities for international students. Within that process, we have another obligation with the new information that has come out from the federal government. So, we have finalized the process again to meet the new operational requirements under the international student program in collaboration with both organizations. I am happy to provide that, as of April 8, the Department of Education has issued 31 attestation letters. These letters are sent to the applicant's designated learning institution, which then provides the letter directly to the student, which is required.

For the record today, even though that second question said that we didn't give an answer, we did. On the first question, we are actually providing even more information today and I am happy to, as well, give more extensive information after the third question.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Premier; I must have missed his answer through all the other words.

So, can the Premier commit to fully funding Yukon University going forward, understanding that there has just been a highlighted issue: that there is a gap between the wages earned by the Yukon Employees' Union and those at Yukon University?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we're very proud that our government established a university — the first north of 60. As I have stated a couple of times, I think, during this Sitting and maybe during Committee of the Whole, we are, of course, committed to funding Yukon University and we have worked with them around the collective bargaining increase. We worked directly with them to determine that amount.

Last year, in 2023-24, we had \$33.5 million that was the base, and we increased by \$1,089,000. This was part of work that we did collaboratively with the university that is directly resulting from the collective bargaining. This year, in our budget — sorry; maybe I'll just clarify that. That \$1,089,000 was part of our supplementary budget that we passed earlier in this Sitting, and the 2024-25 funding for Yukon University — what we have before us in our mains — is \$34 million, and we'll continue to be a good partner with Yukon University and

ensure that they have the funding they need to run the university.

Question re: Whistle Bend traffic

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear concerns from my constituents in Whistle Bend about their experiences with traffic and congestion. As bad as it is now, it will only get worse with the ongoing development of Whistle Bend. While the city is responsible for some aspects of this, any long-term solution will require support from the Government of Yukon, as they are the primary developer of Whistle Bend.

What steps has the Yukon government taken as a developer to help the City of Whitehorse alleviate the serious traffic issues facing residents of Whistle Bend?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, people of Whitehorse have spoken to me and my colleagues often about the need for lots in the City of Whitehorse, and we are working very, very hard to develop Whistle Bend, which was identified by the City of Whitehorse as the next area of development. We are moving ahead with the development of Whistle Bend as planned by the City of Whitehorse, and we're going to continue to do that.

Municipal roads are the municipality's responsibility. I have been quite candid and consistent in my messaging that I won't interfere in the running of municipal infrastructure such as roads, water facilities, or whatever.

Mr. Speaker, we have a good relationship with the City of Whitehorse. We will work with them to execute the plans that they bring us in terms of what they want to do and try to find sources of funding for the municipalities, be it Whitehorse or other municipalities, but we are working with municipalities on the issues that they bring us and we will continue to do that. But roads within the municipality are the municipality's concern. I'm sure they have plans to deal with the traffic happening out of Whistle Bend.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. There are several large infrastructure projects that would help address and mitigate the traffic pressures in Whistle Bend. Some residents have asked about a third entrance into Whistle Bend, and some have suggested the expansion of Mountainview Drive, which is often the choke point. Either of these options would require significant investment from the Government of Yukon.

Has the Government of Yukon considered either of these options, and if so, when can residents expect more information to be shared?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just today, we offered to do a ministerial statement on Whistle Bend and Whistle Bend lots, and the opposition parties vetoed that ministerial statement: not interested in that statement — not talking about lots and housing for the Yukon.

When we came into government, we said that what we would do was support our municipalities in the planning of their communities, that we would not interfere with them planning out their communities, which includes the layout of neighbourhoods like Whistle Bend, roads, access, and those sorts of things. For sure, if the city came to us and said that they wanted to do more work and this was their direction, we would

put it into the list of priorities that they have given us for infrastructure.

By the way, when I first came in as Minister of Community Services, the amount of money that we started putting into infrastructure went way up compared to under the Yukon Party. It was double or triple what it had been. Now, during the first question in Question Period today, we heard: Hey, you need to be investing more money into municipalities. It's wild to me to hear that from the Yukon Party because they didn't do it while they were in government. We did. We have more money lined up under the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan for the next several years, and we will continue to invest in our communities as they tell us.

Question re: School drinking water testing

Mr. Hassard: In 2018, the former chief medical officer of health confirmed that testing for lead in drinking water was done at a number of Yukon schools based on work done at the Del Van Gorder School in Faro. We raised the issue in the fall of 2018, which prompted the Yukon Liberals to release the testing results publicly. Recently, two students from the school in Faro tested the water in the school as part of their science fair project and found elevated levels of lead in the school water.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm that the government has tested the water following this discovery? If so, where can I direct constituents who are interested in those results?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question — the important question from the member opposite.

On March 28, Government of Yukon officials found out about the school project which found some lead in the water through CBC and reached out to school officials to find out more about the testing the students did. On April 2, school employees confirmed that the students tested various water sources in the school and identified the presence of lead. On April 3, Highways and Public Works shut off the water taps in the morning and placed signage on all drinking water fixtures to not drink the water until further testing could be completed. The Department of Education sent bottled water to the school in the interim.

On April 5, Highways and Public Works travelled to Faro to conduct testing of all affected water fixtures. Department officials re-tested fixtures in the school using a three-tiered test: tier 1 was a "stagnant" test; tier 2 was a "30-second flush"; and tier 3 was a "two-minute flush".

On April 12, initial results were received, and one of the three water fountains tested was over the accepted limit for tier 1 and tier 2 tests. Highways and Public Works will be travelling back to Faro this week to conduct further testing of the one fountain. This process involves isolating the fixture from the main plumbing line to confirm if it is the fixture or piping to help determine the best course of action for remediation or replacement.

Mr. Hassard: The most recent results that we can find on yukon.ca show that the latest testing for lead levels in drinking water at Del Van Gorder School was done in 2019. Can the minister confirm that it has been almost five years since

the government testing was done up until last week, and have other schools seen more recent testing for lead levels? Is the minister going to increase the frequency for drinking water testing in government-owned and -occupied facilities, such as schools?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for this question on a very important public health issue.

The Del Van Gorder School uses municipally sourced water. The water treatment is responsible for water-quality monitoring and testing for the community. Delivered water in municipal systems do not require testing by facility staff or end users, as these systems are supported, monitored, and tested by officials.

As the member opposite indicated, in 2019, the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Education worked collaboratively to test for lead in the water supply for all Yukon schools and remediated where required. At the Del Van Gorder School in 2020, remediation work was completed, which included replacing all fixtures and piping known to contain lead.

The school also has a flushing system that circulates the water to avoid stagnation in the pipes. I am advised that the Canadian drinking water guideline limits have changed since the last completed testing in schools. The acceptable limit changed from 0.020 milligrams per litre to 0.005 milligrams per litre.

We are working with the Department of Education to review the data from our previous testing in order to confirm if any other schools across the territory will require testing.

Question re: Watson Lake continuing care services

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, on November 2 of last year, I asked about the government's former plans for two new continuing care beds in Watson Lake. The minister said that they had proposed the idea to the Town of Watson Lake, but — quote: "... we were told that this was not what they wanted us to pursue."

She went on to say that the idea was — quote: "... not an option that was of interest to the Town of Watson Lake."

So, Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: Who did the minister of health consult with when she made the decision to cancel the long-term care beds that she promised to the community of Watson Lake?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation worked together to explore the possibility of opening two long-term care rooms at the Watson Lake Community Hospital. Recruitment for the necessary nursing staff to support this initiative has been impacted, of course, by the health human resources challenges that face every jurisdiction in the country. The integration of two long-term care rooms has been put on hold in the past while we work with the Watson Lake community to determine the best path forward.

I spoke — perhaps it was yesterday or the day before — about the commitment to Watson Lake and to the long-term care beds that could be incorporated into the hospital. We appreciated that the residents of Watson Lake are bringing

forward feedback and concerns about the availability of continuing care supports and services in the community.

Watson Lake is at this time supported by one permanent registered nurse/home support supervisor providing care, coordination, nursing, and home support work supervision, one auxiliary-on-call registered nurse, one auxiliary-on-call home support worker, and one Whitehorse-based home care occupational and physical therapist.

I look forward to providing more information to Yukoners.

Ms. McLeod: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Mayor of Watson Lake was on CBC's *Northbeat* last night and was very clear that neither he nor any representative of the Town of Watson Lake told the minister that these beds were not wanted. Now, maybe she was mixing them up with the Mayor of Aberdeen.

In response to my questions about this last week, the minister said that a community needs assessment was being done for Watson Lake, but many in my community took note that this type of assessment has already been done, and that was what prompted the Liberals to issue a press release in November 2022 promising the two new beds.

So, while the Liberals do another study, will they reconsider their plans to cancel the two beds that they had already announced back in 2022 and proceed with them immediately?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the attempt at some humour, but geography may not be the strong suit on the other side of this Legislature.

What I had indicated yesterday — I'm sorry; it may not have been yesterday — most recently in the Legislative Assembly, I indicated that we would be pursuing the long-term care beds in Watson Lake. We hope that the community of Watson Lake will support such an option. We will continue with the work being done to renovate some hospital rooms that have been identified for the purposes of this project and pilot and for the purposes of making those spaces comfortable for Yukoners who may need to stay there.

We hope that we will be able to pursue hiring the staff who will be necessary, which was one of the barriers last year when this was attempted, to have the staff necessary to provide the service through a long-term care pilot project in Watson Lake, and I look forward to that becoming a reality.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the minister still has not consulted with Watson Lake residents about a long-term solution for continuing care services in the community. This is despite over 500 Watson Lakers signing a petition requesting that she visit our community and consult with residents.

Instead, the Yukon Hospital Corporation planned for the two beds and the Yukon government began the hiring process for the positions — but then, without any announcement, the minister cancelled these plans and tried to blame the Town of Watson Lake.

So, we're happy to hear that the minister is moving forward with this — again, without consultation, as far as I can tell. Will she commit to my community to discuss a long-term continuing care solution for Watson Lake?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I can't quite figure out these questions. Do they want the long-term care beds at the

Watson Lake hospital or not want them? The question seemed to be a bit unclear.

Let me clear for Yukoners. Our Department of Health and Social Services is working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation together to explore the possibility of proceeding with two long-term care rooms that would be at the Watson Lake Community Hospital. This will provide a different level of service than is currently available to Watson Lake individuals. We certainly support, through the programs that are already in Watson Lake, the concept of home care — the long-term ability to stay in one's home as long as possible — because we know that patients, particularly elderly patients who are aging in place, are more successful and more comfortable if they can reside in their own home. As a result, we have a number of individuals who support this type of care in the community of Watson Lake.

We appreciate that there is work underway to provide a different level of care, which may be long-term care beds at the Watson Lake Community Hospital. Work is also underway to have a community visit for Watson Lake in the summer of 2024.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS

Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), the Third Party designated Bill No. 307 as an item of business for today. Bill No. 307 now stands in Committee of the Whole. Therefore, I shall now leave the Chair and the House shall resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 307: Act to Amend the Education Act — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: Madam Chair, it is a pleasure to be back today talking about Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, allowing for more locally developed courses and programs for Yukon students.

Just going back to the notes from April 3, I believe that the last exchange between the minister and me was about letters to First Nations, and I will just draw attention to the fact that, this afternoon, I tabled 15 letters that I sent out after the minister's suggestion to each Yukon First Nation and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

With that, I am happy to answer more questions.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to continue to discuss this engagement — or the amendment to the *Education Act* brought forward through this private member's Bill No. 307.

As I have already stated, the Government of Yukon supports the inclusion of locally developed courses in school curriculum, ensuring that our students' education is relevant, diverse, and reflective of the community's unique cultural and educational needs. In partnership with Yukon First Nations, educators, students, and their families, we are definitely on a journey to reimagine our entire school system and to realize that this transformational journey is rooted in trust and collaboration.

Ensuring that every step we take is aligned with the needs of those we serve, our work includes the continuous development of enhancement of curriculum resources and training. These efforts are designed to foster localized, culturally inclusive programming and deepen the understanding of Yukon First Nation cultural history and contributions among all K to 12 students. Yukon, as I have stated a few times, probably more than a few times, adopted BC's curriculum and embraced the changed approach of encouraging and valuing the localization of curriculum by teachers to meet the unique needs of students in each classroom.

We currently have an MOU that was recommitted to in 2017, and during recent discussions in British Columbia, I had a chance to meet with the ministers, and we made a commitment — or we made a commitment to renew the MOU and to have more — again, I think we already work with the curriculum development team in BC, but we are working to renew our MOU at this point.

This approach has — basically, I think the language in section 43(2) of the act — in practice, it is almost irrelevant, as the curricula for the education system as a whole encourages localization and Indigenization, and students can take approved, locally developed courses of study to earn credits toward their graduation program.

