



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 24

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 1, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 1, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker absent

Clerk: It is my duty, pursuant to the provisions of section 24 of the *Legislative Assembly Act*, to inform the Legislative Assembly of the absence of the Speaker.

Deputy Speaker takes the Chair

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): I will now call the House to order.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Deputy Speaker's statement

Deputy Speaker: I will ask that any visitors in the gallery to please wear masks, and if you are not going to wear masks, I will have to ask that you leave the gallery, please.

Interruption

Deputy Speaker's statement

Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Visitors in the gallery are here to watch, but they may not participate in the proceedings of the House. I ask that visitors sit quietly while you attend the Assembly. Thank you.

Interruption

Deputy Speaker's statement

Deputy Speaker: Order. The House will go into recess.

Recess

Deputy Speaker's statement

Deputy Speaker: I will now call the House to order. I ask all visitors in the gallery to please wear their masks.

Withdrawal of motions

Deputy Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motion have been taken: Motion No. 157, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

Tributes.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling the Yukon Hospital Corporation 2020-21 consolidated financial

statements, which are tabled pursuant to section 13(3) of the *Hospital Act*.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling a letter addressed to the Deputy Premier regarding the Hidden Valley school matter.

Deputy Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 3 — response

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to acknowledge the seriousness of the matter and recognize those who took time to sign the petition submitted to the House on October 18, 2021. Again, as I've said before, there is nothing that is more important than the well-being, safety, and protection of students when they are in our care. I appreciate that so many other Yukoners agree and want to ensure that our schools remain safe spaces for students.

I would like to be clear that, as soon as the school was aware of the allegations in 2019, the individual was removed from the Hidden Valley school and has not worked for the Government of Yukon since. The Department of Education and I personally have apologized that many families became aware of this situation through media reports rather than targeted communication directly from the Department of Education or the RCMP.

To protect the privacy of the victim and the integrity of the RCMP investigation, the Department of Education did not take steps in 2019 to inform other parents of the situation at that time. We were respecting the RCMP process and confident that a comprehensive investigation would involve contacting additional students and parents. We now recognize that other affected parents were not made aware of the situation and that steps could have been taken during this time to share information in targeted ways to better inform and support families. That was a mistake. We apologize again for this and acknowledge the stress and emotional toll being experienced by the Hidden Valley school community. We can, and will, do better as we move forward.

We are now focused on taking the needed steps to rebuild trust and provide the best targeted supports to the school community. This is a difficult situation involving children, and I am committed to ensuring that all Yukoners get the answers they are looking for. We will be meeting again with the parents in early November to listen to the issues, concerns, and challenges that they are facing right now. We are honouring our commitment to the parents of Hidden Valley Elementary School and have launched an independent, third-party review by lawyer Amanda Rogers, which will look into Government of Yukon's internal and interdepartmental processes, as well as its policies and protocols to respond to incidents of this kind. Once the government's review is complete, this information will be made available to Yukoners.

We are participating in the Child and Youth Advocate's public review of policies, protocols, and actions to ensure that safety and supports at Hidden Valley school are in place for the

interests and well-being of students. Furthermore, the Department of Education will cooperate with the Yukon Ombudsman's review announced on October 25, which will examine the decisions, actions, or inactions around communication to the Hidden Valley school in 2019 and more recently in August.

The RCMP are also conducting an internal review of their 2019 investigation by the E Division Major Crimes Unit from British Columbia after acknowledging that mistakes were made in their investigation. Findings from these reviews will help us to improve how we protect Yukon students, support school communities, and ensure that the right policies and protocols are in place and effective.

I also want to acknowledge and recognize the dedicated Hidden Valley Elementary School administration and staff, who are deeply impacted by these matters. Any concerns about safety practices at any school or about how staff are interacting with students should be brought to the attention of the school administration and area superintendent immediately.

This is a truly difficult, complex, and challenging time. I am going to do whatever it takes to reduce the likelihood of this ever happening again in any Yukon school. We are absolutely committed to working in partnership to advance this healing process in a restorative way that rebuilds trust and strengthens our education system.

Again, thank you to all the Yukoners who took the time to sign this petition. We have a shared interest in the safety and well-being of our children.

Petition No. 5

Ms. McLeod: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have for tabling a petition that concludes as follows:

The undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon government to immediately rescind any and all requirements for mandatory COVID-19 vaccination announced October 15, 2021, and currently proposed to be implemented on November 30, 2021.

This petition has over 2,300 signatures.

Applause

Deputy Speaker's statement

Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind visitors in the gallery that, as part of not participating in the business of the House, please refrain from clapping as well. Thank you.

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to apologize for the disrespectful comments he made toward municipal governments on October 28 during debate of Committee of the Whole.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill its obligations under part 4 of the *Highways Act* to keep the roads safe by ensuring that vehicles are not left abandoned on the highway for long periods of time.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the new City of Whitehorse mayor and council and the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 254 in the planning and development of a veterans square.

Deputy Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon Forum

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Deputy Speaker, last Friday, leaders from across the territory gathered for the second Yukon Forum of 2021 and the 18th since we signed the *Working Together* declaration in January 2017. I want to thank Khâ Shâde Héní Dickson of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation for hosting us on their traditional territory. I would also like to thank the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon First Nation chiefs for another successful meeting.

The Yukon Forum continues to be an important venue for open dialogue between the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments. There are a lot of pressing issues that we are dealing with as a territory, and we absolutely need to come together and work together to address them.

Communities throughout the territory continue to grapple with the opioid crisis. On Friday, we had a very heartfelt conversation about the crisis, and we all agreed that urgent action is needed to protect citizens and to keep our communities safe. Our government has taken significant action to advance harm reduction initiatives, including opening the first supervised consumption site in the north, as well as expanding the safe supply program that provides those with opioid addictions a prescribed safe alternative to street drugs.

We have also tabled amendments to the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, SCANA, in the Legislative Assembly. These amendments will provide communities with additional tools to address illegal activities related to child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, gangs, criminal organizations, and illegal firearms. We are very pleased to hear support for these amendments from our First Nation partners, and we hope that members of this House will support them as well.

Another pressing issue is COVID-19. We continue to see cases, and there is not a community in our territory that has not been impacted by the pandemic. Our government continues to follow the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health to protect Yukoners and to keep our communities' health and safety. My team and I committed to continuing to work together with our First Nation partners as we implement the recommendations of our public health officials. We need to work together to do everything that we can to limit the spread of COVID-19 and get on a path of recovery.

We also had meaningful conversations regarding residential school recoveries and reconciliation. We heard about First Nation Government's Burial Investigation Committee, which will guide the research and investigation of potential burial sites around former residential schools here in the Yukon. The Government of Yukon committed to working with the committee and all Yukon First Nations that wish to conduct searches and other work at former residential school sites.

We have also talked about Yukon Days, upcoming meetings with the federal government, Yukon government, and First Nation governments. These trilateral meetings did not happen before the signing of the 2017 *Working Together* declaration, but they have proven effective in advancing our priorities with the federal government.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise to respond to today's ministerial statement on the Yukon Forum.

The Yukon Forum is an important venue to discuss issues with Yukon First Nations on a government-to-government basis. As opposition parties, we are only privy to what is released in the communiqué at the end of forum, so we are hoping to get some more details about that today.

We certainly agree that the opioid crisis is an urgent and important matter, as the press release states. Opioids have taken the lives of too many Yukoners, and we need all levels of government on board to help quell this crisis.

We look forward to seeing what additional recovery supports for Yukoners desperately looking to become sober are. As well, what additional funding has the Liberal government given to the RCMP to target criminals profiting off of our most vulnerable Yukoners?

We do firmly support the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, which was enacted in 2006 by a Yukon Party government, working in concert with the former Leader of the NDP, Todd Hardy. It's a mechanism to help keep our communities and neighbourhoods safe.

I do want to reiterate, though, that we have some concerns with the changes to SCANA, largely due to a lack of consultation on those changes. I also need to point out that the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* itself is the subject of a court challenge, and our party, along with the Yukon NDP, asked for a full public review of that legislation.

As members are aware, the Trudeau Liberals are bringing in orders-in-council to make a number of legitimately and legally purchased firearms illegal. We do have a problem with the lack of public consultation on this legislation and how it appears that the Yukon Liberals are bringing in the changes with respect to firearms to make it so the territorial government can help the Trudeau Liberals confiscate these legally purchased firearms from law-abiding firearms owners. Hopefully, the Premier can explain why this change was necessary and why he believes that SCANA should give the government these new abilities.

With respect to the discussions surrounding the First Nation Government's Burial Investigation Committee, which will guide the research and investigation of potential burial sites

around former residential schools in the Yukon, we hope the Yukon government will provide the resources requested and necessary for this important and difficult work to take place. Of course, we very much support that work. We wish this committee all the best as they move forward.

Thank you to the Premier for his update, and I look forward to hearing his response and answers to my questions.

Ms. White: Yukon's opioid crisis is ongoing, and it is deadly. Opioid use has affected every community in the Yukon, and opioid overdoses have taken young people barely out of their teens to those in their 70s. Since the spring of 2016, 47 Yukoners have lost their lives to opioid overdose. As of August 31 of this year, there have been 14 overdose deaths in the territory. Sadly, we know that number has since gone up. Each of these losses represents a person with a story — a person who was loved and who loved in return. Each loss affects family, friends, and community. Each loss represents heartache, and each loss is a tragedy.

It's not a surprise that when First Nation leadership and the Yukon government had the Yukon government ministers in a room for the Yukon Forum, this important topic was discussed. The Yukon NDP are proud to have negotiated for important harm reduction services, like a supervised consumption site and safe supply. We are grateful for the work done by those at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, because without their perseverance and guidance, these two programs would not have been possible.

We hold our hands up to harm reduction organizations like Blood Ties Four Directions for their steadfast commitment to the safety of the community and to the ongoing work of others to tackle this pandemic.

These two programs are only two steps on a long road toward harm reduction. The Yukon government needs to act on the request of the RCMP and others to create and implement a managed alcohol program in the Yukon. Each of these harm reduction tools needs to be made accessible to the Yukon communities that need them.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you to my colleagues for the comments today. As I said before, the Yukon Forum is about keeping an open dialogue between the Yukon government and First Nation governments. There are plenty of issues to address; that's for sure. Much of it is working together on a bright future for all Yukoners. We can address these issues more quickly and accomplish more if Yukoners work together. That's why these meetings are so important.

The conversations, Madam Deputy Speaker, are not necessarily always easy and we don't always agree, but what matters most is that we show up and continue to work on issues that we face together to make sure that the Yukon First Nations' voices are heard, included, and respected. The Yukon's future prosperity depends on strong partnerships with First Nations and First Nation governments, and we have built that respect — the government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations — to advance reconciliation as one of our top priorities over the past five years. We have worked hard to

strengthen the relationships with our First Nation partners — relationships that were completely broken down in the past. More importantly, our Liberal government has made a commitment to Yukoners that we would move forward in partnerships with First Nations for the benefit of all Yukoners.

As for the first order of business in this House, we established a National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon. We have revitalized this Yukon Forum, which completely broke down in the past. We created an assistant deputy minister of First Nation Initiatives to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. We have worked in partnership with Yukon First Nations to establish a First Nation school board. We are implementing the First Nation procurement policy, which brought out a little bit of a divisive approach from the Yukon Party on the procurement policy itself. We continue to implement *Breaking Trail Together*, an initiative of the public service plan that will ensure that government is inclusive and representative of the people whom it serves.

The Yukon is the first jurisdiction in Canada with a strategy to respond to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls — missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirited-plus individuals.

We are working together with First Nations and industry to modernize our mineral development regime to ensure that our mining sector is stable and sustainable going forward for the benefit of all Yukoners, and our commitment to strong partnerships is unwavering.

I will assure Yukoners that our territory would not be in the strong position that it is in today without our relationship with Yukon First Nations, and we will continue to work in partnership with these governments to bring a brighter future to all Yukoners.

Deputy Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Mr. Cathers: Throughout this Sitting, the Minister of Education has been asked about supports for families, students, and staff at Hidden Valley Elementary School. In response, she has been reading a pre-written script that was handed to her which claims that a number of supports and changes have taken place. Unfortunately, the minister hasn't taken the time to verify if the information that she is sharing is accurate, and parents and teachers continue to reach out to us to indicate that the minister's claims in the Legislature are not correct.

Here is a quote from an e-mail that the minister received on Friday from a parent: "Where are these supports that you keep talking about in the Legislature; these supports are non-existent! There has never been an 'on site social worker' at our school."