I wanted to make some of those opening statements today. I would like to focus back to the questioning today — being

with the engagement and what has taken place by the members opposite. I have just received copies of the letter and the correspondence that the member has tabled today, so I have not had a chance to read any of that yet, but I'm definitely happy that the Leader of the New Democratic Party has taken the steps to communicate directly with Yukon First Nations about the private member bill that we talked about on April 3 and now again today.

Maybe what I will do is — since I have not had a chance to review these letters yet, can the member tell me the content, I guess, of the letters that were sent and maybe also elaborate a little bit on the correspondence or the interaction with the official from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in?

Ms. White: I'm just waiting for someone in my office to post things online so that I can read them for the minister.

The minister asked me two weeks ago, on April 3, if I would table the communication between the education director from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and myself. Today, I had a lovely conversation with that director, who is quite possibly listening online right now. Anyway, she indicated that I could, so I did table that earlier today.

The content of the letters that I tabled very much mirrors the communication package that I had given the minister at my briefing, but it also echoes — here we go. Thank you to my staff. So, as an example, I am just going to read this letter. They are all very much in a similar form — different to the nations the minister had mentioned were looking to drawing down 17.7 but very similar.

Here goes: "Re: Bill 307 An Act to Amend the Education Act

"I am reaching out to you to discuss a private member's bill that the Yukon NDP introduced during this sitting. Bill 307 is an amendment to the *Yukon Education Act*. It is a very straightforward change that affects high school students only - it removes a single sentence from the *Act*. That sentence, section 43(2), says that locally developed courses cannot account for more than 20% of a student's course load in a semester or school year.

"The idea for this change comes from a former Yukon teacher, who pointed out that while Yukon follows BC curriculum and BC graduation requirements, BC has made some changes in recent years that the Yukon has not. Changing the Yukon Education Act will allow the Yukon to come back into line with BC.

"With many Yukon schools now using a four course per semester system, it means that not all schools cannot offer locally developed courses. In BC, students are allowed to use Board Authority or First Nation Authority courses to fulfill elective graduation requirements. It means that BC students have more flexibility and choice in their learning, and can explore topics such as traditional technologies, leadership, climate change and so on. Unfortunately, Yukon students are being deprived of this opportunity and the chance to benefit from learning more about culture, environment, and community with locally developed courses.

"What I want to emphasize is that this amendment in no way affects the ability of any Yukon First Nations to draw

down Article 17.7 of self-government agreements. I strongly support Article 17.7 and its key principles for the design, delivery, and administration of educational programs within Traditional Territories.

“I have seen what Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation has achieved with Article 17.7 in creating an educational system that reflects education for self-determination and a system that is responsive to the needs of students. I support Selkirk First Nation in its work to incorporate the language of 17.7 into your self-government agreement. I believe that this amendment can make it easier to develop courses for the type of educational system that works for Selkirk First Nation and for all Yukon students.

“I recognize that the education system as it stands is characterized by silos and segregation of knowledge. This amendment to the *Act* is a single small step to breaching those silos, nevertheless I hope that this change will provide a tool for school boards and education champions around the Yukon to pull the education system forward to some of the innovations that the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation have done so well.

“I recognize that a full review and a possible rewrite of the *Act* is needed, but that process could take years. This proposed change can make a small but meaningful change now.

“I would very much appreciate hearing from you about this amendment. Currently it has passed second reading and I anticipate that debate on this will continue in Committee of the Whole before we proceed to the third reading. I have included a short briefing with this email that explains in more detail what this amendment does for Yukon students.

“Your thoughts on this would be welcomed.

“Sincerely, MLA for Takhini-Kopper King.”

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am wondering if the member has received any reply to the letters sent out prior to this sitting day?

Ms. White: I have not to date.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think, going back to April 3, there were a lot of submissions made that day, including the submission that I made to the House that we have fully adopted BC’s practice in BAA and FNA. I just wonder if the member opposite has taken that submission into consideration, because what I am seeing today in the recent correspondence between April 3 and 17 is that it still states the same in that there is no acknowledgment that we have moved in this direction.

I am wondering if the member can please speak to that.

Ms. White: As I am not the Minister of Education, I don’t actually think it is my role to communicate what she, in her capacity, is doing.

My question for the minister is a simple one: Does the minister follow the legislation of the territory? Does the minister believe that the laws that are written in Yukon legislation are ones that she as minister should follow?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I am asking a specific question about whether the member opposite has taken into consideration the submissions that we made during debate on April 3.

Ms. White: No, I have not.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Earlier today, I tabled a document that was entitled *Board/Authority Authorized (BAA) and First*

Nation Authorized (FNA) Course Requirements and Procedures Guidebook, and I am wondering if the member opposite has had a chance to familiarize herself with this guidebook.

Ms. White: This is a document that we referenced last time around. I am holding a copy in my hand — not from when the minister tabled it earlier — and if there is a specific section that she would like to talk to and if she just wants to refer me to that section, I am happy to flip and have that conversation with her.

Hon. Ms. McLean: In my submissions on April 3, we talked about this being our guiding document. I am hoping that the member opposite — this is the bill that the member opposite has brought forward — would be able to speak to the relevance of this guiding document in the bill that is being brought forward today.

Ms. White: So, the reason why I asked the minister if she believed in the legislation and the laws, especially the ones within her purview — so the Department of Education and the *Education Act* — it is very specific. Right now, we are under section 43(2); it says: “Locally developed courses may constitute up to 20 per cent of the educational program offered to any student in a semester or a school year.” That is the part that I am trying to remove because, right now, with the minister’s assertion that it doesn’t actually govern it, that is the issue.

I am just looking to make sure that we can fall in line with what has been indicated are her intentions within the department. Maybe I am just trying to make sure that we are inside. I appreciate the minister’s point and she can keep coming back at me for the same thing, but ultimately, I am just trying to remove a 20-percent block that would allow for more locally developed courses for students across the territory. I didn’t realize that, by bringing this forward, it would be such an issue or that the response would be as strong as it is, but I am happy to have more conversations. But again, I am focusing on what the law says — it says 20 percent — and that limits people’s ability to participate. I am just trying to increase people’s ability to participate.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, in bringing the bill forward, I’m not in disagreement with it; I’m not.

I think that locally developed curriculum is absolutely the right way to go, and we have certainly enabled that to happen and we have entered into agreement following this guiding document from British Columbia. We have worked with British Columbia for a very long time, and they have gone through a number of changes with curriculum. I just really want to have a thorough discussion. That is what is expected of us as ministers and government when we bring forward any bill that is debated in this House.

I think that part of my questioning around this is that the Department of Education is working to enhance locally developed curriculum to the point where it is fully embraced — the changes. That is partly what I was getting at here in terms of an acknowledgement that changes have happened and that the work that the department is doing is upheld and held in high regard, because everyone is working hard to do this.

In the guidebook, starting on page 13, it talks about public school districts and then, on the next page, it goes on to talk about independent schools, then offshore schools, and then on page 16, it talks about Yukon schools. It is completely part of this guiding document in terms of how we develop courses and how they are applied and how they can be used in the credits for students who want to use and have access to use locally developed curriculum.

We are doing a lot of that work, so part of my question is to actually uphold the work that is happening in the Yukon right now.

Again, I am not opposed to this amendment to the point where it is being — there is a different practice and we do have other sections within the *Education Act* to allow for that.

If the member has any further comments about the guidebook, please bring them forward. Again, I'm not trying to be combative or anything like that; I'm just trying to bring some understanding about how we are expected to bring forward bills, and when we are amending an important act like the *Education Act*, we have to have a thorough discussion. So, I will ask for some further comments around that and then I will move on to another line of questions.

Ms. White: I struggled with what the specific question was, so if the minister wants to repeat it, I will give it my best shot.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I guess I'm just wanting to dig in a little bit deeper around the member's understanding of this important guiding document that clearly the member has had for some time. I tabled it earlier today just to make sure. Perhaps the member can talk about some of the understanding around how this document works.

Ms. White: Sure, and with specific questions around the document, I'm happy to give it my best shot.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I guess we're not going to — I'm trying to just draw out some understandings from the member opposite around some of the guiding documents that we have within the Department of Education and how that guides us in the important work that we do around locally developed curriculum. I will move on.

I'm not sure if the member answered this already, but has the member received any replies to any of the letters that were sent out?

Ms. White: I think I answered that with my second question, and it was no.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for that. Can the member please talk about any other engagement that may have taken place since the bill was last debated two weeks ago?

Ms. White: I had a really lovely conversation with the director of education from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. I have had some lovely feedback from the executive director of the First Nation School Board.

So, yes, I sent out the letters. I have had conversations with some folks closer by.

A friend and mentor is sitting in the gallery, Bob Sharp, who was the whole instigator of this entire process. He is the person who has probably developed more locally developed courses than any other single human in the territory. I definitely

leaned into the expert there, so I haven't had broader conversations, if that is what the minister is asking about. But I have had conversations with the folks — the stakeholders — who were in support.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Can the member opposite talk about her understanding of the mandate of the First Nations Education Commission?

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I learned recently in the debate on the health authority that if it takes longer than five minutes for a member to speak, the radio goes on to the hold message. I am hoping that I don't hit that today, but it's hard to tell, so I appreciate folks bearing with me.

The First Nations Education Commission was first established, or re-established, in April 2013. Of course, right now, I am on that Council of Yukon First Nations website. I think that, in essence, understanding is that what they do is provide technical support, advice, and recommendations to Yukon First Nations who are members of the First Nations Education Commission with respect to education matters relating to Yukon First Nation citizens and communities and that they go from early childhood education to primary and secondary and all the way to employment training. I am sure the minister knows more than me. I would be happy for her to ask specific questions, and I will again do my best.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is an important body that the Department of Education works with. They provide technical support, advice, and recommendations to Yukon First Nation members of the First Nations Education Commission with respect to education matters. They work to implement the Yukon First Nation authority with respect to education matters, promoting collaboration among First Nations. It's an important body that we work with.

Given that, I am just wondering if the member had any contact or attempts to talk to the First Nations Education Commission about this bill?

Ms. White: I appreciate the question from the minister, and I am happy. She can drag me through the coals, to be honest. It's fine with me. Ultimately, I have the support of the Yukon First Nation School Board and the First Nation Education Directorate. I have been given a long-distance high-five, although maybe that is not what the director of education would call it in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory. The Yukon Association of Education Professionals has come back and said that they approve of this. I don't see how anything that allows us to build more relevant and locally developed courses in the territory is a bad thing.

Again, the minister is welcome to vote against it; that's fine. If that's the case, then we could probably end my misery right now and just get to it. I am not sure how long that we need to go through it if that is the intention.

Ultimately, when I look at the First Nations Education Commission and their goals and their mandate, it aligns with locally developed and relevant courses. It's about making education interesting; it's about making it appealing, and it's about making sure that we don't lose students before they get to high school.

Again, I am happy to be told all the things I don't know. That's fine, and we go at it for hours. That's okay, but ultimately, when it comes down to it, it is the idea about moving forward, and it's about moving forward for the greater good. That was a conversation today — a message that was imparted to me from the director of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in education. It's because we were talking about Percy Henry, that he was an education champion, and she had said that he always looked at the bigger picture, always trying to move forward to make it better for people. She said, "Hold on to that today", which I am holding on to it, and I probably misquoted it, but the intention was there, which is moving forward for the greater good.

I appreciate that there are a lot of things that I don't know, but I do know that this will make it better for Yukon students, and that is what I am trying to do.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for that answer. I get that Committee of the Whole is difficult. I remember my very first time in Committee of the Whole, and my legs were shaking the whole time. I understand that, and I think that it is important that the Assembly know — and those who may be listening in know — that I absolutely support locally developed curriculum.

I do take our responsibility very seriously when we make a change to a major act. I'm happy to come back to some questions in a bit and take a little break from my questions. I'm going to turn questioning over to my colleague the MLA for Klondike.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that grace. It is an interesting thing — so, I've stood on this side of the Chamber for many years, and I have been through much debate on legislation. Interestingly enough, government ministers don't have to do it on their own. So, I appreciate the grace of working through electronics, and I look forward to questions from the Member for Klondike.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I appreciate the question from the minister and also the responses for the Leader of the Third Party. I have been in both seats, and I can definitely understand the perspective of both. I know for a fact that the member opposite has a great team supporting. It's very hard when you're in the seat and the only person answering the questions — that's for sure.

I am going to turn to — and I think too, like, what we're trying to establish here is work done, which is exciting work — some of the leg work that has done by the member opposite, and then where do we go from here, right? That's where it comes from. I know that the minister had great conversations with chiefs, and it's about that conversation. We have had this conversation in the Legislature before about — the opposition don't have the resources, the mandate, or the responsibility for consultation. So, it comes down to making sure that the chiefs are on board and the educational community is on board and finding out as well, in this back-and-forth: What has been done, where are we, and what needs to move forward?

So, I'm going to pivot to the fun part, if that's okay with the member opposite, which comes down to some of the conversations as the NDP are debating — well, first of all, which bill are we going to bring forward? And then, we are

going to bring forward a bill that, based upon the mandate of the current government, this should be something that should be supported? So, I appreciate the fact that we are talking about something that we are all so very proud about and want to see change in.

I want to kind of pick the member's brain a bit about some of the leg work that has been done. For example, I know that the member opposite has a good relationship with the NDP in British Columbia, so I'm wondering — I'll just start there.

Have there been any conversations there, because we are kind of going horse and cart — right? We're the cart here; when we were developing the curriculum, it was all about certain parameters that were put into the legislation to begin with because XYZ. We know certain things, and so, we want to have a threshold, and then from there, we are going to move past that threshold.

I will just start with: Have there been any of those conversations with the NDP in British Columbia? I will just start there.

Ms. White: Other than casually in passing at the BC NDP convention, no. And I say this in terms of — and this is about bringing us back in line with where BC is — where we were before. I mean, I could reach out to the BC Minister of Education, but it seems like that cart has passed; that horse has left the — whatever expression would be used. I appreciate the question, but again, the intention is just getting us back to where British Columbia is.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate that answer. Again, this isn't — I am not saying that there was an obligation there. I am just curious, because again, in my small, little part of working with British Columbia when we were developing the current curriculum, it was pretty exciting. It was also the context of when you have a territory that is — let us be frank — when you have a First Nation like Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in who is leading the way in Canada, in my opinion, sometimes we will be ahead of maybe others, including post-secondary institutions.

So, that was part of the impetus I think — I believe — about developing the threshold at 20 percent — right? So, that is why this is kind of an important question to see — and I wish that I had done more research on this myself personally to see where British Columbia is as far as their rationale and maybe even the conversations that they have had with post-secondary institutions, because it is one thing to develop leading, locally developed curriculum; it is another thing altogether to see if universities are going to be willing to accept those.

The conversation at that time was — and, again, I have used this a few times in the Legislature and in graduation speeches — unicorns. We are so ahead of the curve that the curriculum that we are developing — I am guaranteeing that universities are going to be excited to have our students, with a more locally developed curriculum — I think that is an important piece.

But my question to the member opposite would be — that is the question: Have they done any of that research with the post-secondary institutions to see if there is more willingness, if their — I don't want to say "lawyers" but the people who decide the whole curriculum and pedagogy — have they had

time to consider and to classify and to acknowledge these questions?

Again, when I say “these questions”, I am not saying that the NDP had the obligation to do these things at all; I am just curious if, in the pursuit, that was something that was considered or talked about as we debate this bill, because I think that it is an important piece of the mechanism. Yes, we should all move forward. It is high time that we move forward, but now it’s about how we do that and who is going to be ready for it.

Ms. White: There are a couple of questions there. The first thing I will say is that an art class in high school, unless you are going to go and do something that requires an arts credit in university, won’t follow through. It doesn’t carry through.

So, there are a couple of things. Again, this is about mirroring British Columbia, which is a much bigger jurisdiction and they have a whole swathe of locally developed courses. It doesn’t necessarily mean that something that is available in Terrace, British Columbia will be available in Osoyoos or in Victoria — keeping in mind, of course, that they have many nations, and so one that is maybe specifically designed within one traditional territory won’t be reflective of another.

The point is that we are just mirroring BC, and it’s the same procedures for university applications as BC students would be using with BC locally developed credit courses. As an example, Social Studies 11 or 12 is a four-credit required course for graduation in Yukon and in BC, but this requirement could be filled by taking any one of nearly a dozen different courses, including Civics Studies 11, Advanced Social Studies 11, Yukon First Nations Studies 12, Comparative World Religions 12, Francophone History and Culture 11, Economic Theory 12, Social Justice 12, et cetera.

As an example, Mathematics 11 or 12 requires one four-credit course, but that requirement can be filled by any one of History of Mathematics 11, Workplace Mathematics — Madam Chair, I tell you, I am dehydrated and overhydrated. I am all of those things at the same time, so just give me a second. There are a series of mathematics courses that could go specifically toward mathematics, but it doesn’t mean that they cross — depending on what you’re applying for. I am going to use the University of British Columbia as an example of how credits and courses transfer from high school to university.

When you look at the UBC program requirements for students coming from Canadian secondary schools, they have lists of minimum requirements. Of course, each department will have additional specific requirements, so if you want to take a degree in science, then you have to have more science courses than you would if you wanted to get a degree in fine arts, as an example.

So, admissions to any program are based on an overall assessment of all grade 11 and grade 12 courses except courses classified as Applied Design, Skills, and Technology, so that’s the case for all of BC and Yukon students. I would say that adding courses to the Applied Design, Skills, and Technology or arts education list has no impact whatsoever on UBC admissions because these courses were never approved as university program requirements, yet they still remain as an

option for graduation credits in the BC high school curriculum. So, they could still be used for high school graduation here, but they don’t necessarily transfer over.

But they didn’t transfer before and they don’t transfer over in British Columbia, so when the locally developed courses are made, it’s between the person who is advancing them — but then again, it’s between the Department of Education to decide where they fall to make sure that they go ahead.

I know that the member asked another question, but I got so excited about talking about this. Compared to other — we have examples in Alberta and others, but the point is that the courses don’t take away from what university admissions require because it’s not outside of those. They still have to fit within the spectrum. It’s the Department of Education that goes through a course to make sure that it meets those requirements once it has been proposed, and there is an entire process — and we talked about that filling-out process last time — but it has to go through an approval process.

It’s not about making school easier; it’s about making school more interesting. It’s not about dumbing down education; it’s making it relevant. You still want it to hit a standard. So, when we look at the locally developed courses or we look at the ones in the past that have been brought forward, it was never about dumbing down education; it was about making sure that it was relevant. So, when they meet the university admission requirements, they count as those pre-admission requirements.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Nothing about dumbing down — it’s more about competitiveness of jurisdictions.

I will give an example. When we were doing the sample questions for “trades math” versus “academic math” — I am using air quotes because I always believe that a pursuit in the trades is academic math. So, when we are developing the questions that are specific to teaching our high school students what they need to know — from the mathematical world — so that they are ready, willing, able, and prepared for the post-secondary education, it’s a very competitive market. Making sure that those questions are relevant — it’s not necessarily a checklist to say that those particular questions are going to be accepted or not accepted by a post-secondary institution; it’s more about how well we are preparing our students.

I was thrilled to death when BC changed because they put an academic pursuit into trades math. Like, for so long, we would hear in classrooms that if you go into the non-academic stream, somehow that is being considered like dumbing down the math. My father being a jack of all trades and a brilliant mathematician with maybe a grade 8 education at best — I don’t even know if he paid attention then. But he was a mathematician in the way that he applied his trades, the way he worked on boilers and the way he worked on engines and on building boats. So, that academic pursuit exists right across the board.

The competitiveness of getting into post-secondary education, whether it’s trades or university — that is something where we get ranked — BC versus Alberta. So, the pace at which we want to change the curriculum is an important

consideration. That's why they had that 20-percent course-load consideration.

I guess the genesis of my question is based upon that. I'm going to, after this debate, look more into BC and the road they have gone down — I've been out of the classroom for way too long — since that consideration was put in there. They had to have put it in there for a reason; that's what I'm getting at. That is now gone, so it's more about: Well, how do we pivot and what kind of courses have been developed?

The member mentioned specific First Nation courses that are in particular places in BC. I know that the Grand Chief and the chiefs — leadership — went down and looked at some schools in BC and they came back very excited about — I don't want to speak obviously on behalf of them, but it was a copy-and-paste where a lot of the skeleton work is done; we just have to apply the First Nation ways of doing — Yukon-specific — and knowing to some of the skeleton work that has already been done.

So, I guess that the question is more of examples of the new types of courses, and I don't mean a research thing. When the NDP was thinking about this, that must be exciting to think about the kinds of courses right now. I know that my students were more excited to learn about elders, traplines, and the Rangers program coming in than King Henry — any day. You can also see the self-worth being created in individual students who have their PhD in bush — being out on traplines, knowing the migration patterns of animals, and those types of things — much more as far as a math credit compared to figuring out SohCahToa — sine, cosine, and tangents — and then applying those things.

When the NDP is looking at this bill and they are looking at increasing the course load for local curriculum, which I completely agree with — let's just talk about that. What is the priority there? Where do we start first if we are going to lift that?

Has the member opposite been having conversations with teachers who have suggested particular pathways forward? Because, again, this is the exciting part of this debate — for Hansard to record local knowledge, the people who are still in the classroom and want to push us forward. I also spoke with the education leader for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in about exactly this. What is that low-hanging fruit? I will get into a conversation with leadership and the Grand Chief after that, but that is just kind of the question that I was asking to begin with.

I don't know if that helped — a lot of preamble there — but I will give the member opposite an opportunity to answer that part.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for that.

I was trying to find the acronym — or what is not the acronym — of the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees because when I had the conversation with them, there were lots of questions about how we make sure that students are prepared going into post-secondary education. One thing that I think was really interesting is that there were two separate members from two separate schools outside of Whitehorse. One said that it would be amazing if we could have

a class that was land-based for a semester. For example, maybe if it started in the fall, you would start with fish. Maybe you would do a combination of harvest and biology and other things with fish, and then it would move maybe into trapping, so you would have a camping trip on the land and you would go out with a local knowledge holder or an elder and you would hunt and you would process that meat and whatever steps from there. Perhaps you learned how to cook; you did different things with that. Then it would continue, but it would be a semester long. Not necessarily multiple classes — I am not necessarily talking about the full experiential but maybe just one class. So, those camping trips — they do other things — but maybe rural schools have a real way of making things work, which I really appreciate, but her point was that if there was a way to make it relevant and to incorporate the knowledge in the community so that students had that opportunity to learn, that was exciting for her.

I referenced initially when I brought it forward — I talked about meeting with a carver in Selkirk First Nation who was working with a young person who was there as a carving apprentice, but when school started, that was the end of it because the young person didn't have enough time and they weren't able to use it toward an arts credit, as an example. It was a very real, practical, hands-on thing.

I think about myself — it's wild to think that I am here because I don't really like sitting still and I always was in jobs where I used my hands. If there had been an opportunity when I was in high school to have gone into a professional kitchen for a semester, that would have set me up into what my career became after school.

I think about having been in the Music, Art and Drama program and what students took away from that and how that spurred what they did in life after; it was the catalyst. I think about ACES and I think about some of my friends — because I was in French immersion, which is a whole other thing — who were at the point that they were either going keep going in school or they weren't, and it was the ACES program that brought them back in. That was developed specifically to try to target people from losing. It's not so much about me being here to say what is relevant but — for example, Gerry Quarton, who does all the volunteering with Skills Canada Yukon. Gerry's point is that, for some, hands-on learning is what spurs it on. For example, the opportunity — if you identify in your school a young person who really is into cabinet making or really good with wood, how can you transfer that into an applied skill? Or you take someone who is interested in small-engine mechanics and help them with that — and it might not be for post-secondary education, because there are many people like me. I talk about going to university when I am 65 because then it doesn't have to pay the bills and I could just learn because I want to learn.

There are lots of us who won't do that, but we will do non-traditional education that will be very much to the benefit of others. I think, when we talk about the locally developed courses, it's about trying to get that spark. I think the one point is that, when you look at all the education reports, we lose people in grade 10. Sometimes they don't even make it to

grade 10, but if we as a society could say that we will make it as interesting for you as possible by finding, within your community, things that you are interested in with the support of the school community — the support of the people around you — to make sure you can get through it —

In some cases, again, getting that high school diploma — I imagine it would have been a lot easier to do at 17 or 18. I graduated at 21, and I'll tell you that it wasn't easy and going back wasn't easy. Would there have been a benefit for me staying? There would have, but sometimes that's not how it works.

Again, this was brought forward because the one kind of catalyst — the one person who has been so far behind this was the one who highlighted that we are losing out by having this cap. BC removed the cap. I have asked people — maybe I didn't ask very well.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: There is. There we go.

I have asked about the BC limits and there are limits.

There are only so many elective credits for grads. Students also have to meet English, math, et cetera, and there is only so much room for the additional. If these locally developed courses aren't hitting the parts — for example, the math, the science, or the English parts — there are only so many extracurricular ones you could take. You couldn't take 17 arts classes because you won't graduate with that, so there are still limits. There are limits in place.