Can the minister please explain why the information that she shares in the Legislature about supports at Hidden Valley school is not accurate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise in the House today again to speak about Hidden Valley. As I have stated over and over in this Sitting, the well-being, safety, and protection of our students when they are in our care is of the utmost importance, and we are very much focused on taking the needed steps to rebuild trust and to provide the supports that are needed for the school community.

Yes, I did receive a letter from one of the parents late last week, and I am replying to that letter. I plan to have a visit to the school tomorrow to do a walk-through with the administration and to ensure that some of the safety issues that have been pointed out are underway. My understanding is that they are being expedited to improve safety and openness in the school setting, including assessing the school for areas where doors can be removed and others where one-way glass can be effectively used. I'll continue on with my answer.

Mr. Cathers: Well, we've heard repeatedly from parents and the YTA that supports and changes that the minister says have happened haven't actually happened yet. The minister has a responsibility to ensure that information she shares here in the Assembly is accurate. We know the pre-written script that she has been relying on for most of the session may sound good as a way to deflect from the government's mishandling of the Hidden Valley school scandal, but the minister has not been ensuring that what she is sharing publicly is accurate. This is a serious situation, and it requires the minister to actually address the issue rather than just saying things and hoping that they come true. This lack of action and accuracy is frustrating parents.

I would like to quote another excerpt from the e-mail sent to the minister by a parent on Friday: "This is why it's so difficult for me to sit in the legislature every day and watch you say these things that I know are not accurate or true."

Will the minister please start taking this issue seriously and ensure that the information she shares in the Assembly about supports that are in place is actually accurate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There is nothing more important than the safety and well-being of our students. Of course, I am very concerned about the supports for families. I have been clear about that. I have met directly with the families. I have spent time with them and heard their frustrations with how things were handled in 2019. We have launched an independent review into this.

In terms of supports for students, family, and staff — I know that I have said this many times and I will say it again — to note that we have not taken an approach that makes assumptions about the supports for students, staff, and families. The school has directed and referred families to many YG resources on an individual basis. I am looking into a couple of e-mails and concerns that have been brought to my attention. I'm happy that folks are bringing those matters to my attention because I am very committed to ensuring that families have the right supports in place.

Mr. Cathers: I'm glad to hear that the minister is finally going to visit the school. Her repeated inaccurate claims in the House about what supports are in place at Hidden Valley school are well documented. The Yukon Teachers' Association wrote her indicating that she shared incorrect information in the Assembly, and parents have done the same.

In an e-mail that the minister received on Friday from a parent, she suggests that it would be helpful for the minister and members from both opposition parties to do a tour of the school with people on the ground to see first-hand what the situation is, where the lack of supports is, and what physical changes are needed.

As she knows, she is able to tour the school at will, but Opposition parties require permission from the Cabinet Office to do so.

Will the minister agree to allow members of the Opposition to do a tour with concerned parents at Hidden Valley school so we can see first-hand, from a parent's perspective, where the gaps are at this school, so we can understand the reality of the situation rather than relying on the minister's talking points, which parents and the Yukon Teachers' Association have told us are not accurate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I take my position very seriously, as the Minister of Education. I do not accept the preamble of the Member for Lake Laberge, basically putting my reputation — and reflecting it in a way that I am somehow being dishonest or not looking at the facts behind this situation at Hidden Valley.

I have talked repeatedly, over and over in this legislative Sitting, about the importance of providing the right supports and about hearing from the families. I did attend the school on September 22 where I attended a family meeting — a facilitated meeting. We are planning another session like that in early November to hear directly from the families and school community. The Minister of Health and Social Services and I will be attending that meeting together. Again, it will be a facilitated meeting that will include parents and guardians of current and former students and current staff at the Hidden Valley Elementary School.

Question re: Obstetric and gynecological care

Ms. Clarke: Last week, when I asked about wait times for Yukon women to see a gynecologist, the minister listed off a number of other issues, but she failed to mention anything about actually reducing wait times. We are glad that the minister has said that they are looking at subsidizing fertility treatment and free period products, but that has nothing to do with wait times. In fact, someone seeking fertility treatment won't be able to access that service unless they first see a gynecologist.

I will ask the minister again: What action is she taking to reduce wait times for women needing to see a gynecologist?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm happy to rise again and answer the same question that I did last week with respect to this. This is an important issue for Yukon women. I can indicate that plans are underway for expanding health care services. The bilingual health care clinic is scheduled to open in January 2022. The expansion of services at the Sexual Health

Clinic and at the women's medical health clinic that are operating here in town, specifically inside other medical clinics but that see patients who are not necessarily attached to those clinics, is also underway. The consideration of, as I said, maintaining and continuing to improve all services to women with respect to their health issues is in fact a priority for this government and it is work that's underway.

Ms. Clarke: Last week, I noted that the current gynecology program is made up of just two doctors. We understand that currently one of those doctors is on leave, meaning that the entire Yukon is currently only served by a single obstetrician. This means that if that single doctor gets sick or hurt — or even a test for COVID — then there will be no capacity for C-sections or other emergency pregnancy procedures. This is not sustainable.

Will the minister agree to expanding or enhancing the OB/GYN program in Yukon to ensure that we are not faced with a situation like we are in now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the scenario drawn by the member opposite, but the fact is that we have lots of options with respect to providing service to Yukoners and to Yukon women who might need those services. We are in the process of expanding the midwifery opportunities here in the territory — something that has been a long-standing issue and an opportunity for women to have care choices. We are working closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation with respect to expanding that scope of practice for midwives, which is a very exciting opportunity here in the territory.

We will continue to fill vacancies with locum doctors and nurses. There are expanded nurse practitioner abilities here in the territory, and we are seeking nurse practitioners specifically for the purpose of providing women's clinics, additional services, and opportunities.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear that the status quo is not acceptable. The wait time to see an OB/GYN is over a year. Over a year — that is completely unacceptable. The program is structured in a way that will almost certainly burn out the doctors and leave Yukon vulnerable to a reduction in services, and this will harm women. We need to expand and support this program.

Will the minister review this program and address this important aspect of women's health in the Yukon — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pretty sure that I have explained now — in three answers — yes. We are working to expand options for women's care in health care — primary care, acute care, opportunities for women to have alternatives through midwifery, opportunities for choices here in the territory, and opportunities for women's care.

I can also remind the member opposite and all Yukoners that there is a national and global shortage of physicians, but that we manage to provide service to Yukoners when absolutely necessary through bringing physicians from other locations to cover for those physicians who have to be away. Clearly a priority for us is making sure that all Yukoners have the medical care that they need.

Question re: Building renovation program

Ms. White: In 2019, with no notice or consultation, the government announced their intention to implement a building renovation program through municipalities. Municipalities were not impressed by the total lack of communication, but they were even less impressed by this government's downloading of responsibilities onto their already busy plates.

The Minister of Community Services at the time committed to exploring the possibility of housing this program under the Yukon government instead — a commitment that we have heard nothing about since.

Has the minister or his department explored the possibility of creating a similar program under the Yukon government and, if so, will he disclose the documents to prove it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk this afternoon about the better building program that the government announced in the 2019 throne speech. The program is one that is offered by municipalities across the country. Here in the territory, we have heard from municipalities and understand how taxed they are in terms of their resources. We have expressed — my predecessor in this role and I — how we are willing to work with municipalities to make sure that this program goes ahead for territorial citizens.

We know as well that offering it through a local improvement charge through the municipalities and through the work that we've done is the cheapest option for our citizens. It allows us to offer loans to the territory's people at the Canada lending rate, which is currently about 0.25 percent. We think that this is very cheap money to allow Yukoners to actually improve the buildings, reduce the costs of running their buildings, and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We have heard time and time again — certainly this week we are hearing it again and again — how important it is to act on climate change.

I am reaching out and have reached out and will continue to work with our municipal partners to take the action that we need to start to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the territory and make our homes more efficient.

Ms. White: In the past, many homeowners, myself included, were able to access a similar program through Yukon Housing Corporation. The fact is that the government has had two years to work with municipalities and the Association of Yukon Communities to find an acceptable solution. Two years later, municipalities still don't have answers to some of the most basic questions that they have asked about this building renovation program. On Thursday, the minister insinuated that the communities are not cooperating, when in reality they are just looking for clear answers from this government.

When will the minister actually work with municipalities instead of trying to impose a program and refusing to answer the most basic questions about it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy again to continue to answer questions about the better building program, which we announced in 2019. We have been working with the Association of Yukon Communities and municipalities across the territory. On my community tours, I brought this issue up with every single municipality that I met with this fall.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the reality is that this is an opt-in program for municipalities. They do not have to offer the program that we are going to build if the amendments to the enabling legislation go through. They can opt into this program.

What this allows us to do is take dramatic action on climate change that's outlined in *Our Clean Future* — the territory's climate change plan. This program is identified in that plan. It will save 12 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions if it's fully implemented. This enabling legislation will allow the territorial government to offer the program in unincorporated municipalities and to continue to work with municipalities to build the program. If municipalities want to opt into this program, as I've said many times, they are responsible governments and can take decisions on behalf of the citizenry that they represent.

I will answer more questions as they come up. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Ms. White: The minister stated in this House that there is no onus on municipalities to sign on to this project, but he forgot to mention that there would be no alternative for residents to access the program if their municipality doesn't sign on. The minister continues to reference a better building program, a renovation program that has yet to be designed. If there were an actual program to review, maybe the municipalities would reconsider.

Last week, the minister continued to blame municipal governments for their questions. It's unacceptable. When will this government sit down with municipalities and the Association of Yukon Communities to work out a program that will be a win-win for all Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have designed the energy side of this program. What we haven't finalized yet, because the enabling legislation has not yet passed this House, is how we deliver it in municipalities. I know that my predecessor has met with municipalities over the last two years. I have met with them this summer and fall to work with them to actually deliver and pay for the program.

Now, this is a program that's offered across the country by municipalities solely, but we recognize that there is some work involved on behalf of municipalities. We realize how small some of our municipalities are. We are willing to work with them to pay them an administrative fee to deliver this program. We also will work with municipalities to enable them to work with this program.

However, it is an opt-in program. If municipalities do not want to deliver this program, if they find it too onerous, if there are problems, they don't have to deliver this program, but the municipalities that are ready to do the program can deliver it and it will be a great benefit to the territory and its citizens.

Question re: Species at risk legislation

Ms. Tredger: 2021 marks the 25th anniversary of the Yukon government signing the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk.

It has been 25 years since the government promised to develop species at risk legislation for the territory. In 2019, the former Minister of Environment said — and I quote: "The

Yukon government is currently working to develop a Yukon Species at Risk Act.” I asked about this during supplementary debate last week and the Premier said that he did not have any updates. It has been 25 years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, where is the species at risk legislation?

Hon. Mr. Clark: Most other jurisdictions have legislative tools to list and conserve species at risk. Such legislative tools are also a priority for the Government of Yukon. With foresight and planning, the Yukon has an opportunity to benefit from the hard lessons learned in other parts of Canada and the world to prevent the endangerment of species, such as woodland caribou and grizzly bears, as our territory further develops its infrastructure and economy.

A timeline to complete a legislative framework for species at risk depends on several factors, including determining how new legislation would interact with existing federal and territorial laws and requirements.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the interim, the Government of Yukon will continue to actively manage and steward species at risk using various existing legislative tools. These include the boreal caribou, section 11, conservation agreement signed in 2019 with Canada, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Gwich’in Tribal Council to protect the species and its critical habitat.

Ms. Tredger: Right now, we have no Yukon-specific measures, guidelines, or policy to determine if a species is at risk and, if so, what should be done about it.

Canada’s species at risk legislation only covers federally regulated land in the Yukon, which represents about eight percent of the territory. Let me repeat this: Right now, just eight percent of the Yukon has any protection for species at risk. That means that 92 percent is without protection. There is no way we can make ecologically sound decisions about wildlife living in that 92 percent of our land without clear legislation.

Will the minister commit to a timeline to present species at risk legislation to the House?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We continue to work collaboratively with our partners in the territory, including First Nations, Inuvialuit, wildlife management boards and councils, interest groups, and other government orders on species at risk conservation.

I can advise that, during the course of the summer, I had the honour to meet with the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), as well as Yukon Fish and Game Association, and other organizations. We are alive to this issue.

Our efforts to ensure that species such as wood bison, woodland caribou, and grizzly bears continue to have viable populations in the Yukon are guided by management plans that the Government of Yukon developed with First Nations, Inuvialuit Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), and, as I said, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

The Yukon Conservation Data Centre continues to track the locations and status of lesser known and globally rare species that are Beringian in origin and unique to northwestern North America. This information is used in global reporting of biodiversity change as well as environmental assessments.