The BAA and FNA courses can count toward the 16 grade-12 level credits required for graduation. You could have more, but you still have to have the other ones on top of it. I am talking about the really highly keen students who take extra classes. The BAA and FNA courses that align with the ministry grade 11 arts education or Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies curriculum may be used to satisfy graduation requirements for arts education or applied skills and tech, so there are some that can go outside of that 16. If we think about the extra credits — they weren't called "extra" credits because they were still credits.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: Thank you; the teacher helped me out there. They are the non-curricular credits, so some could go toward graduation and curricular depending on if they met the requirement for the arts education or Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies. British Columbia already has that clearly mapped out: how many classes, how many courses, and what they can do. What the Department of Education has the ability to do is put it within the classification of where it belongs.

Hon. Mr. Silver: This is great. I am all in favour of blowing past the 20-percent threshold. I think it's time and I think the department has been doing a great job of moving in that direction. I would even make the argument that we could even go into those academic courses.

I taught a grade 12 math class, and with every single chapter, whether it was on logarithms or trigonometry, I could find an example to use the Rubik's Cube to explain the particular math of the day, so surely to god we could use local curriculum and local examples. You talked about First Fish and

First Hunt. Pat Joe, I believe, is one of the amazing educators who has done an awful lot of work on that curriculum development, working with people like Georgette McLeod and others in Dawson for 17.7 and even before Georgette.

There has been so much work on — and it is like non-academic, academic, or credits. I think that we can go further. I think that we can use this momentum and use the professionals who are in the classroom right now to develop even those more specific questions for the academic-pursuit courses as opposed to the non-academic as well.

When we talk about local curriculum, we're not only just talking — I know that this is strange — First Nation courses and getting out on the land; it is also teaching resilience for our students. When I was at Robert Service School, we would rotate who had the responsibility of filling in for the principal. So, I was pretending to be the principal one day, and a kid came in, grade 3, who was throwing things around the class, throwing chairs around. And I'm like — okay, I'm the high school math teacher, so I asked this kid to come in — let's pretend that his name was Bob — and I said to the kid: What seems to be the problem here today, Bob? This grade 3 student talked to me as if he was 30 years old. He asked: What seems to be the problem today? Well — and then he started listing all of the socio-economic issues that he is dealing with in his family and his life in such an intelligent, articulate way, and then he started listing off: All I need you to do as an educator is to make sure that I know how to take care of myself, tell me how to balance my cheque book — and he started going through all of these things about what my responsibility was as an educator, and I had no argument for this kid — none. He was correct.

So, locally developed curriculum can also be our ability to instill self-worth and the necessities of street smarts — of being prepared for the world. I know that it is a lot of the work that is going into this initiative. I know that there are a lot of people who are working on — how do I say this politely? — expanding upon what students would normally call "bird courses" — the values courses. They are so amazing and so important and so necessary.

I am just excited and so I apologize that, as we are asking these questions, I feel like I am champing at the bit to say: Tell me more; tell me more about what your experience has been as you are putting this forward, working with some amazing educators, working first with the chiefs and others, getting those letters together. It is more about: Tell me more about the conversations. So that is kind of where I am going with a lot of that.

Also, our goal cannot ever be to be prostituting our academia. You don't prepare a kid — sorry; I keep on saying "kid". You don't prepare a student for a job; you prepare a student in this modern world that we're living in to be prepared and ready and articulate. That's the most important piece. It's not about making sure that they have the ability to keep our economy going; it's about where we stand with our values, with our index of well-being. Where do we stand as a community when we want to showcase our young people to the rest of the world? I think that these are important conversations.

The way that the curriculum was developed to begin with — I give a lot of credit to the British Columbia system for doing it the proper way and inching forward but at the same time breaking down boundaries — hugely. So, this is important to me; it's important to the member opposite. But you nailed it when you said that it's not about us. It isn't. It's not about what the Leader of the Third Party wants or what I want. I learned that very quickly at my first meeting at leadership. I went in with the Grand Chief and folks were angry and upset, and I couldn't — I was like: I want to help; I'm here to help; why are you yelling at me?

It was like: No, they are not yelling at you, dummy. They're yelling at 150 years of colonial leadership — for lack of a better word — of not being able to have the authority. So, that is an important thing that we have been working on.

That has been six years of trying our best to move forward. It's difficult. There are a lot of things that are impediments. Again, as we move forward, I think that it's important to kind of look at what the efforts are and make sure that we are all rowing in the same direction.

I have another clarification question, I guess. I'm not sure if the member opposite has had any time to think about this. I'm just thinking about it now. When we first started talking in second reading — and I think it was also during Committee debate — the time frames of the courses were talked about — the way that the schedules are designed right now as far as the timeline for semesters. I don't know the procedure now; I know that, back in the day, each individual district or school had some control over those things — over the actual timelines, I guess. I know that the 20-percent course load — I believe that it was the member opposite who spoke about how that doesn't align well with the current high school courses offered.

If a student is only taking four courses per semester, this means that they potentially wouldn't be able to take a locally developed course at all in that semester. I am wondering — this is just a small side question, really: Was there any consideration to raising the maximum course load to 25 percent to align with the high school offerings? If the member opposite could help me out with that.

Ms. White: I thank the member very much for the enthusiasm. I appreciate it, and I think what he was talking about was surprise academics — where you can learn about math, but it doesn't feel like math. That would have been my kind of math class because math is why I graduated when I was 21, to be honest.

There are a couple of things. It wouldn't have been about increasing the percentage, so right now, it has the 25 —

I have totally forgotten most of what we are talking about, to be honest.

Changing the percentage number would have been more difficult, I believe, because there are different variances across the territory about what exists. If, for example, we had increased it from 20 percent to 25 percent, there are still high schools that do five and there are ones that do four. It would have possibly brought it out of line with, for example, the high schools that do five classes. It just seemed that it made more

sense to follow British Columbia, which just removed that cap altogether.

Again, we talked about it before. It is the 16 extra credits or the non-academic curriculum.

To the minister's point — or the member's point, I guess, depending on how this conversation goes — it doesn't limit it to not having academic classes developed. Locally developed curriculum can be academic — absolutely. I pulled up one about field studies, and it is literally all applied sciences — science in the field. It could absolutely be all of those things, and it's not just talking about — I don't want to say “empty credits” because that is not what I mean. But it could absolutely be academic credits in that surprise way like when the member was talking about the Rubik's Cube and math. It's not specified here.

When you look at the locally developed courses in British Columbia, you can see a wide array. It's similar when you look at the locally developed courses in Yukon; you can see that. So, the one that I was just referencing as far as being applied sciences is Field Studies 12. It is hands-on. It's designed to provide flexibility in selecting a range of environmental monitoring activities. It says that teachers are expected to select at least two activities within each of the big ideas based on community, teacher strengths, environmental opportunities, and relationship with other courses. Field Studies 12 may be designed to integrate and enrich a variety of science and social studies courses, and teachers may combine big ideas content and elaborations with the circular competencies to construct integrated curriculum for Field Studies 12.

The point is that, within the Department of Education right now, they have these incredible templates. These templates exist right now. The Minister of Education was talking about the document. I'm going to find it and list it so it's not quite so disrespectful as just calling it “the document”: the *Board/Authority Authorized (BAA) and First Nation Authorized (FNA) Course Requirements and Procedures Guidebook*. Even within that, it talks about how you develop those courses, but it's important to note that the templates exist for that already. The Department of Education is doing that, but what I am saying is: Let's align with what is being done right now. If we're ignoring that cap, then taking the cap away altogether is aligning with what our actions are.

I just want us to follow the law. There are a lot of times where we should do that — period. But it's also about bringing this in line with British Columbia. So, we follow BC, and BC made changes and we didn't make changes. I just want us to make the changes. More than anything, I just want education to be interesting. I want my 16-year-old nephew who really hates school right now — if there was a class out there that really got him jazzed. He's in a school right now that only has four classes per semester, which means that he couldn't take a locally developed one. By looking at this and by adjusting it, I am just trying to make sure that there are more Yukon students who have more access and are not limited in their ability to take things that are interesting.

I want my nephew to finish high school before he's 21, because it was really hard going back to school at 21. Summer

school at 21 was not easy, so if there had been surprise academic math that I could have taken in grade 11 — well, in my case, I would have been in grade 12 — and taken a class that made sense for me and I still learned all my core principles for math, I would have been better off. There are legions of students like me who aren't fully engaged in school. If there could be one thing that would get us to the next point, that's all I want to make sure of — that we give that opportunity.

There are educators in the territory who are doing this work. The Department of Education is already doing this work. I am just asking us to remove the barrier of making sure that it becomes truly accessible.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you for that answer; I completely agree.

Surprise math — I have never heard that before; I like that. It's maybe the Rubik's Cube with some surprise math. It definitely got folks engaged in education. What I have noticed in my career and also when I was a student as well is that you have to have a hook.

I was not a good student. I was the guy in the back making jokes and trying to find something in the teacher that was wrong, make fun of it, and expose it because I wasn't doing my homework. I wasn't engaged. I didn't think I was smart enough, maybe — who knows? It wasn't until a teacher said to me: You're smart enough and you're good enough and you need to be doing this. It actually instilled in me some kind of confidence and I actually started caring and paying attention and admitting that I didn't know.

I taught a very hard course for a lot of people: high school math. I saw a lot of folks who just wanted to be part of something. They didn't care necessarily about the subject, but they wanted to be part of something bigger. So, I completely agree — it's not about maybe changing the timelines; it's more about, well, if BC has the snowplow out and if they are directing us in a direction — and I know that's where we are heading as a department — then let's seize this opportunity and let's move forward, because, again, it's one thing to say that our students would be more attractive to a post-academic world or a post-secondary institution; it's also about our success levels — our rates of actual attendance.

I was talking to the Minister of Community Services just this morning about students and engaging them and getting them in the classroom. When I first started teaching in the Yukon in 1996, the divisions of the classrooms were deplorable. I was told by one administrator at one time: Well, if this student misses 20 classes, you can finally kick them out. That's pretty much the only instruction I was given by certain educators or administrators at that time. We have come a long way — thank goodness — because you can't go any further back.

Parallel that to the conversation with the First Nation chiefs on education, that was my education about where we need to go, what is important to those communities — not just the chiefs. There are a lot of people behind the chiefs who have been feeding in that direction as well.

My point is that, even though I'm an educator, I'm not the professional here. It shouldn't be my direction. There is a

reason why as well — when you think about establishing ministerial leads, do you want a teacher to be the head of education or not? I mean, there is a perceived bias there perhaps, but we need to leave a lot of the hard lifting and the hard work to the professionals.

So, I know that the department is listening to this debate; I know that they are engaged and that this is a good conversation. It's a great conversation and people are champing at the bit, but I also know that we will leave them with the hard work of finding out: Where are we now, where do we need to be, and what does this bill do compared to where we are already trending?

So, that brings me to my final questions for today — and I really appreciate this back-and-forth engagement. Clearly, the Leader of the Third Party cares about this, has done the research on this, and really wants to see what we all want to see, which is just a better environment always — we always have to be striving forward. So, thank you.

Also, by the way, I can only imagine the math when the member opposite was 21. I know that curriculum. It wasn't great. It really wasn't, and we've come a long way in that curriculum. I have been out of the classroom for over a decade now, and back in 2011, my last year of teaching, we came along with that curriculum — I believed in it, I stood behind it, and it was easier to teach and had better examples, but we can do so much better.

So, this all brings me to the conversation of JEAP, the educational plan that is moving forward. We've done a lot of work at the Yukon Forum and also with the leadership to talk about — we all need to be on the same page and we all need to be moving forward. In the member opposite's conversations with leadership and with others, were there a lot of conversations about the joint action plan? Were there a lot of conversations about JEAP specifically?

That would be the end for me today, and I really do appreciate the member opposite's responses to these questions about an extremely important issue. So, thank you, and thank you for bringing forth the bill.

Ms. White: I do thank the member for the conversation and the questions.

There was an overarching — well, there are a couple of things. I would say that the biggest conversation that I had specifically with a First Nation was with the director of education with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. The one thing that she imparted — which I think is really important and is why it's exciting to know that other nations are going to draw down or are leaning toward drawing down education. It is because she was very clear that all of the goals and intents that were being done by that nation were for the benefit of all students. It didn't matter what your cultural heritage was, whether you were from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation or whether you weren't or whether you were a new immigrant or whether your family had been there for 100 years; what mattered was that they were going to do their best by every student within that community to the benefit of the community.

I think that is the part for me that was really exciting. I talked about that it felt like fireworks when we were having the

conversation because I saw what education — I think where we want to go in education is when we look at that.

Honestly, I think, going back to the preamble of the current *Education Act*, at the time in 1990, it was trying to be forward-thinking, and it was doing the best that it could, but it was prior to the *Umbrella Final Agreement*; it was prior to final agreements; it was prior to a lot of things, and it didn't fully capture that. That was one thing.

The overarching thing that every education champion I have had a conversation with in probably almost — close to the last 10 years honestly is that the *Education Act* really needs to be reviewed, that it isn't relevant anymore in the way that it maybe was at one point in time, that there are changes that need to be made so that it can really follow the path that we are currently on. So, sometimes the goals and intentions of people — what they want to do — is actually hindered by what exists in the *Education Act*.

This is an example I think of what we are talking about when the Minister of Education says that we are doing these things. And I don't doubt that they are being done, but there is a piece of the law that says that this is the parameter in which you can do them, and that's the part I am trying to remove — that parameter.

The overarching thing that people say is: Let's open it up. Let's talk about it. Let's look at the future, and let's get an *Education Act* that does that. That is the overarching thing in what I hear from education folk — right from the classrooms all the way up to leadership. The full spectrum is what people are saying.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I know I told my colleague that was my last question, but just in response to that, I spoke with the minister earlier as well. I asked her about the education review. Again, that has been a conversation with the chiefs and with the minister, and that's where it lives — in JEAP. That's an important part. Again — making sure that we had a place that we can all get to. It's a living, breathing document. It can change, and it changes based upon as we draw down as work is being done.

I just wanted to say that is a really important part of this dialogue as well. I completely concur with my colleague that it needs to be reviewed. Every act needs to be reviewed, and we need a process to do this that everybody can inform and be part of.

I really want to expose the name of the person whom we are talking about back and forth, but I know that person does not enjoy the limelight, so I won't, but I will say that I am so appreciative of the education department of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and I lived it. I lived them in their initial years of 17.7 and the shared resources for the whole community and how appreciative the whole community was for that, and doing so in a colonial school always came with its challenges as well.

I want to thank those folks for the hard work that they do, and I will cede my time.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I am just going to make a couple of quick opening remarks, and then I am going to move to some questions and build on some of the dialogue back and forth that I have heard this afternoon.

The first one that I noticed as my colleagues the MLA for Klondike and the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King were standing up and rising and going back and forth. I looked over and noticed our pages, who are in high school right now and probably — man, I am curious to know what they think as well as we have this debate. Just a note, but what I noticed was their attention to the debate back and forth.

The other thing that I will just share is that my parents were high school math teachers. We used to have math quizzes at home.

I want to build on the first piece — when the act was tabled — again, thank you to the NDP for bringing this forward. The first thing that I did was to try to look up where this came forward in the first place, and it came through when the *Education Act* replaced — I forget what it was called before, like the school something or other — it wasn't even an education act at that point, and it was brought in in 1990. It was under the Penikett government, and Minister Piers McDonald was the Minister of Education at the time. So, I went back and read through the debate from Hansard in 1990, and I will say that — and they even talked about this clause at one point — but they were very enthusiastic about the bill, and they were talking about how to make it relevant for communities, for families, et cetera — that notion of "local".

Let me just start there with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. Did she have a conversation with any of her past colleagues about where this came from? I think she mentioned just a minute ago about how the *Education Act* at the time was trying to do the right thing, but it was, of course, prior to the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, et cetera. If she could talk about what her experience was with her predecessors and also a little bit about how those changes have happened and why we need to move differently today.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I will just highlight that the conversations I've had with the previous Minister of Education at the time who brought it forward was really about ore docks and not about education. I was thinking about that because I was given the heads-up that this might be a topic of conversation. I found a really — this is going to get nerdy. Donald A. Burgess from McGill University wrote a paper called *The Yukon Education Act: Commentary and discussion on recent legislation*. It's a much bigger document, because the pages I have go from 175 to 186, but it's 12 pages. I am not going to read 12 pages into Hansard because Hansard is not into that and also I could be out of order because I would be reading from an extensive paper without having tabled it. I am not going to do that, but I did think that there was one really relevant point in this paper. It's an interesting read if anyone is really into that, but I don't blame them if they don't.

On page 5 of that document, it says: "Yukon Education. In direct response to the request of parents that a statement of the overall aims and objectives concerning public education in the Yukon Territory be prepared by the territorial government, the following statement of philosophy was published in a White Paper in 1988:

“Public education should prepare people for life and work in the Yukon, Canada and the world, and promote in the community a love of learning. (Yukon government, 1988a).

“In addition, the White Paper went on to emphasize two central themes which were to guide the government in the elaboration of its new education act. These were first, universal quality education to meet individual needs, and second, greater public participation in the education system. The government then went on to elaborate a number of priorities that it intended to address in the new legislation. These included:

“to ensure in law the right of access to an appropriate education;

“to develop self-worth through a positive learning environment;

“to provide opportunities for each student to achieve his or her maximum potential;

“to promote personal growth and effective participation in Yukon society;

“to promote the recognition of equality among the peoples of the Yukon in an environment that respects the cultural differences of individuals and promotes the wealth of this cultural diversity;

“to develop critical and creative thinking and information assessment skills for today’s world;

“to promote understanding of the history and values of the Indian culture in order to heighten understanding of the Yukon and its peoples;

“to increase awareness and appreciation of the Yukon’s natural environment which is as much part of the Yukon’s identity as are its peoples and history;

“to encourage understanding and democratic participation within the education system;

“to provide a standardized core curriculum so that students may transfer smoothly to other schools within the Yukon or to other parts of Canada;

“to prepare students for participation in a Yukon, Canadian and world society;

“to encourage in students the development of basic skills and of aesthetic sensitivity to the world around them;

“to provide schooling in a supportive environment especially for those who must leave their home communities in order to attend public school elsewhere in the territory.” It then expands on it.

The reason why I thought this paper specifically was interesting is that it was an overview kind of in real time as the legislation was coming forward. So, it’s an academic paper because it’s from McGill University, but it goes on and it breaks down each of those points and what they were trying to achieve with it. I think it’s important to point out that the NDP, the government of the day, for example, did an exercise called the “Yukon 2000”. It went out and it was in all communities, and there was the big conversation about: What do we want for the future?

I spent a lot of time on the *Education Act* and the preamble and reading other documents about it, but I think at the time the effort was to capture where we were and kind of where we wanted to go without really knowing what that was. So, to think

that, in 1988 — this was long before that move toward self-government, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the final agreements — there was still the recognition that there was a diversity of culture that needed to be respected and captured.

I’ll let the member tell me if he’s interested, but it does specifically talk about, within this paper and looking down in it, Yukon First Nations — well, actually, I’m just going to read you that section right now.

So, it goes further on and says, under “Yukon First Nations”: “Each Yukon First Nation, and there are fourteen defined in the Act, will have the right to establish a local Indian Education Authority to speak on its behalf in educational matters. In addition, there is to be guaranteed First Nation representation on each school authority and school council. In the event of any discordance or conflict between the Yukon Education Act and the Yukon First Nation Land-Claim Agreement, the latter shall prevail to the extent of the conflict. In other words, this act will grant considerable power to aboriginal groups in the Yukon.”

So, it was already looking forward, but what was written in 1990 — some parts are still relevant now but not all of them.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member for that. Am I interested in that? Yes, for sure. I will try to follow up afterward.

I recall reading similar language — and I am trying to recall whether it was in the debate and what people raised or whether it was actually in the act itself, but some of the language that she just shared with us was definitely there.

Again, I could feel their sense at the time. Then they put in this limit of 20 percent. I just want to talk about that for a second.

After I looked up to see where the act had come from and how it evolved here in this Assembly, I started to ask around about this 20 percent. When I talked with the Department of Education, I inquired about it. I was told that the Department of Education had already made this move past that limitation, using other parts of the act to allow that to happen.

That just reinforces for me — and I think it has been said today: Why not then remove the clause? So, I still support the bill before us. Even if it’s not there in practicality, it’s certainly there in symbolism and sorting things out and giving a clear signal as to where we are trying to head.

Everyone who has stood up in this House talks about trying to make courses relevant for young people because we believe that the learning outcomes are better. Also, learning how to learn — the love of learning.

I also happen to have had a conversation with Mr. Bob Sharp, who I think expressed some concerns about the Department of Education and how they were achieving this goal of getting past the 20 percent. I think he talked about the importance of moving past it regardless.

I guess the question that I want to ask the member opposite — I have known Mr. Sharp for 20 years, but I have not known him as a teacher. I knew him as someone in the community. When you talk to Bob, there is a lot of information coming out, and I am sure that the member opposite had some of that, and I am just wanting to give her an opportunity to share with us the

evolution of that conversation that happened and how she landed.

I will stop my questions there for now and see if there are others who wish to rise, but I just want to say to the member opposite that I appreciate that she has brought this amendment to the *Education Act* forward, and I think that it is symbolic of what was originally intended with the 1990 act, and I think that it strengthens where we are trying to head.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, it is interesting, because although the member opposite will call him “Bob”, I can’t actually — I just call him “Mr. Sharp.” Although he was never a teacher of mine, he was definitely a teacher when I was in school, and he was definitely a teacher who would tell me to smarten up and such.

There are a whole series of things. There are the things you know from yourself, that you experience, and then there are the things that you know because they are around. Having a conversation with Mr. Sharp about his involvement in education in the territory — it is like an entire — it is more than my lifetime, right? — and I just turned 47. So, whether it was when he was a principal in Ross River, whether it was the principal in Old Crow, the vice-principal of Whitehorse Elementary, or all the way throughout, there are incredible things that he has done on that journey, but more than the list of the academics that he can give me, it is more of the impact that he left. The classes that Mr. Sharp had — or even if I go through right now, the locally developed courses — because his fingerprints are still on all sorts of programs because he is still developing courses that spark an interest and a fire in students. Despite the fact that he is doing a terrible job of retiring, the rest of us are really fortunate for that, right? — because he could have just walked away.

I could list off the list — or I could read from when he won a lifetime innovator award in 2022 from YuKonstruct, but mostly, it is the fact that I know my friend Marvel finished school because she was in ACES with him in grade 10. I know that anyone who has done any of the experiential programs — in large part, it is because he had a part in setting them up. When I look at the locally developed courses, he is often one of the signatories. He is often one of the people who is behind it, so he is supporting current Yukon educators to be able to go through the process of developing these courses for their students to try to make them relevant.

I think, similar to when the Member for Klondike was talking about making math relevant for students, I guarantee that if I ask anyone who went to Robert Service School when he was a math teacher, they will probably tell me about a Rubik’s Cube if I say: Hey, what about math?

So, the impact that teachers are able to have — by being able to follow a teacher’s interest that can align with a student’s interest or an entire school’s interest, you change how that works.

I love riding bicycles. I love riding bicycles, so when I go out and I take people biking — because I’m a bike instructor — that love of biking is a part of what sparks it for them, and my enthusiasm for their success is partially what carries them on. So, Mr. Sharp’s enthusiasm for — well, it probably the most

ridiculous, to be honest, because at the market a number of years ago, I still have the firestarter that he was selling at the time, because why wouldn’t he be at the market selling firestarters? But the enthusiasm around the firestarter — I’m confident that he probably made those in school at one point in time with students. I mean, you can look at, for example, the greenhouses, and that is obviously an interest but a passion that is carried on.

I think about every teacher who ever had an impact, and the most impact that they ever had on me was when they were really excited. So, Mr. Herry, who comes in here all of the time, was my teacher for grade 7, grade 8, and grade 9 social studies — sciences humaines. And because he was someone who travelled the world, when we were doing Greek — whatever we were talking about in Greece — he actually showed us pictures of things like the coliseum, and we made maps that were aged with tea as we were doing these things that were relevant to the curriculum, but it was following things that he was interested in, and that made it more relevant.

I think the real purpose of this is to allow the interests that exist in the education community and in communities as a whole to be able to be that launching pad for locally developed courses. When he came to me to have that conversation, it was mostly as: Do you think this something that we can do? It was something — he was like: This is something that I’m working on — I’ve been working on this. I have a draft letter to the minister. This is something that I think we need to address.

Again, when we talk about having to review a piece of legislation, it’s a long process. Admittedly — I think I even said in all of those letters that this was a stop-gap measure. This was one small step that could be taken right now out of many, many other steps that need to be taken that I have no control over. So, in conversation — again, the Member for Klondike was talking about his friend at home. It’s true — when she talks about it, it is always with that forward-looking lens and: How do we do it better?