I look forward to further questions from the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Ms. Tredger: We continue to hear, and we’ve heard again, that species at risk legislation is a priority for this government and that this government is working with partners, stakeholders, and other governments. I would hope that the government hasn’t been dragging First Nation governments and other partners along for 25 years of meetings with no progress to show for it.

In the face of a rapidly changing climate and loss of biodiversity around the planet, this legislation becomes more critical with every passing year. I repeat my question: Will the minister commit to a concrete timeline to present species at risk legislation to this House?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: National status assessments identify species at risk in seven levels. They are: extinct; extirpated, meaning lost from the wild; endangered; threatened; special concern; not at risk; or data deficient. Yukon’s south Beringia is home to many rare, unique, and at-risk species found only in this region, including plants known nowhere else in the world, and wide-ranging species at risk, including caribou, grizzly bears, and wolverine.

Currently, 43 species listed as being at risk under the federal *Species at Risk Act* exist in the Yukon, and another 10 species have been recommended for listing. The Government of Yukon has received funding from the federal government for species at risk work and ground research, monitoring, and stewardship, including \$299,000 for bats, bears, bison, caribou, and wolverine for 2020-21 and \$188,000 for boreal caribou between 2018 and 2022.

The Department of Environment has undertaken research and policy work, including a jurisdictional scan to review existing legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and management tools to address species at risk. The jurisdictional scan identified that most provinces and territories within Canada have either stand-alone species at risk legislation —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you. So, I certainly take the Member for Whitehorse Centre’s concerns very seriously and will make best efforts to move this matter forward on our legislative agenda.

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Mr. Dixon: We continue to be concerned about the thousands of Yukoners without a family doctor. Last week my colleague asked the Minister of Health and Social Services a very simple question about the recruitment and retention of family doctors. He asked if the minister will reverse the decision of the previous Minister of Health and Social Services and reinstate the physician recruitment and retention officer position and start working closely with the YMA to attract new doctors to the Yukon. The minister said — and I quote: “The

answer to that question is yes, because that's what we are already doing."

So, I would like to ask the minister to clarify that answer. When did the minister reverse the decision of the former minister and when did she reinstate the physician recruitment and retention officer position?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I gave quite a bit of information to Yukoners, but I am happy to have the opportunity to do so again, reminding Yukoners that the *Putting People First* report found that there was, of course, a lack of access to a family physician — about 21 percent of Yukoners. As we implement the recommendations from that report, we remain committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to primary health care services.

Our government is aware of some local physicians — I understand that there is one who has closed their primary care practice. We are working to make sure that individuals have access. As I have noted before, we continue to explore options to connect Yukoners to primary health care services. Previously, we have helped 1,048 Yukoners to be matched with a physician through the "find a doctor" program that was started in 2019 and expanded access to virtual care options and alternatives, not only during the pandemic, but to continue, and we have increased the number of pediatricians, psychiatrists, and surgeons.

Mr. Dixon: I assume that the minister didn't answer my question because what she told us last week was inaccurate.

The simple fact is that thousands of Yukoners are currently without a family doctor. We are hearing directly from doctors that they are tired and burned out and that the Yukon is not the most attractive jurisdiction in which to practise anymore. It seems that family medicine simply isn't a priority for the Liberal government. Recruitment efforts that are actually effective take time to develop and become established. That is why the Liberals' decisions to abandon the physician recruitment officer position was such a blow to recruitment efforts; so was the abandonment of the Yukon MD website.

When will the government start taking steps to address the serious problem of thousands of Yukoners without a family doctor? When will they take steps to address that problem right away?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, just because the member opposite doesn't like the answer that I am giving doesn't mean that I am not giving one. He has accused me of being inaccurate or providing false information, which is completely and utterly inappropriate in this Legislative Assembly. We continue to explore options for Yukoners. It is absolutely known, through the *Putting People First* report, almost exactly the number of Yukoners who are without primary care. As we implement that report, we are looking to hire additional nurse practitioners, which I spoke about earlier, and we are meeting with the Yukon Medical Association to address physician recruitment and retention. This is, of course, a national and global problem, with respect to the fact that we are still in a world pandemic where the primary health care professionals have been front-line and we thank them for their dedication. Of course, they are getting tired, and we must

support them in every way possible to make sure that they have the coverage that they need for their patients and that they have the opportunities to have a balanced lifestyle.

Mr. Dixon: I invite the minister to correct me then — if they have reinstated the physician recruitment officer position, I would be happy to hear that.

I don't think that the minister is appreciating the extent of the problem. We aren't seeing new family doctors move to the Yukon, and those who are here are reluctant to open new clinics. We are hearing that family doctors are tired and considering closing clinics. Doctors who are planning maternity or parental leave are finding it extremely difficult to find locums to cover them off, which will further exacerbate this problem, and the Liberal government is nowhere to be found. The recruitment officer position has been abandoned. The recruitment website has been converted. There isn't a robust program to find locums, and there is significant uncertainty about whether and when the government will move away from fee for service. The result of this is that there are thousands of Yukoners without a family doctor. When will the minister start taking this problem seriously and start taking action to address the issues facing family medicine in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The member opposite will take note, no doubt, of the changes that our government has made to double the medical travel subsidy for Yukoners, should they need to leave the territory, that we have expanded broadly the specialists clinic and the availability of specialists here in the territory, as well having specialists here in the territory who practise, particularly the expansion of the surgeons team and the orthopaedic surgeons team.

The department has been exploring options to work with a professional recruiter or recruitment firm to support physician recruitment, as well as exploring opportunities for recruitment of nurse practitioners to serve some of the existing clinics. Additional work is underway. We have also met with the Yukon Medical Association to discuss a physician recruitment position. That work is underway. I'm pleased that it's the case and that, like all complex problems, there are many solutions, and we are working on all of them.

Deputy Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Some Hon. Member: Question of privilege, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Question of privilege

Deputy Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on a question of privilege.

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 7, I would like to raise a question of privilege regarding social media advertising by the Minister of Community Services for a better building program. The Official Opposition was first made aware of the social media advertising dated October 21, 2021 on Friday, October 29. We have also provided the required notice to the Legislative Assembly Office this morning and thus are raising it at the earliest opportunity.

In posting the ads, the Minister of Community Services has appeared to violate the privilege of the Assembly and potentially breached the parliamentary privilege of each and every member, other than himself. In the text of the advertisement, he states: “Yukon businesses are increasingly taking action to reduce their waste, increase sustainability and reduce their emissions. We want to support them to keep going. The better building program supports the goals in the Our Clean Future Strategy and will help Yukon businesses retrofit their buildings to make them more energy efficient.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, the better building program, in fact, will be a new program and will only come into effect if Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* is actually passed by this Assembly, which, of course, in a minority situation is not guaranteed. That bill, in fact, is currently awaiting second reading on our Order Paper. The advertising done by the Minister of Community Services would lead people to believe incorrectly that the program was already available and in place, when, in fact, it has still not reached second reading and may not be approved by this Assembly.

I would like to reference a ruling by the previous Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on March 7, 2019, in which he noted that public communications must uphold the principles of the authority and dignity of the House. He referenced the ruling of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Geoff Regan, in 2018 that — I quote: “The work of members as legislators is fundamental and any hint or suggestion of this parliamentary role and authority being bypassed or usurped is not acceptable...”

In the previous Speaker’s ruling, he found that the authority of the Legislative Assembly was not contravened and said — and I quote: “... at issue, then, is the dignity of the House and the extent to which it might have been offended by the news release. The news release was presumptuous. It was also confusing.”

That, of course, made reference to a press release by the Premier.

At the time, the previous Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly concluded that what occurred did not rise to the level of contempt and was — quote: “... an error based on a misunderstanding of the legislative process and the relationship between the executive branch of government and the Legislative Assembly.”

However, the previous Speaker also recognized that it was improper and left no room for future breaches of the dignity of this Legislative Assembly as he stated — and I quote: “Though the Chair concludes that the action of the government on November 22, 2018 does not rise to the level of a contempt, the Chair agrees that the news release should not have been worded as it was.”

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Speaker: Hon. Premier, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: With all due respect to the member opposite, we are about two pages into his briefing notes and we

still have no idea what this “standing on a question of privilege” is. I believe, in the Standing Orders, he is supposed to be brief. We are trying to figure out what exactly he is bringing our attention to, but it has been a couple of paragraphs past the time of being brief.

Thank you.

Deputy Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: In responding to the point of order the Premier raised, I actually stated at the outset what this matter was regarding. It is regarding the presumption of the passage of a piece of legislation. That the Premier wasn’t listening does not mean I was contravening the point of order and I would ask for the opportunity to continue my introduction.

Deputy Speaker’s ruling

Deputy Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, please continue, but keep it brief.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Resuming at the point where I believe I concluded in my notes: The Chair concludes, “Though the Chair concludes that the action of the government on November 22, 2018 does not rise to the level of a contempt, the Chair agrees that the news release should not have been worded as it was.”

“Further, the Chair believes that those who draft and authorize the release of government information have an obligation to ensure that they accurately describe the proceedings of this House. To quote former Speaker Staffen, this should be done so that ‘... the Assembly’s authority is respected, its dignity is protected and the public is properly informed.’ Therefore, having now addressed this issue, the Chair cannot be expected to extend the benefit of the doubt should this occur again.”

Again, for the Premier and others who may not have heard, I am citing and have previously provided to the Legislative Assembly Office copies of the social media posts by the Minister of Community Services which presuppose the passage of legislation by this Assembly that is still awaiting second reading.

The Minister of Community Services was a member of the government when this ruling came forward by Speaker Clarke and was present in the House. He is well aware of members’ obligations to preserve the dignity of the House and, as noted in Speaker Clarke’s ruling at the time, the Chair should not grant the benefit of the doubt in future contraventions of this provision in our Standing Orders.

Deputy Speaker’s ruling

Deputy Speaker: The Chair will reserve this ruling for a later date.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Deputy Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please.

Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Member for Riverdale North, you have 15 minutes and 40 seconds remaining.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would like to reintroduce my officials who are here today. To my left, I have Chris Butler, one of the specialists on this legislation, from the Department of Highways and Public Works, and to my right I have Andrea Bailey on the justice side and justice analysis of this proposed legislation. I have some brief comments and we can proceed if there are any questions arising.

Madam Chair, I would like to address the topic of roadside safety as it is contained within the new *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)* as well as why these specific amendments are required now rather than part of the *Motor Vehicles Act* rewrite. The proposed amendments are designed to enhance road safety through expanding roadside suspensions and impoundment authorities of peace officers. Peace officers can now impose 90-day roadside suspensions for criminal impairment with drugs or a combination of alcohol and drugs. Peace officers now also have the authority to impound a vehicle in specific circumstances including: (1) failure to stop after an accident; (2) flight from a peace officer; and (3) existing driver suspensions.

Last year in the Yukon, at least five persons who were eligible to drive immediately with an interlock ignition device under the *Criminal Code of Canada* were prevented from doing so by the existing waiting periods in the *Motor Vehicles Act*.

The proposed amendments will ensure that this inconsistency is realigned by changing the waiting periods for the ignition interlock program to reflect the same waiting periods as found in the *Criminal Code*.

As a result of updates to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, there have been some problems sanctioning certain impaired driving offences because, as the existing *Motor Vehicles Act* only applies to above 0.08 percent, the amendments will reduce the risk of legal challenges to impaired driving sanctions by updating the impairment threshold for blood alcohol content to match the *Criminal Code of Canada* language, which is 0.08 percent or above.

During the Government of Yukon's collaboration with the RCMP and the Driver Control Board, we received input on addressing specific high-risk safety activities as well as aligning the current *Motor Vehicles Act* with the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The RCMP were supportive of the additional enforcement tools for roadside suspension and impoundment duties. The Driver Control Board supported updating provisions related to the *Criminal Code*, specifically the waiting periods for the ignition interlock program along with the alignment of Yukon laws with the federal law.

In conclusion, I recommend that the members of this Legislature support the passing of this *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)* as a means to reflect the changes made to the *Criminal Code of Canada* while also addressing important safety issues which are needed now.

Ms. Tredger: My question is one that I flagged in general debate on this bill during second reading. I wonder about the timeline for the review of the full act. I did review Hansard, as my colleague had just asked this question before we adjourned debate, but in all of the second reading debate as well as the Committee of the Whole debate thus far, I have not been able to find an answer. I wonder if the minister could tell us when we can expect a full review of the act.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question. I think that I can provide a fairly quick answer on this, but there are a number of different pieces that have been brought for consideration of our government in the overall rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act*. We are proceeding with that.