So, when I look at people like Mr. Sharp — although he was never my teacher, the influence he had in my life was vast because he influenced my friends and my classmates. Again, I think about Marvel, and she will tell you because she has a very big tattoo from when we were in high school, but that’s a whole different story, and it is the ACES symbol, because that is the impact that course had on her. If there is one class that we could give — I was thinking about this. I have a friend who is a florist, and she has been doing flower-arranging classes at the ILC, and one of the students says: I can’t control my life, but I can make a real nice arrangement. It is that pride — that’s a little bit of pride. If you know you are going to do flower arranging one day a week or one class a day and if that one class will get you to school and will get you through your other three or four classes, then that class is successful, and it serves a purpose. So, this is just about trying to find how we do that.

I am no expert, but I was a kid in school who had a hard time. So, classes that were interesting to me made it easier to go. I thank the member for his questions. I veered off, but I think we were talking about Mr. Sharp, so that’s fine.

I am grateful, and the fact that he came back and sat through like four hours two weeks ago and he's back is a testament, because he is really adamant about it.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I sat because I was trying to give the Official Opposition a chance to get up, but maybe they don't have questions, which is great.

One of the things that happened when this bill first got tabled — I went out and took a look at all of the programs — the outdoor pursuits; Achievement, Challenge, Environment, Stewardship — ACES; CHAOS; PASE; FACES; ES; MAD — and I mistakenly thought that those were all locally developed courses. What I learned from talking with Mr. Sharp was that, no, in fact, those programs are not locally developed courses. They do have that local relevance.

They are experiential and they give that difference, but locally developed courses under the guidebook that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and the Minister of Education were referencing are a different thing.

By the way, when I talked with Mr. Sharp, he said to me that there are now elders here in the Yukon who still call him “Mr. Sharp” because they won't call him “Bob” because they were his students back when they were not elders, so it is a testament to his long, deep relationship with the territory and many communities, as the member opposite has noted.

I just wanted to try to ask about that local versus experiential difference. Again, I think we all agree that we need to have local here, but if the member opposite can talk about, through their conversations, what that means so we can sort of explain to Yukoners that difference, that would be great.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I just have a couple of follow-up questions. I thank my colleagues for the discussion that they have had here today.

Because I talked today about the First Nations Education Commission, which is an important body that I work closely with on everything that we do within Education, I also have another body that I work closely with: the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. The type of work that they do is — the committee meets quarterly to discuss opportunities and challenges in education. It has an eye on supporting Yukon learners from cradle to career. The committee has, in the past, reviewed reports and recommendations about education in the Yukon and identified key themes and priorities, explored K to 12 curricula from across Canada, and recommended Yukon use

of BC's new curriculum with additional Yukon and Yukon First Nation content perspectives.

They have participated in the review of inclusive and special education and supported the development of related workplans. They have provided feedback and suggestions on the Yukon's K to 12 curriculum redesign, updated student assessment guidelines, the culture inclusion standards, in-service and training for Yukon educators, and Yukon school calendars. They have reviewed growth plan processes and public engagement strategies and worked to address findings of the reviews of inclusive and special education and student attendance.

It's a very important body that, as I said, meets on a quarterly basis. It includes the Yukon Child Care Board, Yukon educators, Association of School Administrators, Yukon First Nations Education Commission, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, school councils, the Catholic Education Association of Yukon, the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, and Yukon University.

I asked a similar question around the First Nations Education Commission, but I'm just wondering if the member has had any conversations with this advisory body, and if so, perhaps the member can discuss that interaction. If the member is not able to, I would just — was this a consideration?

Ms. White: First, my apologies to the minister; I missed the name of the committee to start off with.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Advisory Committee for Yukon Education.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I thank the minister both for the clarification and the question. No, I did not reach out specifically to the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. However, on the list of community members, I have had lots of conversations with Yukon educators. I did have a meeting or a presentation, I guess — I presented to some of the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees. I did bring in a letter of support from the Commission scolaire; I did bring in a letter of support from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate; I did bring in a letter of support from the Yukon First Nation School Board, although I appreciate that, on that committee, it says: “Yukon First Nations Education Commission.” Sorry; I did, of course, also table the e-mail of support from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. Although I did not reach out to the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education as a whole, I did speak to a fair number of folks who are represented there.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The last area that I wanted just to ask some questions about is regarding the Association of Yukon Education Professionals. On April 2, I was in receipt of an e-mail from Ted Hupé, the president of this association — and I will quote it: “I am learning of the proposed changes at the same time as the general public and it seems absent any form of consulting with the YAEP. As you have recently stated YAEP is a key education stakeholder in the Yukon and the Teaching Profession Act states the Minister shall consult with

the Association on matters that affect our membership. Section 19 provides for Ministerial obligations, specifically that:

“(1) The Minister shall consult with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals on matters of educational policy that affect its membership; and

“(2) The Minister shall consider any recommendation or report received from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals.

“The proposed changes to the Education Act inevitably affect the YAEP membership. If the Act is opened up in order to change the percentage of locally developed courses, this will change programming for high school students. It will alter the offerings and affect teaching assignments to those same schools.

“I believe that consulting with YAEP on this matter is practically necessary, and required by the current legislation.”

I just wanted to ask a couple of questions about this. What engagement did the member opposite do with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals? Further, does the member opposite feel that they have the same obligation to consult with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, and if not, why?

Ms. White: I’m never going to presume to speak on behalf of anyone else, but I believe that, after I tabled the bill, the minister perhaps did some media and had talked about this, and my understanding is that it’s maybe what spurred the letter that she just read out.

I’m actually just going to read this, which is an e-mail dated Wednesday, April 3, 2024, and it includes the minister, myself, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Education critic from the Yukon Party, and it’s titled: “Regarding proposed amendments to the *Education Act* Advisory Committee for Yukon Education”. It says: “Dear Hon. Minister ...

“Thank you for the timely correspondence and information.

“The YAEP supports changes to the legislation which promote the creation of Yukon-specific courses that count towards graduation and emphasize the value of local and Indigenous content.

“We provide the support with the recognition and understanding that Yukon-specific courses must be developed in a manner which facilitates improved and better access for Yukon graduates to tertiary opportunities.

“We look forward to hearing how Yukon Government will practically support and ensure the academic relevance of courses that improve and ensure better access for Yukon graduates to tertiary opportunities.

“Best ...

“President, Yukon Association of Education Professionals”

I appreciate the minister’s reading of the letter. I mean, I have her response to that initial letter she got. To the best of my understanding, the April 3 e-mail — actually, that came in at 3:01, and the reason that is relevant is that we were in the middle of the conversation on this bill. It’s different — it’s a

different tone and a different thing, so I just want that to also be read into the record.

The first time that I reached out to the YAEP was in January of this year. I can probably try to go through my e-mails to figure out how many times that I reached back out but then had various conversations about Bill No. 307. I guess that it ultimately led to the e-mail in support on April 3.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I did write a letter responding to the initial letter that I read in, and I’m happy that the member has read in the response from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals because, aside from the letter that I sent to Mr. Hupé on April 3 — the day after receiving his letter and the day that we were to debate this bill, Bill No. 307 — there were no other conversations.

I just wonder if the member can talk about what could have happened between April 2 to April 3 to change the mind so quickly of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals.

Ms. White: I’m not the president of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and I wouldn’t pretend that I could possibly speak in his place, and so I will let the minister have that conversation with him directly.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I have no further questions. Thank you for the debate today.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I appreciate the Member for Takhini-Kopper King bringing forward this bill here today for discussion in Committee of the Whole. I know that members across the floor have asked a number of questions, so I apologize if there is some repetition here, but there are just a few things that I wanted to touch on.

The first is with respect to consultation. Now, I certainly understand that the Third Party, the New Democratic Party, doesn’t have the resources of the governing party to conduct a fulsome consultation with respect to a change to this bill, and I also respect the fact that it is a relatively minor change to the *Education Act*, but it can obviously make significant differences to the way that we deliver education here in the territory.

Again, I apologize to the member if she has already gone through this, but there have been some changes over the last couple of weeks as well with letters being tabled back and forth.

I know that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King mentioned that she had support from CSFY — the Francophone School Board — the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and the Yukon First Nation School Board. She just read into the record the support that she received from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. I believe she has had support from the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation, so I am just curious if there have been any other support letters that have come in since we last debated this two weeks ago and if I missed anyone in the list that I provided of organizations that have provided letters of support for this change to the bill.

Ms. White: I thank the member for those questions. A couple of things — the outreach that I did was very targeted — so, specifically school boards, the First Nation Education Directorate, and the YAEP. I don’t actually have formal support from the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Government. I have had very positive conversations with the director of education from

the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, but she would never speak on behalf of the chief and council, so I don't have that.

The honest truth is that, from the Wednesday when we first debated this on April 3, it took me until the next week to actually get all the letters written and formatted. I wanted to make sure that I obviously had the right chiefs with the right nations. Based on the information that the minister shared, which I am grateful for, the nations had indicated that they were looking at drawing down 17.7. That was really helpful, and I do appreciate that the minister actually directed me toward Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in because it was fantastic. Again, it has changed my perception of what is possible.

The questions from the minister about which nations I had or had not reached out to in a formal way and then making sure that it was relevant, making sure that the nations that were looking at drawing down 17.7 — that I included the language that I had learned from the director of education in the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and then getting them out.

The truth is that I haven't heard back from anyone, but I am looking forward to those conversations. I guess I could say that I haven't heard negatively from anyone. I may not have support, but no one has pounded on the door to say that this is a terrible idea.

Mr. Kent: I'm just wondering if the Member for Takhini-Kopper King can let us know which — obviously, there are a number of schools that are governed by the Yukon First Nation School Board and a number that are governed by the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, but there are also some school council schools still. I am just wondering if there has been any outreach to individual school councils, or has that all been through the association that represents those school councils, the AYSCBC?

Ms. White: I thank the member for that question. I also have a lot of admiration for how easily that acronym just flew off his tongue. So, the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees — I actually reached out to them directly. Again, it was targeted, so I went to the school boards specifically because they are in charge of multiple schools. I had reached out to the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees. There was a lot of back-and-forth about dates, and then we finally settled. I possibly said when we were here last — but it was not very far leading up to that Wednesday and it was just based on availability.

I did not reach out to individual school councils; I just reached out to the governing body or the representative.

Mr. Kent: One other organization that I am curious if there was any outreach to was the Yukon Catholic Education Association. Obviously, again, it's not a governing body but an association that has representation from the Catholic high school here in Whitehorse and the two Catholic elementary schools here in Whitehorse. I am just curious if there was any outreach to that organization.

Ms. White: No.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much. And then there is — this is an acronym that perhaps the member can help me with — the Canadian Parents for French. Obviously, they deal with

the French immersion program. I am just curious if there have been any conversations with them in the lead-up to this change.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I thank the member for that question.

There wasn't. It affects high schools, and not to say that this group doesn't have some reach into high schools, but I did not reach out to the Canadian Parents for French.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the member.

I am curious and I know that colleagues in my caucus are curious, as well — I guess this is a little bit of a hypothetical question, but presuming that we do pass this and the limit is removed on the amount of local curriculum and a school or an association wants to make a change to the course, what level of consultation would be required by them? As I mentioned off the top, I certainly understand that the Third Party wouldn't have the resources for a broad public engagement or access to the engageyukon.ca website to look into this. I guess I am just curious then, if there is a decision made to adjust a course or introduce a new course, what level of consultation is required at that point to introduce that new curriculum?

Ms. White: Thank you for that question. Just for clarity, I met with the AYSCDC on March 26 and the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon on March 22.

So, for locally developed courses, it is not so much that it is a thing that goes out to public consultation. Again, the minister has spoken about it before, but the *Board/Authority Authorized Courses (BAA) and First Nation Authorized (FNA) Course Requirements and Procedures Guidebook* lays out the parameters of those steps, but the locally developed course framework template that is on the Yukon government website is the one that goes through it. As it was mentioned to me, the authors of these programs — or whether there are teachers who are also offering the course — in a lot of cases, they are doing this because they have recognized a need within their school community or within their schools themselves, and so they take it upon themselves. There is no mechanism right now in place to support them in developing it and so it is done independently.

I think that one of the hard parts is that, when it goes to the committee for review, the committee isn't necessarily expert on the subject matter, but the authors or teachers who are authoring these courses unfortunately are not invited to speak about them — either about the value or the reasoning behind it. I think that would probably make the whole process a lot smoother and a lot better across the board.

I think that it is also challenging — and I say this with the understanding and the education from someone who has done a lot of these themselves — that these are done often with very little support from the Department of Education until they get through that process. I think that if we were really looking at giving this wings and ability, maybe we would look at making sure that there were some resources accessible for those folks who are looking at authoring the locally developed course framework. I think that I would encourage, if it was possible, that the committee that does the review invites the authors or teacher/authors in to speak about it. I think that would be a real benefit.

Mr. Kent: There are a couple more subject areas that I would like to explore here. Again, I apologize to the member because I think this may have come up earlier from one of the MLAs from across the floor, but one of the concerns that I have heard and that colleagues have been asking me about is with respect to how this may affect post-secondary entrance requirements. Can the member comment on that? Does she anticipate that if too many locally developed curriculum courses are introduced because we are removing the cap, it would have any effect at all on post-secondary entrance requirements for Yukon students?

Ms. White: I will do my best to answer this. I think it will be similar to the answer — although I can go to a different university than the University of British Columbia.

It's important to note that, for graduation, you have a certain amount of credits. I am not necessarily going to have the right sheet, but I hope I said before that it is 16 credits for the non-curriculum ones specifically. When the locally developed courses are taken, it doesn't necessarily mean that they would go toward what you are applying for at a university. They would still go toward graduation, but it wouldn't necessarily be applicable.

Looking at the University of Calgary, some programs use arts education courses that are approved for some degree programs. Examples include the University of Calgary programs of entrepreneurship and innovation, language and culture, accounting, and film studies.

Some of those, for example — arts and applied skills in — pardon me; I'm just looking for the language. This is the hazard — for anyone who is wondering what my desk looks like right now, it's absolutely chock-a-block full of papers.

Any class, for example, under the arts education or Applied Design, Skills, and Technology curriculum could be used, for example, toward those courses at the University of Calgary. It's important to note that not all locally developed courses would necessarily — they could be used for graduation. Again, it is the Department of Education that would make that decision, but not all of them would be toward university. So, if you wanted to be a doctor, taking Hairstyling 11 may not be what would lead up to you being accepted, but it was probably a really great class to take — I think students make those decisions partially — but it doesn't affect things.

University of Calgary — there are pathways to admission to different programs that make use of arts education courses, so having more arts education courses that qualify as graduation credits simply allows students more options to fulfill that requirement. At the University of Ottawa, admissions require four provincially examinable grade 12 courses, including program-specific requirements. Program requirements are very open — for instance, the accounting program only has two prerequisites: English 12 or French 12 and Calculus 12, and every arts program at the University of Ottawa only has a French 12 or English 12 requirement — so, lots of additional courses if you go there. I have one more university, if you're interested — McGill University — but it pretty much mirrors the others.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, perhaps I can just get — the member had a document there that she was reading from for McGill, so I will just maybe grab that after so I can take a look at it and just review that.

A quick question with respect to professional development — the professional development days at schools are now split. Some are assigned by the department and some are the responsibility of the school councils. Obviously, if there is new curriculum introduced, there will be some requirement for training and professional development with the educators who have to deliver the curriculum. Now, I know that the number of hours or minutes are in the *Education Act*, so I'm just wondering if the member gave any consideration to enhancing the time allowed for professional development for teachers throughout the school year as something that would be a companion piece to the amendment that she has brought forward, or is that something that the member would look to the government for after, if the amendment is passed, to work with the YAEP on to ensure that there are enough professional development days within the school year to account for the necessary training to deliver new curriculum?

Ms. White: I think that additional professional development time and days would be a benefit to all Yukon educators; however, I don't think it falls within here. Really, when you look at the locally developed courses — I will just randomly pick one, so let's hope it goes well. I picked Aesthetics 12. There are a couple of things about the locally developed courses. For one thing, they are not necessarily Yukon-wide, so of course, for example, Aesthetics 12 will require certain things. As an example, it says that the teacher must have certification in cosmetology. That probably isn't every teacher or it depends on if you have a cosmetologist in your community who is interested in teaching the course.

They don't necessarily get mirrored across, but what it does when you look at these locally developed courses is that it really does say, for example, what is required. Aesthetics 12, as an example, says that the teacher must have certification in cosmetology. Then it will have if there is special equipment that is required, which would limit where it could be done, but often — it's my understanding and in conversation with teachers who have run the locally developed courses — it definitely follows an interest of both the teacher and the school community. It's not something that they get additional training for; it's within the spectrum of what they already know. If there is additional training — it is a great question that I don't have the answer to but is one that I might ask when we are in the Education debate.

Mr. Kent: I just jotted down another set of questions. I am curious if the member can let us know if the removal of the cap that is being contemplated in this amendment — it would obviously apply to public schools, but would it also be applicable to the private schools that are in the territory right now, such as Montessori and the Wild School?

Ms. White: This applies to high school classes, and it is my understanding right now that neither of those schools offer high school classes.

Mr. Kent: So, again, this is a bit of a hypothetical question, but if the Montessori school, for instance, expanded and started offering expanded courses that did go into high school, which starts at grade 8 now, would this apply to them as well?

Ms. White: This is just speculation, of course, on my part — great question. I don't know the answer to it, but Montessori is very much experiential hands-on learning and the Wild School is entirely outside. So, there is a lot of locally developed curriculum that, I am confident, is already being used to teach the basics, but that is a great question from the member that I cannot answer.

Mr. Kent: Again, I thank the member for bringing forward this amendment — this bill today and two weeks ago when we initially discussed it. My public school days are a ways behind me, but having a child who attends an elementary school here in Whitehorse, I am more familiar with some of the outdoor education, experiential stuff at Golden Horn — the GOES program, for instance. I am interested at the high school level in expanding the trades and the experiential side of things.

This is an amendment that I believe we can get behind and we will be supporting. I look forward to further discussions and getting a sense of consultations if the First Nation School Board or one of the school council schools or CSFY comes forward with some potential changes or even one of the private schools, if it does apply to them as well for a curriculum change.

That concludes my questions and I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this bill for debate and a vote later today, hopefully.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: I just want to thank my colleagues for the conversations. I appreciate them, and I am very hopeful for what this can mean. This is something that I think is a good thing, so I thank everyone for the conversation and the questions, including the ones I could not answer.

I especially thank the folks in my office who have been using Slack to send me links. I don't know if I hit the point where the radio would just go on to the pause, but if I didn't, it was only in large part due to their ability to Google and add links.

I thank everyone for their time.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Ms. White: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King 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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 307: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 307, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party that Bill No. 307, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the grace again of the Chamber today as I move through pages that I had not anticipated. It was a real pleasure to hear from folks here both today and two weeks ago, and I believe that the enthusiasm that we have heard about education in the territory is a really positive thing — that everyone here believes in the power and importance of education and making that relevant for Yukon students speaks volumes. I think that is a very hopeful takeaway — that everyone here understands how important it is going forward.

It's true that we all have strong opinions about the education system, and we have come together and we have focused on the positives and a way to go forward in a positive way.

Mr. Sharp was here for so many hours sitting in the Assembly, and we all have to give him props for that because those benches are not comfortable, but it was him who proposed this change, and it was really through his guidance that I began to understand how important, how relevant, and how changing this could be.

I also want to be clear that what I am proposing is a very small change in a much bigger piece of legislation, and really, I believe that this small change will have big impacts until we can take a look at the whole system. The bill is about giving Yukon students more opportunities now to earn graduation credits by taking courses that are locally designed and relevant to them and their communities. It is well understood that students are more likely to stick with education when they feel that their education is both relevant and meaningful to them. The bill will be especially helpful, I believe, in rural Yukon and for First Nation students because this is an opportunity for courses to be developed in their community for them to keep them going to school.

I just want to say thank you. I appreciate the process, and I appreciate the education. I appreciate the champions in education who are so spread across the territory doing different things. I am really thankful for the conversation that I was able to have with the director of education for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, which was in large part because the Minister of Education had suggested that I reach out, and I did.

In the conversation that I had earlier today with her while she was in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory and I was here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, she left me with a couple of words from Percy Henry, because we had talked about him earlier as being the education champion. She said that he was always so adamant that, whatever you do, you always move forward, and you move forward for the greater good of the community, so I think that's what we're doing today. I thank my colleagues.

Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill at third reading. Over the course of the debate on this over the last number of weeks, we have raised a number of issues in relation to it, but I wanted to first comment on the fact that we are debating the bill at all. First of all, I think it's worth noting that it is rare that opposition parties are afforded the opportunity to change legislation, and I certainly give credit to the Leader of the NDP for exercising her ability to do that and bring forward this bill.

I have discussed before in the past the disparity between opposition parties and the government when it comes to proposing either bills, legislative amendments, or even just motions given the fact that the resources afforded to opposition parties are fairly limited. In this case, the member has sought input from the community, namely some key input from Mr. Bob Sharp, whose name has been raised in the Legislature in the past few weeks — probably more times than in his entire life.

Moving from there, the Leader of the NDP did seek feedback from a number of affected groups, and while we concede that we didn't hear from as many groups as we perhaps would have liked to, there has been an absence of any opposition to this bill passing.

We think that the intent behind the bill is sound. We have indicated before that we voted in favour at second reading because we wanted to raise questions in Committee. Those questions have been raised, and over the course of a number of

hours, the Leader of the NDP has fielded questions from several members of this Legislative Assembly. I think at least seven or eight different members have asked questions about this, so it has been well-debated.

As I said, I think the intent behind it is certainly one that we can support. I note that, in their March 28 release about this bill, the Leader of the NDP noted that the intent behind it is to raise high school graduation rates and to better engage students in their communities. That, of course, is an attempt that we certainly support. It has never been clear to me — and I will have to go back and review the Blues carefully — why that 20-percent cap was in the bill to begin with, but that may be a matter of historical context and one that would require some further study on my part.

Nonetheless, as I indicated, we will be voting in favour of this bill. I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the Third Party, for bringing it forward.

I also should note before I do sit down that part of the discussion here was driven by the confidence and supply agreement, with this bill being identified under the confidence and supply agreement as being allowed to proceed to third reading.

Despite that bill being identified in that way, I think that it is clear that this bill will enjoy support from all parties regardless of the fact that it was identified through the confidence and supply agreement provision, which allows that bill to proceed to third reading.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down and cede the floor to others to wrap up and bring this to a vote.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise today to speak to private member Bill No. 307 in third reading. Thank you very much to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing this forward. The bill, of course, is regarding locally developed course study. The Yukon government champions the inclusion of locally developed courses in our curriculum, ensuring that education is relevant, diverse, and reflective of our community's unique cultural and educational needs. We work with many partners, of course — Yukon First Nations, educators, students, their families, and all of the folks whom we talked about today in Committee of the Whole around those whom we would normally work very closely with when considering an amendment under the *Education Act*.

There are provisions around section 5 and further, the focus of this bill today, which is 43, that gives the minister the authority to establish courses of study and curriculum in our school system. We follow the BC process for developing and approving accredited courses of study. We have worked closely with BC for the last 30 years. It has changed considerably. BC curriculum reform includes board/authority authorized courses and First Nation authorized courses, allowing an unlimited number of locally developed courses to contribute to the 28 elective credits required for graduation. Yukon mirrors this approach, enabling students to potentially fulfill all 28 elective courses with locally developed courses, constituting up to 35 percent of their total course load.

I have had a lot of time to put my comments on the record. I am not going to go over some of the comments that I've already made. I think that I have been clear about how much the Department of Education in Yukon values — we very much value locally developed education courses and curriculum that are relevant to Yukon students. I have been clear in the discussions that we have had on April 3 and today that I would have liked to have seen more thorough consultation. Despite this concern, government will be supporting this amendment in third reading today — happy to move to the vote.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned during Committee earlier today, I do appreciate the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, bringing forward this amendment to the *Education Act*. I have to say that, when it was given first reading and first introduced, I wasn't sure that I would be supporting it or not, and I thank the member for, over the course, the briefing that she and one of her officials provided, the document that they gave us at that briefing, and then just some of the discussion back and forth through second reading speeches and Committee of the Whole and the fact that the member was able to answer the questions that I asked today with respect to the consultation. As mentioned, obviously, we would have hoped for broader consultation, but we recognize the limitations that one of the opposition parties has for that.

I do appreciate the amount of work that was put in by the member to reach out to the groups to get the support from the groups that she did get support from and to have that outreach with First Nations and other education stakeholders throughout the process. What we are trying to accomplish here today is to remove the limit that locally developed courses may constitute up to 20 percent of the educational program offered to any student in a semester or a school year, so I certainly appreciate the intent. Like my colleague from Copperbelt North, I too would be interested in why that limit was set when it was set back in the day.