Members opposite will know that originally there was a proposal to introduce the new *Motor Vehicles Act* into the Legislature probably a year ago or so. However, at that time, there was consideration for the act itself to be brought to the Assembly for consideration. Upon reflection, it was determined that it was a better idea to have the legislation and the regulations ready to go. I have heard from people like Chris Butler and other technicians at the Department of Highways and Public Works on a number of different topics that we are reviewing to be brought forward to the Assembly in due course, certainly recognizing that there is some urgency in moving this matter forward. As I have taken a dive into this issue as well, I have found out that, in some jurisdictions, it has taken somewhere between seven, eight, or up to 10 years for a full rewrite of a motor vehicles act to occur. I certainly don't want that to occur.

I am pushing from my end. I can advise that we do have a dedicated drafter on this project, which is certainly very positive. The current likely time that this new legislation will come for scrutiny by the House is in the spring of 2024. However, if at all possible, I have certainly asked my drafting team at Highways and Public Works and Justice to expedite this if at all possible. That wasn't such a short answer, but that is the answer.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*?

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

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining clauses and the title of Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all remaining clauses and the title of Bill No. 4 read and agreed to

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining clauses and the title of Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 5 to 12 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I move that you report Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please.
I now call Committee of the Whole to order.

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

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Tourism and Culture

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Deputy Chair, for the opportunity to rise today to introduce the 2021-22 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the Department of Tourism and Culture. I want to take a moment to thank Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey, who is here to support me today in answering questions from the opposition, and as well, our acting director of Finance, Kate Olynyk. Thank you for coming in today; it is great to see you both. I appreciate the supports not just today, but throughout the year.

As a quick review, the department's main estimates, as tabled in the spring of 2021, were \$39.2 million. That breaks down as \$36.1 million for operation and maintenance and \$3.1 million for capital. We are very proud of this budget and the work that is being accomplished through it. The programs and services delivered by the diligent and passionate staff of the department are very important to our society's well-being and economy. It also contributes to maximizing socio-cultural benefits to Yukoners and visitors.

As we are all aware, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet here in the Yukon or elsewhere in the world, but we are seeing signs of improvement in a number of economic indicators, which demonstrate that Yukon's recovery is underway.

The Yukon was one of the only two Canadian jurisdictions to demonstrate GDP growth in 2020. Statistics Canada found that, while Yukon's level of economic activity declined in April, May, and June 2020, it rebounded significantly from July 2020 to now. Retail sales did not decline in 2020, instead rising 2.3 percent over the 2019 levels.

Construction continued to be very strong through 2020. The first five months of 2021 show that this growth in construction has continued. The mining sector continued its growth during the pandemic, and the Yukon has benefited from increased exploration spending and investment in mining operations. The Yukon's population has also continued to rise, the number of active businesses has returned to pre-pandemic levels, and our unemployment rate is currently among the lowest in the country.

Despite all of these positive trends, tourism is the one sector that has not been improving at the same rate as the other industries in the Yukon. While some border restrictions have been lifted, travel is still far from returning to normal levels. The 2021 second quarter Yukon tourism visitation report for the months of April, May, and June shows international border crossing into Yukon 94-percent below the five-year average.

Overnight visitation for international visitors is starting to improve, but it is still 87 percent down from the five-year average. Similarly, air arrivals in Whitehorse are also picking up again, but are still 77 percent lower than our five-year average. Clearly, economic recovery is going well, but the tourism sector has not yet rebounded.

Based on industry feedback, data, and the guiding principles of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, our government launched the three-year, \$15-million *Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan* in December 2020. The plan outlines initiatives to support the survival of the Yukon tourism businesses and how we rebuild and strengthen our tourism sector for the future. We are now in the second year of this plan, and the tourism industry continues to need relief and recovery support.

This year's winter tourism season will likely be another difficult one for tourism operators. Assistance for these businesses is still a significant priority. To ensure that our tourism assets, accommodations, experiences, and communities remain viable and sustainable for recovery, we will continue to invest in tourism industry relief and recovery. That is why the Government of Yukon has renewed and extended the tourism accommodation sector supplement and the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement until March 31, 2022.

These funding programs were created to ensure the accommodation sector and other visitor-dependent businesses could access additional funding after they had exhausted other financial supports. The accommodation supplement provides up to \$400 per room each month, up to the point of break-even, for eligible accommodations businesses. The non-accommodation supplement provides businesses that rely on visitors at least 60 percent of their revenues, up to \$60,000, to cover fixed and variable expenses, up to the point of break-even.

As of October 29, we had provided support to 94 businesses, with agreements totalling just over \$4.1 million since these programs began last year. To continue these two important programs, the department is tabling a supplementary budget of \$43.1 million, an increase of \$3,985,000. This increase will mean that, from October 1 to March 31, 2022, tourism-reliant businesses will be eligible for a new round of supports. Because of their experience with business funding programs, the Department of Economic Development will take over administering these supplements going forward, but the budget will remain with the Department of Tourism and Culture. I would like to thank the Tourism and Culture staff for their responsiveness and hard work in developing the funding programs and administering them until now.

Responding to the evolving and unstable conditions brought on by the pandemic required flexibility and adaptation. I am proud to say that the Department of Tourism and Culture continues to provide effective relief and support. This government recognizes the value of our tourism, arts, and culture sectors and the contributions they make to our economic and social well-being.

Tourism, again, is vital to the Yukon in a myriad of ways. For decades, it has been a strong and consistent economic engine for the territory and a source of employment in Yukon communities. Every community participates in tourism and is home to tourism businesses and operators.

This pandemic has highlighted that there is a person, a family, and a story behind every business. These business owners and employees are our neighbours and our friends. They are people who care about our community, people who are deeply invested in our social fabric, and from an economic perspective, their earnings and their spending support the larger economy.

Yukon's outstanding tourism reputation is built upon the passion and talents of Yukoners. The ingenuity and enthusiasm are as much a part of what draws visitors as our incredible wilderness, vibrant culture, and captivating heritage. This sector continues to show great leadership and grit. Their businesses enrich the Yukon in many ways, but it wouldn't be possible without local support.

We all know someone whose livelihood depends on travel, and this is the moment to thank them through our patronage. As we recover, we can all help out by continuing to do the things we are already doing: Visit and take part in the activities and services that tourism businesses offer; share the Yukon places and people that you love on social media; celebrate the people, experiences, and events that make our corner of the world such an incredible place.

These were the foundational principles behind the Great Yukon Summer travel rebate program with over 170 tour packages from 62 businesses that were on offer, and Yukoners were able to explore their own backyard like never before, all while supporting local businesses.

As of October 29, 1,895 Yukoners had participated in the Great Yukon Summer, spending over \$1.3 million with Yukon tourism businesses. There have been 785 applications for rebates, totalling almost \$330,000. The summer experience packages were extended, and Yukoners were able to book existing summer packages into October, with the deadline to submit summer rebate applications being extended to November 30, 2021. This extension also gave Yukon businesses a chance to put together new packages for the Great Yukon Summer Freeze rebate program, offering Yukoners a range of experiences and options to take part in over the winter and during spring break 2022.

The Great Yukon Summer Freeze is a continuation of the summer program and will function the same way, with Yukoners paying for eligible tourism packages offered by local operators and applying for a 25-percent rebate. Given the popularity of the rebate program, this extension into the winter will look to build on the momentum and allow winter operators to participate, while continuing to encourage more Yukoners to get out and experience all the great sights and experiences that our territory has to offer.

Packages became available for booking on October 22 at greatyukonsummer.ca, with more being added in the coming weeks. Winter packages will take place between November 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022, and the program will

continue to be administered by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, which has done an exemplary job and has really stepped up as an indispensable partner.

As I said, the response to the Great Yukon Summer campaign was fantastic, which also includes the events funding, which I will speak to now.

As part of the government's ongoing commitment to assist Yukon businesses and organizations with COVID-19 impacts and recovery, a total of \$500,000 in extra funding was made available. We delivered this through a special Great Yukon Summer edition of the On Yukon Time funding stream to help develop, adapt, and expand the reach of Yukon festivals, events, and other summer activities. A total of 53 recipients — which included non-profit societies, industry, community associations and collectives, First Nations, municipal governments, and Yukon businesses — received this funding.

They held events and programming such as music and culinary festivals, film screenings, live theatre, dance, storytelling, artist residencies, sporting events, and a diverse array of small-scale and local events throughout the territory. Because of this new funding opportunity, we saw new areas of creative emergence and entrepreneurship, groups trying things they hadn't before, delivering to new audiences in new formats.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the important role of festivals, events, and other summer activities in the livelihood of Yukon artists, businesses, and Yukoners. Events not only attract visitors and bring a positive economic impact, but they enrich our lives, deepen connection, and give us all something to look forward to. Supporting arts, culture, sports, and business sectors leads to many other societal benefits beyond the immediate financial security of organizers. They show off who we are to the world, what we are proud of, what makes us unique, and what makes us somewhere that the world wants to be.

As we navigate this final phase of the pandemic, the forecast is favourable, and our path forward is promising. The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the tourism and culture sectors through this crisis. Working across the entire Government of Yukon, especially with our colleagues in the Department of Economic Development, as well as with the federal government and impacted businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders, we will continue to explore avenues to support the tourism industry through recovery and will remain responsive to the needs of businesses.

We will continue to invest in relief and recovery to ensure that our assets, accommodations, experiences, and communities remain viable and sustainable for recovery. With the tourism development strategy and the relief and recovery plan to map the way, and the leadership and input of our industry partners, we are confident that we will get back to where we were pre-COVID.

I am honoured to represent Tourism and Culture as minister, and I look forward to the important work ahead.

Ms. Van Bibber: I too would like to thank and extend a welcome to the deputy minister and the staff who are attending today. As was mentioned by the minister, the world pandemic

has really hit our economy and taken the wind out of the sails, and of course, no one was hurt more than the tourism sector.

The Yukon thrives on its tourism industry, and a number of businesses are really suffering a major hit. As was also mentioned, the number of travellers has dropped so drastically that we are in the 80-percent to 90-percent range. Even without my crystal ball handy, we know this coming season is not looking so good.

As was mentioned, the department has stepped forward with the program for the accommodation and the non-accommodation sectors to provide dollars in support to at least keep them afloat.

Can the minister give us the total amount of money spent on each of these sectors — the accommodation first and then the non-accommodation sector? Has each of these programs been fully subscribed to?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To date with the accommodation and the non-accommodation programs — October to March and 2021-22 April to September — so our total amount that we've provided through both of those programs is \$4,126,538. We have had a total of 140 applications, and we have supplied in support to 94 different businesses to date.

We have not been to a point that we have exceeded our allowable. Really, what we have tried to do, throughout the pandemic, is in many cases — you do your very best to forecast what your budgets look like — especially for these programs — of course, looking at a series of different data. We have been lucky to lean on some of the folks who specialize as, essentially, economists in government to help us with that.

So, today, we still have funds available. Really, truly, what we have always said is that we will dig in and make funds available. Sometimes you have to cash-manage that through the appropriations that we have. In this particular case, we're coming back to look for an increase through our supplementary budget, but we feel that, with this request, we're managing the demand well and we are still processing some applications. Right now, we would be allotting more than just this \$4.1 million. I think that we're in a good position to help the tourism operators who need it.

When we pivoted from the Yukon business relief program, there were about 12 businesses at that time that were still receiving funding. We were wrapping up those applications. What we have tried to do is make sure that, within the non-accommodation program, if we needed to, we could be agile enough to carry folks over. But I think we have done a good job of catching the companies or businesses that are still in a fragile state to make sure that they are ready to embrace tourism coming back to pre-COVID levels.

Ms. Van Bibber: The national TV ads that have been showing with the tagline "It's a Different World Up Here" — and I have to admit that I did see one when I was watching curling and was quite impressed with the ad. Could the minister tell us who created the ad? When did they start running? For how long and on which stations will these ads continue?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This is our fall into winter campaign that is happening, and there are multiple platforms that it's running on. I think that I touched on it in the House the other

day. I watched one of them during *Hockey Night in Canada* two weeks ago, just when they started to run. It is our focus on really pushing to a number of different TV channels.

There is a tremendous specialty channel output as well as some of our regular cable channels. I will tell you what — I am going to get you the entire list of stations that are covering it, because it is pretty robust. We are also doing a digital strategy that goes along with that. I think that October 18 was our start date, and I believe that it goes into December. I will get the full campaign timeline for you. Again, there is a big digital component of it that we are pushing out. There is a multitude of three key different images that we're using. It is something that, through all the data that we collected — through Cossette, which we work with very closely, and Aasman, of course, is our other partner and a local company. So, for things like the Great Yukon Summer, Aasman jumped in and really helped us to define the look and feel of that campaign and helped us with some of the marketing strategy.

In this, you have Aasman, but Cossette is a lead on it, and they really took a look at going across and trying to get a feel — sort of with their data — that there was something that we needed to do. We needed to compel our visitors; we needed an emotional response, really, to what they are seeing. It is something unique. What we are hearing across the industry at this particular time is that this type of campaign is very unique. You might have seen some that had the look and feel from the northern lights. You might have seen some of the wildlife pieces that are there, with a sort of mountain backdrop. You may have seen some of the indigenous culture that is embedded into some of that as well and some of our local iconic pieces of infrastructure — hotels that are there as well.

Again, it is focused on our domestic market — so it is Alberta, BC, and Ontario. As my deputy minister said to me when we were reviewing it, it seems that people really like crime dramas — because if you look through the shows that we are covering — or the adventurous type of folks as well as some of the other shows — that would be more like *Gold Rush* and things such as that — that they have tied into. We are pretty excited about this one out of the gates.

I guess that the other piece — we have learned a lot over the last year, or year and a half, about our domestic market. We do think that we have areas that are untapped. We think that it is very important at this time, as we wait to see what is happening with international travel, to focus on some of those big, big markets and to see, in the early stages of this COVID recovery, if we can pull more Canadians to the Yukon in the summer — and, of course, in this one, showing pretty amazing winter opportunities.

Ms. Van Bibber: Could the minister fill us in on the cost of this campaign? Is there CanNor federal support for this? We also see that use of the program is running to December this year, so this is focused on our winter opportunities. Will there be a refocus come spring and summer?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: For the member opposite, I will make sure — I'm going to dig in just to make sure I have — I'm going by memory from reading through that, and I think it's December. But you are absolutely correct that we're also

looking at what happens in Q1 and Q2 of the next part of our strategies and into the part of the calendar year — sorry, confirmed that it is the end of January.

It's not just us. As we start to turn the corner on looking at our international opportunities and seeing the movement of visitors again, the approach that we're looking at right now is that we have the budget that we put together — which was that the previous minister identified \$15 million that had a number of items within it that were helping us to move through the recovery. We're using the existing budget for the campaign.

Essentially what happens is that — with our relationship with our marketing firms — as components of the marketing start to get underway, we sign off on those pieces of the strategy. I think what I'll do is — to be fair and to give you a fulsome answer, I'm going to get you all of the channels that we're using and a bit about our strategy so that you can see that, when it comes to the digital side and online — and then I can get a number for you just on that campaign from October 18 until January.

When we think about our international — we take some of that burden on, but also, we're looking for two key partners. We have lots of domestic folks, of course — partners that we work with that you would know from your days in the tourism industry and different organizations that you were part of — but above that, Destination Canada, which we're really looking to lean on. We had a meeting with them in September and had a chance to see what they're thinking, moving forward. They are feeling that the Yukon is in a good position to jump right back into the market, partially because some jurisdictions had big starts and stops.

You might see that there's an Atlantic Canadian province that has done an extremely good job over the last number of years with some really catchy advertising — expensive too. What we were trying to be very cognizant of — we didn't want to roll out something big and then have to really retract that, and some of those folks did.

When you talk to people in the tourism industry across Canada, at the same time that an ad was running on TV, the borders for that particular province were being shut down, so you are really sending mixed messages to your potential clientele. We just tried to stay live with our advertising and continue to have it out there but, at the same time, be really respectful of what was going on inside the Yukon — not just working with the medical community, but what was happening in the communities of the Yukon. My predecessor did a great job of really trying to have a finger on the pulse in all the communities of what people were feeling and trying to ensure that, when we were inviting people back, we used the best possible standards. That was some of the work that was done with TIAY to ensure that there was an acceptability. We also were ensuring that visitors were coming and approaching their experience in a really respectful way to those communities and, in turn, the communities were ready to embrace that opportunity. Those are some of the key pieces.

With Destination Canada, we are really seeing, from our conversations, how they want to interact with federal governments. Of course, they are like a Crown corporation and

they are looking at that European market pretty quickly as somewhere to be. They want to be sending representatives at the technical level to hit those markets. Of course, we have some of our best markets, as you know, in western Europe. At the same time, we are also looking to see what is going to happen now that they have identified a new minister who is going to lead tourism. I am happy about that — somebody who is coming back to Parliament. They are based in Edmonton. I have had a little bit of interaction with that individual before, and I'm really hoping that, once they get their feet under them, we are going to see how our provincial and territorial governments will be partnering with the federal government as well to look at not just the programs, but how we are going to market Canada.

I will just read a couple of pieces for you. Again, the department invests approximately \$6.9 million annually to market Yukon as a year-round tourism destination. Tourism Yukon actively markets in 10 countries around the world, and our primary markets are Canada — as we talked a bit about our domestic strategy — the USA, and German-speaking Europe. Our secondary markets are Australia, the United Kingdom, and Japan, and our emerging markets are China and the Netherlands. We are monitoring the markets of Mexico and South Korea also on our radar as places where there is some real potential.

I know, from my experience in Whitehorse and travelling around, that we are seeing and bumping into more and more folks from Mexico who are coming to the Yukon. Pre-pandemic, our international tourism accounted for about 70 percent of Yukon's visitation volume and 90 percent of visitor spending — so, very significant for us to keep our eye on. It's not expected to return to these levels until about 2023 — is what experts are saying in the field. Again, as you stated, for 2022, we need to have our programs in place and continue to have people ready for 2023.

Given the restrictions on travel as a result of the pandemic, Tourism Yukon re-profiled some of our budget in support of our Yukon and BC marketing programs. As well, we took \$100,000 for the Explore Your Yukon campaign, which was designed to encourage Yukoners to travel to communities throughout the Yukon. That was new; that is not something that was done before. About \$225,000 was spent on our BC campaign as well.

I think it would be important to note the *Art Show of Winter* video. It was a beautiful piece. It was produced under our content program. One thing we try to make sure that our marketing firms, our communication firms, are aware of is that we want to try to ensure that, any chance we have for Yukon content, Yukon artists, or technical expertise to be used by those firms — we always want to remind them of how much of an opportunity that is. As true partners with us, that is something they should be thinking about all the time.

The *Art Show of Winter* was produced by Megan Jensen. I think a lot of individuals here in the Assembly have seen that. If you didn't, please let me know, and I will provide you with a bit of information about it. It is just beautiful. It is a Yukon-based production company, TSU North, which has resulted in

significant awareness for the Yukon in our target markets and travel publications, such as vacay.ca. It won gold and silver awards from *strategy* magazine's annual marketing awards, which is something that was pretty significant. Just talking to the firm on how they went out and how they shot that and how they got it done, it was kind of a magical day. Megan did an incredible job — so, kudos to her and Yukon talent.

Going back to our visitation levels for domestic markets, they are anticipated to return to near pre-pandemic levels in 2023; however, as a result of supply-chain issues and other challenges — and COVID-19 variants — full return to overall markets could take until 2026 — is what subject matter experts are saying. We are hoping that our market is bouncing back much quicker.

I hope I covered most of your questions. If I didn't, please let me know.

Ms. Van Bibber: The current program that was called the Great Yukon Summer, where Yukon businesses registered a package, or packages, to offer to Yukon residents so that they could experience our territory and, at the end, apply for a rebate of their expenses ended yesterday, October 31. Today, a new program, called the Great Yukon Summer Freeze, begins on November 1 — I believe you stated until March 31, 2022.

Can the minister give us a breakdown of how the money flows? We have the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, which gets the packages together. We have the Department of Economic Development, which is now going to be doing the rebate portion, yet the funding is still coming from Tourism and Culture — is that correct? If the minister could explain the responsibilities and who handles which aspect of the program.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I had better clarify: The accommodation and the non-accommodation programs that we're talking about today — the money is still inside the Tourism and Culture budget, but we're having some of our team members at Economic Development essentially process the applications. Part of that is because, early on, the Department of Economic Development jumped in very quickly and had a number of different programs to administer. They would have done 549 Yukon business relief program applications. We were doing the essential workers. The team got very competent at running those programs and moving through the applications, so that will stay the same. The only difference is that, instead of the Tourism folks essentially reconciling the applications for those two programs, it will be Economic Development.

We will continue for the Great Yukon Summer Freeze. That will continue to be delivered by the Yukon chamber.

I just asked our acting finance director, and essentially, we have a transfer payment agreement that's in place. We have paid admin fees to date, for your records, of \$48,096. That is based on that \$1.3 million, almost 2,000 people receiving, and almost 785 applications.

We will continue to have that same relationship with the chamber as we go into March. You are absolutely right, March 31 — and partially because we are hearing that from Yukoners, saying we really want to support our tourism operators who have winter product, and not just at Christmas

time, but also during March break, which would be a really good chance for us to support them. So, that is essentially how we are going to run our programs.

I am going to go through quickly so that the House has the information today, instead of having to wait. I am going to go through a little bit of our campaign and answer some of those earlier questions concerning what we are looking at for our campaign that is going on right now until January. I will try to give it at a high level without getting too deep into it.

For television, we are looking at British Columbia and Alberta, as well as some USA specialty channels, but really focused on BC and Alberta and regional. Global Network is one of the networks that we are looking at, as well as some specialty networks, and I will go through them all. Again, at the national level, we are getting reach through a number of networks that I will touch on, as well. Those are anywhere from 30-second ads to 15-second ads.

Online digital — we focused on British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. That can be anything from newsfeed posts and social media, and stories and video, and they range anywhere from 10 seconds to 15 seconds, and the YouTube videos we are using are 15 seconds. Our partnership with tripadvisor.ca — we are doing BC, Alberta, and Ontario, and it is site-wide and is videos that are about 15 seconds long, and we are also doing social and newsfeed posts.

Place-based, which is in airports — if you're going through the Vancouver airport or the Whitehorse airport, you'll see, on digital screens, about 10 seconds in arrival areas, and static posters as well. We're also pushing out to BCAA — British Columbia Automobile Association — as well as CAA, but really, CAA west — so, focused on Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba — and *Canadian Geographic*, and we're buying a full page in all of those publications.

Always-on, which is an approach that we're using through some of our digital strategy, is Canada nationally and BC, Alberta, and Ontario through content amplification on social media.

Our run dates for Travel Yukon winter, which is October 18, 2021, to January 2, 2022 — again, online digital, Tripadvisor partnership and magazine. On television, I think we've touched on some of the channels that we're looking at right now — Global, CTV, CTV Global, for the most part in Calgary, and then, as well, in Vancouver and Victoria, and as I stated, *CSI: Vegas*, *Survivor*, *Global News*, *NCIS: Hawai'i*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, *FBI*, *The Equalizer*, *Saturday Night Live* — as you can see, the trend, lots of — I guess through our data, that's — our professionals are telling us to team up into these pieces — as well as *60 Minutes*, *Grey's Anatomy* — these are all different shows that we're running our ads in, and that's the Vancouver and Victoria market and sort of the same content, pretty much, that we are using for our Calgary piece.

Some other channels — when I say the specialty channels that I touched on — the History channel, SYFY channel, W Network, Showcase, E!, CMT, Comedy, Food Network, HGTV, Sportsnet, Slice, Discovery, CTV Drama, SCI, DIY network, BBC Earth, MTV, Stingray, Velocity, BBC First,

TSN2 — that has a big reach for us, as well, there. I think I've gone through shows.

Our USA specialty stations, which is really focused on the BC market, BTN — Big Ten Network — CNBC, BBC World, Golf Channel, A&E, TLC, BET, AMC, Paramount channel, CNN, Fox Sports Racing, GSN, Fox News channel, PT TV, CNN Headline News, NFL Network, and MSNBC — so, it's quite a reach.

I think that one of the questions was: How much was the cost? Our total media buy for this was \$1,295,595.

The most we touched on earlier, because it really focused on our domestic work. What I will do is ask Deputy Minister Ferbey to just provide me with some of those ads that we could share. I have seen some individuals in government — Mr. Ferbey shared them, and others shared them, and I know that they will. I will just send them out to everyone here. Even through the political debate and challenges that we have, I think that everyone wants to see the tourism sector rebound. All the content is not political. It's very well done. You all have many followers on social media, so, if you could put that out, it will be a great help to your friends and neighbours.