Again, I am going to refer to the handout document that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King gave us and in there provided a list of existing locally developed courses in the Yukon. I won't go through them all, but you know, Esthetics 10, 11, and 12 is one; Ancestral Technology 10 and 11; Climate Change 10 and 12; Criminology 12; Field Studies 12; Hairstyling 10, 11, and 12; Leadership 12; Outdoor Education 10; and Yukon First Nations Leadership 10.

One that is not on this list that I know we have heard a lot about is a program that was offered at what was then Vanier Secondary School as well as Porter Creek Secondary School, and that is the Sled Ed or the Sled Education course. Hopefully, that is something — I know that it has disappeared in the past couple of years with retirements, but that is something that I would like to see reintroduced. It gave the students a good understanding of mechanics, outdoor education, and the number of things — you know, when we go through this list of existing locally developed courses in the Yukon, there are a number of things in here that I think were encompassed in that Sled Ed program, so hopefully that is something that we see

resurrected in our high schools and in the spirit of Russ Tait, who I think was one of the original instructors of that program. I think he has since retired, but it would be nice to see something like that come back.

With that, I would again like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this amendment and congratulate her on what I would assume would be the passing of this bill here this afternoon.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 307 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 307 has passed this House.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 905 — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion No. 905, standing in the name of Mr. Cathers; adjourned debate, the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to continue remarks with respect to the motion that is before the Legislative Assembly.

I guess that I would want to emphasize some of the positions that I have taken previously in my opportunity to speak to this particular motion. I will say first that I will come to the motion in detail, but the motion is extremely specific and

it requires the implementation or the immediate work to begin consultation on what I believe would be a flawed piece of legislation, but I will return first to some comments about the Government of Yukon position with respect to protecting and safeguarding the rights of legal gun owners in the territory.

Our government, of course, supports the rights of legal gun owners in the territory while also supporting an approach to gun control that helps protect public safety. Saying the words, of course, inserted into that sentence because we have spoken about this on many, many occasions — I believe that the Government of Canada supports this position. They have introduced legislation, and while many individuals think it is flawed and are prepared to challenge it, I think that its goals are complex, and ultimately, the feedback that we have given with respect to the federal legislation is that we must both protect the rights of legal gun owners and we must also support the approach that helps protect public safety.

Our government supports those rights of legal gun owners in the territory while also supporting an approach that is supported by the MMIWG work report that is done Canada-wide — the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls leadership that has taken place here in the territory to have an MMIWG strategy that is second to none and is the envy of many other jurisdictions and is copied by many other jurisdictions for the purpose of having a strategy that is not only focused on the importance of the fact that we have this absolutely unacceptable tragedy of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls in this country and that we have not, to date, paid the attention necessary and that we have, by virtue of that work, identified really second-class citizens through the actions of a society that has not been held to account for the fact that there is a much higher level of opportunity for Indigenous women to be murdered, to be killed, and to go missing. That stretches to young women as well — to girls — and we must address that.

Appropriately so, the Canadian government and Canadian society has undertaken the review of the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls report — a process that was designed for the purposes of travelling the country, hearing from individuals and families who were affected and the vast impact of those being affected. I never walk by the wall at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre with the little blue moons carved and placed on that wall that identify — I think it's now over 40, but at the time that I spent more time there on a daily basis, there were 39 of those blue carved moons that represent the women of the Yukon who have been murdered or are missing who are of Indigenous descent. I think that now there are over 40 little blue carved moons on that wall, and some people don't know what they are and walk straight past them, but we have a sad history, as does Canada, with respect to the impacts.

I mention this because we also have a sad history of statistics that are off the charts with respect to women being killed with firearms. We have to take that into account. I completely appreciate lawful firearms owners — hunters, people who work with firearms, people who need them to be safe in communities and to be safe when they're working out on the land, and others use them for sport. I completely

understand all that, but the recognition must take place that there are balancing acts here with respect to the operation of societal values.

We are not prepared to change one for the other. We must work out an opportunity for there to be a balance — a balance for lawful gun owners and a balance for laws that will protect the public safety. There are many, many ways in which this can happen.

Bill C-21, the federal firearms legislation — when I spoke previously, I said that it is so complex, but it is no match for the complex activities and the complex societal concerns and norms that we are trying to address with the use of that particular legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this is a really hard question. It's a very complicated question, and it is, as I have described only briefly, a complex issue — Bill C-21, which, of course, is the current federal legislation with respect to trying to achieve that balance of which I speak. To protect lawful gun owners and to protect public safety at the same time — those seem like two maybe simple sentences, maybe simple turns of phrase, but they absolutely are not. The difficult challenges that they bring to light are, I would argue, far too many for a single piece of legislation to address. It is why we continue to work with the federal government on making improvements to the laws that are designed to protect gun owners and protect public safety.

It's also important for Yukoners I think to recognize that this complex issue which is before us all today is also what's here with respect to this motion. We cannot ignore the fact that this is so complex. I would say that we cannot, even through what is a relatively specific and complex motion here, resolve these problems by simply attempting to implement Yukon legislation.

Yukon, by all accounts, has the highest per capita — we also know the problems with per capita assessments — number of prohibited and restricted firearms licences in Canada. As I said earlier, lawful firearms owners in this territory must be respected. They are hunters, trappers, and people who are performing wilderness work. They are people who are leading individuals through hunting or leading folks on a tourism trip down a river — a lifetime opportunity. People save a lifetime to come and visit this beautiful territory and to experience the wilderness here, so, of course, firearms are part of that kind of work and protect the rights of people who are enjoying the Yukon wilderness — we hope, of course, with respect to just perhaps scaring off an animal rather than causing their death. But in the interest of protecting people, that is sometimes the case.

Our government is committed to closely monitoring the next steps of the Canadian government as they go to complete what is known colloquially as the “buyback program”. It is not set to resume application until the fall of 2025. I'm not suggesting that these are not timely issues — they are — but knowing exactly what and how that is going to operate is probably about a year and a half from now.

We continue to work with our partners and with the governments across the Yukon — with the territory — and the federal government to explore all of the mechanisms that are

available to us to support law-abiding firearms owners. I truly want to emphasize this part and make sure that it is heard by all because, as we debate this — as I said — complex motion, it must be understood that we are continuing to explore every mechanism of opportunity to make sure that Yukoners' rights are protected and that we do everything possible to make sure that we are achieving our goals with respect to public safety, not the least of which are set out in the strategies for murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.

The one issue I wanted to note there with respect to that strategy and the importance of the Yukon version of, as I have said, leaders in Canada — leaders brought to the table — I think that every person in this Legislative Assembly, for instance, signed that declaration to uphold the strategy and the goals set out in that strategy to change history, to make these experiences of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls come to an end and provide safety for the community as best as possible.

I would be remiss if I did not identify the leadership at that table. There were others assisting, but it has come from and is properly recognized to have been the approach brought by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and she happens to be the Minister of Education as well. That innovative approach to that impossibly difficult issue not only through the implementation of the strategy but before that, the drafting of the strategy and the work with everyone to get that done, and before that, the investigation and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which began here — its first hearings were here in Whitehorse and ended here for the purposes of coming full circle. Those led by that particular minister and the achievement there is second to none for the protection of our communities.

It is an issue for us collectively — as a community, as a society, as Canadians, and as Yukoners — that we work collaboratively, that we take the approach that we must work together to achieve a balance. I certainly look forward to us getting to that point because of the complexity of these issues. It is not black and white. It truly is not black and white.

The approach in this motion — let's go to that for just a second. The motion urges that the House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately begin consultation and work on the development of a Yukon firearms act. The first assumption there is that there must be a Yukon firearms act. It doesn't talk about engagement or consultation to determine if there should be a Yukon firearms act. The decision that a firearms act should be done is an integral part of this particular motion.

It goes on to be more specific and requires that the firearms act would support the establishment of a chief firearms officer in the Yukon. That doesn't seem to be too controversial, as I said when I spoke to this motion before. We have a firearms officer in the Yukon. We have a chief firearms officer who supports the Yukon from a distance in British Columbia, but nonetheless, we're open to conversation about what a chief firearms officer for the Yukon looks like. The motion requires that the legislation which is assumed here would do that firstly.

Secondly, it requires in the motion that the Yukon firearms act would protect the private property rights of law-abiding

firearms owners. For some reason, it is not numbered as number 3, but it goes on to say that it would also — I assume this means the Yukon firearms act — support the creation of a regulatory framework that would limit the implementation of any federal firearms confiscation program. Herein lies the problem, among others, which is that the intent, it seems, from this motion would be that a Yukon firearms act would — not unlike its counterparts passed in 2023 in Alberta and Saskatchewan — be designed to thwart the federal laws that might attempt a federal firearms confiscation program, so it's not talking about buyback here. It's not talking about firearms owners who would turn in their firearms for compensation.

Again, it is almost impossible to talk about every combination of issues here. It does not call it a "buyback program". It calls it a "confiscation program".

While that may be one point of view, there is open debate about whether or not that is the way it should be categorized. I appreciate that the motion brought here categorizes it that way. It makes the assumption that a firearms act for the Yukon must be done. It says to go ahead and start the work required to do that. It does require consultation, which is a good thing when drafting legislation or supporting legislation, but I think it's incredibly important to note that the purpose of the Alberta legislation, which tries to do many of the things that are set out here and then some additional things — and the Saskatchewan legislation, which again tries to do many of things that are set out here and some additional things that people would argue — the supporters of that kind of legislation or those two pieces of specific legislation in this motion — the firearms act of the Yukon — would be designed to challenge, through territorial and provincial legislation, federal laws of which the federal government has complete jurisdiction to make — those being criminal laws.

It is still open for argument as to the classification of those as criminal laws, but that remains to be seen.

This motion assumes a lot of things. It is prescriptive. It assumes that we should have a Yukon firearms act and that the Yukon government should be directed to do so. The approach here, as in the legislation that has been introduced in Alberta and Saskatchewan, is asking us to introduce and develop a Yukon firearms act immediately — I believe it says "immediately" — and to begin the consultation to do so.

The question remains as to whether or not the Alberta and Saskatchewan legislation, which are developed in a like way, will survive a court challenge. They have not yet individually been tested, but they have been made law in each of those separate jurisdictions back in 2023 and have not yet been tested. I suspect that we won't see that until such a time as the buyback program is implemented — determined what the details of that should be and then implemented likely, at this point, in the fall of 2025.

There is no argument that this legislation is constitutional because it has not yet been challenged. There has been no opportunity truly to do that because what will trigger those challenges will likely be any implementation of a federal program that is for individuals to turn in their firearms that have been made unlawful by virtue of the inclusion in Bill C-21 or

the Canada firearms legislation and will ultimately be challenged at that time.

Court challenges to pieces of legislation determining whether or not they are constitutional or otherwise not constitutional or are outside the scope of the ability of that jurisdiction to make those laws is one way to go. It's a way that we have seen former Yukon governments go where everyone goes into their corner, and we start hiring lawyers and going to courts and trying to fight for what is determined to be the only position — the sort of black-and-white opportunities for people to just take one position versus the other.

I have argued and will continue to do so — and I know that our government and my colleagues have supported the idea — so that instead of going to our corners or drawing lines in the sand, we should really roll up our sleeves and try to determine what is the best course of action and what the best solutions are for Canadians and for Yukoners. We ultimately need to protect Canadians and Yukoners from violent crime that involves firearms all too often, but we also need to protect the rights —

Speaker: Order, please.

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

Debate on Motion No. 905 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed April 17, 2024:

35-1-226

Homelessness in Yukon, letter re (dated April 17, 2024) from Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier, to Lane Tredger, Member for Whitehorse Centre (Pillai)

35-1-227

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, Chief Dawna Hope, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun (White)

35-1-228

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Sharon Nelson, Selkirk First Nation (White)

35-1-229

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Maria Benoit, Carcross/Tagish First N (White)

35-1-230

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Nicole Tom, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation (White)

35-1-231

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Amanda Leas, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council (White)

35-1-232

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Stephen Charlie, Liard First Nation (White)

35-1-233

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Bessie Chase, White River First Nation (White)

35-1-234

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Pauline Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (White)

35-1-235

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Dylan Loblaw, Ross River Dena Council (White)

35-1-236

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Dylan Loblaw, Ross River Dena Council (White)

35-1-237

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Sean Smith, Kwanlin Dün First Nation (White)

35-1-238

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Barb Joe, Champagne Aishihik First Nation (White)

35-1-239

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Chief Bob Dickson, Klwane First Nation (White)

35-1-240

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Council for Yukon First Nations (White)

35-1-241

Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated April 8, 2024) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Jody Beaumont, Director of Education, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government (White)

35-1-242

Yukon *Education Act*, correspondence re (dated March 4, 2024 to April 3, 2024) between Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, and Jody Beaumont, Director of Education, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government (White)