Ms. Van Bibber: I understand that at the beginning of the pandemic there were quite a few dollars allocated to museums and cultural centres so that they could maintain at least minimum operations and also plan or make new projects for the comeback of visitors, whenever that happens. Has this proven successful? Can you give us an update on the projects or plans that have been submitted by the cultural centres and the museums?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The cultural sector, which is a significant contributor to the socio-economic life of Yukoners, has been hit particularly hard by the impacts of the pandemic. Many events and festivals in the territory were cancelled in 2020 and notably scaled back in 2021, due to COVID-19 restrictions, which significantly limited opportunities for the creative sector to earn their income.

Yukon government continues to support the culture sector and create opportunities for it. To strengthen and ensure Yukon's unique creative voice in sectors, economic contribution continues.

The impacts of COVID-19 on the cultural sector here in the Yukon, across Canada, and around the world will be long-lasting, and the pandemic has resulted in some innovative and new ways of creating, performing, and engaging, which we expect to continue as part of the long-term adaptation.

In 2020, we immediately responded to the needs of the arts community by making an additional \$455,000 — arts funding for \$425,000, and again, through YVAC, we did another \$30,000 — available for individuals and organizations through our existing suite of funding programs.

We created the \$300,000 non-profit sector supplement program through the *Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan* year one, for organizations under financial pressure resulting from COVID-19. Yukon Historical and Museums Association administer this program, which was terminated on March 31, 2021. We distributed \$473,531 through the On Yukon Time: Great Yukon Summer Edition events funding,

and some organizations had the opportunity to leverage that and to be able to provide themselves with some income.

In 2020-21, the department honoured all existing funding agreements for organizations and projects that had been cancelled or postponed as a result of safety measures related to COVID-19. The arts fund was increased by \$125,000, and the department offered a one-time special intake last April for that amount.

When we were monitoring the sector impacts, we encouraged the establishment of the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council and undertook a survey of Yukon registered non-profit organizations, as a government-wide initiative, in partnership with the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council and the Yukon Volunteer Bureau, and monitored sector data from national surveys, such as the Canada Council for the Arts, and have adapted programs accordingly.

Getting right to the core of that, as I stated, do we feel that it has been effective — I think is essentially the paraphrase. It has been a different story for many different museums and cultural centres, from one to the other, based on their model. We have some smaller museums that just made the decision to shut down because of concerns in their community. Of course, we continue to provide the contribution agreement. Any of those fixed costs that may have been in place, for the most part, were covered. Some folks didn't bring staff back, or they had volunteer staff.

We have other museums or cultural centres that have a different model, where they may have anchor tenants, and they don't have any significant overhead, except for their O&M. If their O&M is paid for, perhaps by a First Nation government, then they might have used those individuals who would normally work in that centre to deploy them to another area of need.

The discussions I have had with folks in this sector is that there was a federal commitment made in the spring, and we are waiting for that to roll out. It was money committed. I thought, from our standpoint, what we are watching to see is: Will that be an appropriate amount to support the most vulnerable cultural centres and museums? That is something that we are closely watching right now.

We are hoping to see that defined. I know the leaders in that industry were waiting to see that, and that is something we are hoping, very shortly, that we will have an understanding of what those programs look like — and some of the bigger established museums or cultural centres, I think, have taken the biggest impact.

How we handle it — whether it will be enough, or will we have to take a look at that program and augment it — I'm not sure. These are going to be important conversations. Certainly, my conversations have been that we want to be there for the folks who are in that industry. Again, there is such plethora of different scenarios for each one.

I think it would be important to add, though, that I had the opportunity to speak about our museums and cultural centres policy, and I had an opportunity to speak to leaders. A meeting was held in Dawson City just a number of weeks ago. There were two key topics during that, and one was — the member

opposite will know — there is a long-standing need in the Yukon for an appropriate piece of infrastructure for us to look after our archived riches.

We have either the paleontological, the archaeological, or even the permanent collection. We have been in this situation for a long, long time. It has been over a decade where things have been stored in spots that really are probably not appropriate for that level of value. How can you put a value on some of those items?

There has been good work being done on that. The department has been doing some design and planning, which was budgeted. We continue to do that work, but the fear from all of the members was that the government was going to potentially occupy a space where museums do their best work. It was really about: Are we building something that will in turn compete or take the place of museums? That is especially when they are trying to make sure that they have appropriate funding in place. It was a good opportunity just to clarify to them that it is not about that; it's really about having proper archival space for all of those amazing things. The individuals who are extremely passionate about this have taken the time — I have had a chance to sit with them all and really get a sense of what their thoughts are.

The second thing was the policy. There has been a big push about trying to make sure — it has been a long time, many years and successive mandates, trying to get to a place. There are costs that continue to go on. They want to make sure that those museum and cultural leaders have the right supports in place. That was something that we have committed to continuing to work with them on and trying to meet them on that.

I think that those would be the key pieces. I think that it is appropriate to share that with you because I think, for museums and cultural centres, those seem to be the hot topics at this particular time.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thanks for that answer.

On this same line of questioning, there was a creative and cultural industry strategy that was completed and then delayed due to COVID, as I understand, and it is currently under review by you, the minister. Can the minister tell us what happens with this review? When will the actions be implemented for creative and cultural practices?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will answer this in three parts. Just for the Assembly, I want to give a little bit of background about this. There was some very significant work that has been undertaken on the creative and cultural strategy.

The creative and cultural strategies industries, of course, are a key part to Yukon's economy and our northern way of life. When we think about how many individuals work in this sector in the Yukon, we have, per capita, almost the largest number of individuals. But, when we cross-reference that against their impact to our economy, there seems to be a challenge there. We need to figure out how we can have those individuals working full time as cultural entrepreneurs and, at the same time, making the impacts that we are seeing in other provinces and territories across the country.

The creative potential, advancing Yukon's creative and cultural industries, is a government-wide strategy that will

support growth and development of Yukon's creative and cultural industries. There is a clear opportunity to increase the contribution that these industries make to Yukon's GDP and, through rewarding work, that enriches the quality of life in Yukon.

The strategy identified four strategic objectives and 22 key actions. All of the actions integrate input gathered through an extensive public engagement with individuals and organizations in the creative and cultural sector. The previous minister, to whom I would like to say thank you, from the start requested that I was there, working alongside on the opening of this. The previous minister did a lot of work — the bulk of the work — to get this to a place where it was ready to be funded and then moved back on.

I am going to clarify a bit on those numbers. Yukon's 2018 cultural GDP was \$59.7 million, representing two percent of the total territorial economy. Canada's 2018 cultural GDP was \$56.1 billion, representing 2.7 percent of Canada's total economy. Moving Yukon to 2.7 percent through implementation of the strategy will increase Yukon's GDP by \$21 million, so we think that there is an opportunity there. The numbers that we are looking at — we think that there is about a \$21-million opportunity.

Again, Yukon has the third-highest concentration — I apologize; I want to correct the record — I think that I said that we were the first, but we have the third-highest concentration of artists in the country — 1.14 percent — and the highest concentration of cultural workers at 5.3 percent in Canada. Those are 2016 numbers.

Just to give you a bit of background on the consultation around this, on May 3, 2019, the in-person Whitehorse gathering had about 100 participants, leaders in the sector; in September to December 2019 in-person sessions, there were 35 sessions and 5,000 comments; in September to December 2019, there was an online survey with 133 submissions, and December 2019 focus groups contributed to a draft strategy; and in January to February 2021, there was public comment on draft strategy with 36 responses. In the 2021-22 budget, we had put some implementation money in place.

But to answer the question, the cultural strategies — a number of things have happened. I thought that it was appropriate to ensure that I had a strong understanding of every component of that before we launched it or before I brought it through the processes — that we needed to have it funded. If there has been any delay on this, that lies with me. I just really needed to understand it.

The second thing is that I wanted to ensure that all of the budgeted monies in it — that we had a very clear understanding that they could all be deployed in a very effective and efficient way and that it was a strong, strong budget. We went back a bit with our teams to make sure that we really disseminated how we were going to use that money.

This is all in process now. I can say that. There are internal government processes that it has to go through. It's on its way, and then we will be able to work toward launching this very important strategy in the near future. Many individuals who work in a cross-section of these sectors are all patiently waiting,

but I know that they want to see the strategy put to work and to get that GDP again from 2 percent to 2.7 percent and for them to have the proper resources they need to really expand and excel in the areas that they work within the cultural fields.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Ms. Van Bibber: One of our southern gateway towns has been without a visitor reception centre for quite a few years now. The visitor reception centre is currently housed in the recreation centre.

Can the minister provide us with an update on this VRC and if there are plans to replace it or just continue to rent space in the recreation centre? Also, what is the cost of renting this space annually?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There has long been a need for an improved visitor information centre. I know that probably over successive mandates there has been a discussion around this and different ideas on what structures to use — whether to build something brand new. At one point, there was thought about using one of the older hotels that were there, and it actually ended burning down in a subsequent fire. There is definitely a need.

I would like to take the opportunity to commend the municipality of Watson Lake. They have done an exceptional job of just making sure that it is a very pleasant community to drive into for tourists. For anyone who has been in Watson Lake this last summer or the summer before, under the guidance of the mayor and the CAO, they have done a great job. There are flags from all around the globe. There is another individual who takes time to make sure that there are flower baskets throughout and that the lawns are kept looking fantastic. Again, it makes such a difference. As the member opposite said, it is the gateway when you are driving into the community.

The visitor information centre in Watson Lake is located in a leased space in the town's recreation centre. Again, thank you to the Town of Watson Lake. It is usually open from May 1 to September 30. To be fair to the folks who work there, there are some individuals who have worked at the visitor information centre in Watson Lake for a long, long time. This September, I took some time to go and sit with them and understand what they thought about it. They walked me through the installations that were there, but also it was about what their thoughts and feelings were. The member is absolutely correct; it is not an optimal spot — everything from just the sound in the space to all the other activities that go on in the building. Certainly, the individuals who work at the visitor information centre in Watson Lake take immense pride in telling the stories

of the Yukon. I heard it loud and clear from them — the folks on the ground — who said, “Look, we know it’s not going to happen overnight, but this is not an optimal spot for us.” That really had to do with some water damage in the previous space.

I was privy to the previous minister having some pretty fulsome conversations with Liard First Nation on trying to figure out a model that would work — a model where there could be a cultural centre that really focused on Kaska culture and, at the same time, pulling the visitor information centre in or, like you’ve seen in Haines Junction, it became a great part of that business plan where the Government of Yukon leases a space. In some cases, what happens is that there could even be a prepay and that kind of offsets the capital expenditures for the piece of infrastructure that’s there — for the space.

I think, at this time, what I will share with you is that this dialogue has continued on. During that same visit, I spent a number of hours with the chief and council, and we talked about those opportunities as well.

My commitment to folks in Watson Lake, and to Yukoners in the tourism sector, is that I think we have to really go back over this next year and see what our timeline is, and is that going to be the right approach? Our number one priority in that was laid out by the previous minister — our number one option was to be in a partnership, but inevitably, we know that Watson Lake needs to have an appropriate visitor information centre. So, balancing that conversation in a very respectful way — the challenge, I think, is — for some of the nations and going back and sitting with Chief Charlie — to see if that’s a priority for his administration now that they are in place. They have lots of competing priorities that they’re looking at — and to see if this is something they want done. I know that the potential location is there, and there may be other options as well, as we go forward, for an interim solution that might be able to last for longer than just a lease in this space.

Highways and Public Works oversees the lease for the visitor information centre, so I will get back to the member opposite with the annual cost that we’re paying for that particular space in our lease to the Town of Watson Lake.

Ms. Van Bibber: The minister stated that he had met with Liard First Nation. Did he also meet with the municipality or any of the other sectors within Watson Lake?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In that particular visit, I met with folks who work at the visitor information centre. I met with our housing manager. It was really as well to try to get myself up to speed in the communities with the individuals representing departments that I’m working with.

I met with the Watson Lake chamber, which is a large group when everybody comes together. The city manager was there, but I didn’t get a chance to meet just directly mayor and council, but I did have breakfast with the mayor and then I did meet with the chief administrative officer in the afternoon in that meeting. As well, the MLA — your colleague — attended that meeting with me. She was there representing the interest of Watson Lake. There were a number of other individuals there.

I also had an opportunity to stop by to speak to the folks who oversee the liquor store — two individuals who have probably more than 40 years of public experience there. I had a

chance to look into their needs and what we can do better. I was trying to meet with the folks who are on the ground delivering those services and the chamber and, again, the First Nation chief and council.

Ms. Van Bibber: The border restrictions that have happened — first, Americans could come into Canada. We couldn’t go there. Now those have been lifted and we can go to the States. There are all sorts of rules, regulations, and COVID requirements. I’m not completely aware of everything, but with respect to the cruise ship traffic that we are hoping will rebound and be allowed to come into Canada, has the minister any projections, or is he in talks with the cruise ship and bus tour companies about these passengers being allowed into the Yukon?

Can the minister also give us an estimate of how many visitors we might expect if he is in talks with Holland America?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are very live issues around cruise ship traffic at this time, so I think, to be very open to the Assembly, I can’t give a projection on numbers right now, but I will give a little bit of information around what is happening that could affect that.

First of all, I will just touch a little bit on the Canadian border crossing. The Canadian Border Services Agency facilitates the flow of travellers and trade. The agency enforces more than 90 acts and regulations, including the *Quarantine Act*, designed to protect Canadians.

We will continue working with our federal government to ensure that border-crossing processes, especially at the Fraser port of entry, are safe, efficient, and lawful. The tourism sector is an important part of Yukon’s economy and is, of course, our largest private sector employer.

The key to that — it sounds like just standard policy words, but the “safe, efficient, and lawful” — “efficient” is because, with the onset of COVID and global borders having particular protocols in place in order to pass through, it is something that we are watching very closely. The reason we are watching that is because what the wholesalers in the cruise industry end up doing is that they provide opportunities to come into the Yukon. Travellers come into Skagway and then have a certain amount of time to be able to come into the Yukon, go through that experience, and then, of course, depart. What we are really watching is the time that it takes folks, because sometimes they are in a busload of individuals and, of course, there are these new measures across the world that are in place. I think that is one thing that I am hearing on this. We are really watching to see how efficient those processes will be. That is going to be key.

The second thing is that we are concerned. I have asked our departments — both Tourism and Culture and Economic Development — to dig into the fact that there have been some very protectionist-style policies tabled by Alaskan legislators, both in the Senate and the Congress in Washington. That is of concern, so we are going through that and we are ground-truthing that. We are also reaching out to industry, and one of the things that we are hearing is that — potentially, you can understand that it is probably a very popular policy position in Alaska to say — what I am getting at is that they would be

looking to have — as I understand it, and we are still digging deep into this — cruise ships would not have to stop in Canada before they travel to Alaska, and they are mandated to do that now. So, there is this change that is being looked upon. But industry folks are saying that it may not give the same results that those legislators are looking for, because it may reduce the amount of time when people can actually depart or the timing for people to depart. Our teams have been reaching in. Essentially, that might mean that there are fewer travellers going to Alaska, which in turn means that there are probably fewer people potentially stopping in Skagway, which we tap into.

We're looking at having this discussion everywhere we can to inform folks about our concerns. The Department of Economic Development has had a membership with PNWER. It has been a great table with representation from Northwest Territories, Yukon, Alaska, Manitoba, right to British Columbia and, of course, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and a number of others.

There are winter meetings that are coming up. I have asked for folks to prepare some information. I think that it's important for us to table that for our Alaskan counterparts. I believe that the new vice-president of PNWER is an Alaskan official. I can give a sort of formal background. The federal Minister of Transport announced — this is, of course, what happened first — that there was a ban on cruise ships and pleasure craft in Canadian waters, and that happened in April 2020, which is now due to be rescinded on November 1, 2021. The ban had a significant impact on cruise ship visitation to Skagway, Alaska and on post-cruise tour visitation, which we talked about. Skagway was forecasted to host over one million visitors in 2020 from approximately 473 cruise ship arrivals. Approximately 9,000 cruise visitors were expected through shore excursion trips to Carcross and the Southern Lakes. That gives you a sense of where it was going. In our discussions, I am sure that it will come up in other forms about the Skagway port. There is a big interest, of course, for expansion there. That continues. There is a real interest in Skagway to see those numbers increase and, of course, we want to see folks come across to here. Again, using the means that we have, which is to continue to have dialogue with counterparts or enter into dialogue with counterparts in British Columbia, using the PNWER association to make interventions to talk about our concerns and see what the thoughts are from Alaskan representatives as well.

So, at this point, we don't really have projected numbers because all of those pieces are still moving, but I think that, as we start to see what happens with next year's traffic again and look at ways that we may be able to work with my colleagues at Highways and Public Works and at Community Services around some of these issues and with the federal minister as well when it comes to where we can make those border crossings as safe and as efficient as possible —

Ms. Van Bibber: Many of us old Yukoners grew up with the White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad whistling into town with many passengers, and also going down to Skagway.

Are there any plans or activities to bring back the passenger rail into the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would say that there are no plans underway, but I think that it is a very important conversation. There are many individuals and lots of different stakeholders, whether it be the communities that are here — or the potential as well to look at traffic even from Carcross to Whitehorse. I know that there are lots of concerns with communities. My colleague who represents Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes has gone to community meetings and there have been lots of discussions there before. It's fine for me to say that I think it is a great topic, but again, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation — there are so many different governments and communities along there.

Of course, this is owned by White Pass. White Pass has seemed to really focus over the last number of years primarily, if not solely, on tourism traffic, and that's seasonal. Of course, I might have the wrong term, but they still have the tenure to that rail, which is interesting.

We are seeing across Canada — both for traffic where people are just commuting or even from a commercial standpoint — people using rail as a means to reduce emissions and also as a way to reduce traffic flow. We are always trying to build that potential relationship with the folks in Skagway. We have attended a number of meetings there on topics other than tourism — really about the port — and have continued to talk to White Pass about what their interests are in the future with our rail line.

From a tourism perspective, I wish I had had the opportunity to travel that back and forth to Whitehorse. I think it is always a topic that we should keep on our mind. Potentially, in the future, it might be a solution for some of our traffic and supply chain needs.

Ms. Van Bibber: This will be my last question. I would like to thank the deputy minister and finance manager for attending today.

As we know, Condor flights have been a huge factor in our tourism industry. We are one of the few small towns in Canada with the luxury of a direct flight from Frankfurt to a city of our size. Can the minister indicate if there are discussions going on with Condor and if we're expecting even a few flights returning this coming year? Can the minister also indicate how many businesses that cater to that specific German-speaking market have been forced to either close due to COVID, or does the department keep those sorts of stats?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, Condor has recently announced a change to its summer schedule in 2022. The airline will now be flying from Frankfurt to Whitehorse on Tuesdays rather than its traditional Sunday slot. The 2022 summer schedule will still include a total of 17 rotations — return flights. So, impacts on Yukon tourism businesses should be minimal once they adjust to the schedules.

I have not seen a breakdown of statistical information that just focused on the companies that are supporting our German-speaking tourists. I will endeavour to dig into that. We are really seeing, sort of, the pre-COVID numbers of businesses. I'm going to go back and look. I know that there have been

some businesses that were in a fragile state. Probably because you asked me that question, then there might be stuff before I get into it that I should look into, but I certainly will dig into that.

That can be one of the questions that we respond to you on. I think the one that we didn't answer was about the lease in Watson Lake, and we'll also see if we have this. For the visitor information centre, I will get the value of that, and I will also go back and find out what businesses.

I will give you a couple pieces of information that's important on that piece. So, over the past 22 years, Condor has brought almost 100,000 visitors from Germany and other European nations. You absolute are correct in your question. When you talk to folks like Destination Canada, it is so important and it has so many ancillary benefits to the Yukon. Again, the airline celebrated its 20th anniversary of its Frankfurt-Whitehorse service in 2019, and the 2016 report prepared by Vector Research estimated that the economic impact of Condor's service from 1999 to 2015 was \$76.7 million, at \$4.5 million per year. The total 20-year economic impact of Condor's service was just under \$100 million.

Ms. Blake: Thank you to the officials who are here today. I appreciate the briefing given to us. Tourism was the first and hardest hit industry in the COVID crisis, and it is still true. We are probably looking at 2022, at the earliest, before we are even close to recovering. Tourism operators are still facing difficulties with ongoing COVID restrictions, travel restrictions, and staffing shortages.

The Department of Tourism and Culture cannot rely on just Yukoners to fill these gaps. As much as we all love the Yukon and call it home, we know that many Yukoners are looking to travel outside of the Yukon to visit family, attend postponed events like marriages and funerals, or return to travel plans that had been cancelled. I might have missed it if this question was asked, but I will ask it: Is the department targeting the European or Asian markets to come and explore the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will just give a quick summary and, again, we can pull some of the information from earlier questions. We are, absolutely. The target markets — the German-speaking European markets, the Japanese market, and now the Chinese market that is coming online — are very significant opportunities for us. As well, we are now looking at Mexico. We do have a number of countries — 10 countries that are core. For the member opposite, just over \$7 million was spent. To summarize it: From October 18 to January 2, there was a lot of focus on western Canada and Ontario, but at the same time, we are really starting to do significant work on the European market and that international market to get prepared for the spring. You are right that we are still in a tedious position. We still have a tough winter to get through. We need Yukoners to go out and spend money in Yukon with Yukon tourism operators. We need to see that domestic market in Canada come in and support and, at the same time, get ready and go into 2022 with some very significant marketing around our international markets.

Ms. Blake: What is the plan for targeting outside the Yukon for the winter tourism that operators hope to see?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just as we had a good discussion earlier that was really around multiple platforms pulling people into the Yukon — it really focuses on our Larger than Life brand. That has provided exceptional opportunities to explore and share the Destination Yukon brand.

Something that I think, and as the Member for Porter Creek North stated — it catches your eye. It's a very significant strategy that we're putting together. We talked a bit about it earlier — probably just under \$1.3 million in ad buys, across multiple platforms. I think that this can help us drive our winter tourism at a domestic level — and then working with organizations like Destination Canada. Destination Canada is working with the federal government and really starting to put — in the first quarter of 2022 — a significant strategy for early winter recovery here in the Yukon.

Ms. Blake: We know that individuals flying here will be required to be double vaccinated. Is it possible to ask the same of tourists who are entering the Yukon by vehicle transportation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would be remiss if I didn't touch on — we have a number of wholesalers who are actually coming to the Yukon over the next while. So, Tourism Yukon again completed a public request for proposals for its general sales agents in German-speaking Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan in the winter and spring of 2021. Tourism Yukon's general sales agents provide in-market services in support of the department's efforts to market Yukon to the world, meet the goals of the Yukon tourism development strategy, and support Yukon tourism businesses under the government's COVID-19 tourism relief and recovery plan. The work done by our general sales agents will ensure that, once international travel restrictions begin to ease, Yukon tourism experiences will be available for sale in our key target markets.

I just want to check with the deputy minister.

I would say that, within the next 10 days, we are also going to be in a position where a number of our wholesalers and people who represent the Yukon products abroad are going to be in Whitehorse, meeting with industry folks. It gives us an opportunity to speak directly with them and to ensure that we are promoting the tourism sector and just letting them know how important this sector is. Of course, this is what these folks specialize in — getting our products out there.

I commend the Department of Tourism and Culture. What they have gone through — as any department — when you go through this level of impact to the industry that you represent right across the board is not easy. I think the folks who are part of our team are really excited about getting the Yukon back to where it was and continue to get back to the strategy, which was great. I know that you are a big proponent of some of those entrepreneurs in your community, especially the focus on indigenous tourism. There are so many opportunities to be doing stuff.

Of course, your key entrepreneurs are on *The National* tonight doing other stuff, but products like that are so important to get out.

When it comes to your question, the federal government is mandating the regulation when it comes to airlines. We haven't discussed anything about transportation coming in. The protocols that have to be followed in the Yukon are set out. Yes, they have changed from time to time, but, of course, that is really dictated when individuals get to a community or they get to an establishment or a business. If you hear anybody at this point — what they say about travel is, "Please make sure, whether you are travelling to the Yukon or you are travelling to Europe or abroad, that you are keeping up to date on whatever the regulations are, or whatever the current situation or status is in that particular region, because things are pretty live and they are moving from time to time."

Ms. Blake: Many Yukoners would like to be able to support local tourism businesses but find that the rebates offered through the Great Yukon Summer and Great Yukon Summer Freeze are only for expensive packages and not smaller ones. Not everyone can afford to go away for two or three nights to a lodge or another community.

Has the department looked at supporting less expensive opportunities that more Yukoners could participate in?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our approach on this, right from the start, was that we needed to put something together with speed and efficiency — and get it out — that would impact the individuals and the companies. I think that it is important for Yukoners to be aware — how we have set this up is that we communicated out to the private sector: "We can help you build your packages, and these are the terms around the packages — pretty broad terms — and we are also going to put dollars toward you building your packages." We committed \$2,000 for those companies to use a local firm to go out and build their packages.

Now, it is important to say that we had lots of local firms that do marketing and communication that were immensely impacted by COVID, and that could be any folks who are part of a media outlet that does classifieds and advertising, right through to people who do just core communication work. We wanted them to be able to have something that was beneficial and have an ancillary impact from this program. I think that the government program was generous in a sense that it was providing companies about \$2,000 to build the programs.

Secondly, it is important to note that the Department of Tourism and Culture, as I have been made aware, has wanted to have packages on their websites for a long time, and there was not a lot of buy-in. Sometimes they just went to one particular company and said — even a company putting their own package on seemed to be a bit of a challenge, and there wasn't a lot of uptake. So, the fact that we have 170 packages from 62 businesses and, in some cases, multiple companies coming together to build a package — we felt it was successful. It is not like those packages have to be taken down. The only difference is that the rebate will sunset and those packages will still be there.

You are correct. We went through this program from the start. The price point that we put on it — the cheapest package is \$250. I want to be very sensitive to the fact that there are people who are not going to be able to spend \$250 and get a

package. But, when we thought about it and we looked at the different examples — and I will wear this. I was talking to my officials and thinking, "How much does it cost to drive to Dawson from Whitehorse and do an activity?" When you think about that, the fuel up and back — it is a lot. We thought that \$250 was — I'm not saying that there aren't lots of people who may not be able to afford that, but we felt that it was a fairly decent price point to start at. This is the part when you are doing public policy and you know that you are not going to get it right across the board — there is going to be something where you miss some folks.

Folks have reached out to me directly and said that this program misses a segment of the population. Again, I will wear that, but we also know that when you are running a business, going through operations, and trying to deliver a product — for the business side of things — you are putting that effort in — the O&M that has to be taken into account when you are providing a product — you need to have a fairly significant amount of revenue coming through. We wanted to be respectful to the business owners and understand that, yes, there are some folks who didn't get it. To be fair, we are not looking at restructuring the pricing of the program, but we are just moving into the winter piece.

Yukoner Appreciation Week is coming soon, and I am hoping that folks will want to go out and support local business and still get a benefit themselves. We will be talking about it here in the Assembly. Folks who are focused on a different price point can then have an opportunity to participate by getting their Christmas presents early, getting a rebate, and helping local businesses at the same time.

Ms. Blake: We asked in the spring about providing and maintaining crucial infrastructure for our tourist sites and rest stops on our highways year-round. Sometimes outhouses are the only option on long stretches of the highway. Will the public sites continue to be maintained over the winter months for highway travellers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm going to have to get back to you, partially because I know that there are multiple departments.

This has sadly been a complex challenge for successive governments. I know that there are multiple departments that deal with this. Let me respectfully get back to you — just to find out which highway infrastructure, out of all of it, is maintained, which is seasonal, and which is connected to seasonal staff. I probably owe you, in the Assembly, a broader answer about the ongoing strategy on how to make sure that the right infrastructure is in place, understanding that, when people are coming through our communities, it might be one of their first stops. We want to make sure that it's representative of a good place to come and stay and also that it represents a province or territory that is serious about its tourism sector.

Ms. Blake: Early in the year, the government agreed to pay the current and back property taxes for the MacBride Museum. Has this department agreed to carry on paying these property taxes? How much are they every year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I can pull the numbers that we have on our funding with MacBride. I'm not sure what the upcoming tax yield is, but I can get through some of the numbers for you.

You probably know some of these numbers maybe from previous times. I will say that MacBride received \$182,000 annually to operate MacBride Museum and \$50,000 annually to operate MacBride Copperbelt Mining Museum.

In 2021-22, the MacBride Museum Society will also receive \$62,000 in project funding through the special projects capital assistance. The MacBride Museum Society received an additional \$217,407 in 2021 to pay for the museum's outstanding taxes. I know that they are receiving \$50,000, and I think that it's more about their winter product for 2021-22, 2022-23. That's the only commitment that has been by the department toward offsetting any tax burden or tax bill that MacBride Museum will have moving forward.

Ms. Blake: This will be my last question. Is the minister still intending to host the Arctic Arts Summit in Whitehorse in June 2022, given the current fourth wave and expected fifth wave of COVID-19?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are, at this point. I think that what we have all learned is that things can move pretty quickly. That is a commitment. I think that it is something that the previous minister worked on. We think that it is a pretty significant event. For those who aren't aware, the Government of Yukon and the Canada Council of the Arts will co-host the third international Arctic Arts Summit in Whitehorse. The summit is scheduled for June 27 to 29 and is to coincide with the Adäka Cultural Festival — very significant. It is the first time that Canada will host this event. The key aim of the Arctic Arts Summit is to strengthen and promote circumpolar collaboration in the art and cultural sectors. We are looking at 400 artists, cultural leaders, policy-makers, and participants from the cultural sector attending from all of the countries that are members of the Arctic Council. We are talking about Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, and United States. Other participants may include Canada's first indigenous Governor General. I sent a letter off about a week ago inviting her to come for the event with the Canada Council of the Arts. The Canada Council of the Arts sent representatives to Whitehorse a couple of weeks ago and we had the chance to meet with them, but I think that it is fair to say that it is something that we are going to have to watch, of course.

It is a big event and the planning is well underway, but as folks have talked about before, and as you have heard the Premier talk about, it was a very difficult decision to cancel the Arctic Winter Games. At the time, the magnitude of that decision was immense. Also, though, we found out shortly afterward that there were participants who had planned to come to Whitehorse who were sick with COVID. When you think about what that means — and, as a leader yourself in the north and having probably worked across on different pan-northern conversations — we have to be aware of how sensitive things can be, if things go back into communities across the north. I think we are going to watch it. We hope that we are going to be in a good position to host this event. It is very significant, and it really gets things moving, as we talk about tourism in the springtime with Adäka, as well as this particular event. It will really get things moving in the month of June of 2022.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for his answers today. I have a few questions that I wanted to ask in relation to some of what I have heard from the minister and from my colleagues on this side with regard to questions.

To start, I would like to ask about the return to international travel coming to the Yukon. I am aware that the World Travel and Tourism Council has issued a series of global protocols for the return to what they call the "new normal". I am wondering if the government has taken any action to support industry adoption of the World Travel and Tourism Council's safe travels protocols here in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am just digging through my information. My understanding is that we were working with TIAY. I just want to make sure that I have the appropriate information that I can read for the House. Under the theme, I guess we would say, of rebuilding our confidence and capabilities for tourism — as the member opposite has touched on, to support industry, part of what we feel that we need to do is to support the industry adoption of standardized safe travels protocols for the protection of visitors and residents. The department is working with TIAY to support industry adoption of the World Travel and Tourism Council's safe travels protocols.

I want to say thank you to TIAY. They have taken on a tremendous amount of work over the last year and a half, whether it was helping organizations — everybody is getting to the point of being sick of the word "pivot", but I will say that they were refocusing where their opportunities could be at times when things were really challenging. We have seen great support by TIAY to do that work, and they have been really good about sharing information with their members for our summer campaigns.

Again, going back and looking at the World Travel and Tourism safe travels protocols — "Implement resident perception of tourism and research monitoring" — I touched on that earlier. The previous minister tried to make sure that we had a really key understanding of what all the communities felt. The department is conducting a second survey now to measure resident support for tourism, and results are expected in late 2021.

"Implement a resident and community support for tourism strategy" — the department is working with TIAY, the WTAY, and the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association and other tourism-related NGOs to develop a resident and community sentiment strategy and support the recruitment, retention, and training for labour in our tourism industry as well. The department is working with the Department of Education, but that is really more about our capacity.

Yes, again, we are working with TIAY to try to put forward best practices and make sure that Yukoners are comfortable, and feel comfortable, with the visitors who are coming here to support the sector.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer there.

I have another question — one that came to me as an MLA from a constituent who operates a tourism business here in the Yukon. The minister spoke about some of the marketing endeavours that the government has underway. I had a

constituent ask whether or not local tourism businesses like theirs have free access to the Yukon government's contracted marketing agencies.

If so, how do they go about accessing that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The only place, to date, where we have opened up that door is around these summer and winter packages. Absolutely — we don't have to name the companies now, but certainly, I would be happy — if they wanted to put packages together, they could leverage those dollars that we put aside to do that. That is up to \$2,000.

We are looking at, within our department, broadening our conversation around marketing, depending on where they are operating. I have had a lot of back and forth — good debate, but really just dialogue — with the Member for Kluane over the last number of years. He spent a lot of time in the tourism sector. We shared information, documentation, and strategy work that was done in Kluane. We have gone out and had discussions, and then this summer —

I think the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Kluane were on the same route. They were just behind me. I was trying to make sure that we were out there getting stuff done. They were kindly identifying any things that they saw that needed to be worked on, like the banners in Beaver Creek and things like that.

What we clearly heard in discussions with the operators in Kluane is that it's such — I'm going to get in trouble here with other members in the House — it is such a beautiful place, like many places in the Yukon, and there's a real interest in the operators there to work with our department and to do some marketing around that area. One of the commitments that we talked about is that there has been lots of industry conversations and conferences; they've happened. I think the commitment I made is that we would get together and just put a plan and start to execute. We know that there are great operators out there. Depending on your constituent and where they're operating, there could be some very specific stuff toward Kluane. Of course, Dawson already does this very well through their organizations. At the same time, if there is somebody who wants to build a product, we can get back to them and make sure that they get tied into one of those local companies. If they want to use the ones that we primarily use, it would probably be Aasman that they could use and we would be able to support them with a small amount of funds for their project.

Mr. Dixon: I think the minister touched on it just at the end there. He noted that, I believe, the company is Aasman that they have contracted. I just wanted to confirm: Do local businesses have free access to that marketing support or free access to those marketing firms? I think the minister said there's a limit to how much they can provide. If so, what is that limit?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: \$2,000 — that's what we've used to date. But I want to be clear: That's if they're building a package for the winter or the summer program, they can access that \$2,000 from us. They're not limited to Aasman if there's another firm locally — really, what we were trying to do is that for them — if they're not using a local firm for their company — to get that — we'll invest the \$2,000 to build their marketing

around that product. That hopefully leads them to build a relationship with that local company and then continue to drive business for the local company and then again, through that synergy, to improve what they're seeing from their business as they continue to expand their product. So, again, \$2,000 — local firms. And again, just let us know and we'll have department officials reach out to see where we can be helpful.

Mr. Dixon: I think that Aasman is the only local company that the government currently has an agreement with. I just want to confirm, then: Do local companies have free access to Yukon government's marketing agencies, or is it just limited to the amount that the minister has specified?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, it is limited to the amount that we have there — absolutely correct. I think this last — when the firm of record — when the RFP had closed, it was this joint venture — we shouldn't say "joint venture" — but partnership between Cossette and Aasman. Again, that money is a grant and doesn't have to be paid back to us, and it can be used for the other organizations, as well, that are in this market.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Thanks to the minister for that answer; that is very clear.

What is the status of the construction of a new arts and heritage centre, which is aimed at preserving and utilizing the territory's art collection?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are in early design. We had funds put toward it right now and Highways and Public Works and the Department of Tourism and Culture are in dialogue — one, because, of course, Highways and Public Works normally lead all those bigger infrastructure projects. We are in early stage — I touched upon it a bit earlier in some of the first number of questions saying that it is the big piece of infrastructure that is required to house all of the amazing parts of our collection, but also, I took the opportunity today to clarify that it is really more about just an archival space, a place to work on a lot of the collection, but it wouldn't be front-facing, in the sense that it wouldn't be a spot where you would be driving folks, like a museum. Again, in the early design phase — the capital budget for next year has some funds in it for a more advanced look. We have not chosen a location to date. We are still looking at some different options and that is where we are at this particular time.

Something I will just say — really needed for a long time but, again, trying to make sure that we get the exact needs required and identified before we move forward.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for those answers; I appreciate that.

Can he just confirm how much has been budgeted so far for the facility and how much money has been spent on it to date? I assume that, based on his earlier answers, we are at a fairly early stage, so much of the money, I am sure, is related to consultation and designing, but if he can confirm that. Also, is there an operation model that has been set up for that facility, and if so, who would operate it? Who would fund it and how would the operation of the facility work?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm sorry — can I get the member opposite — just the last part of the question. The first part, I can

go through the budget piece, but just that last part around the operation piece.

Mr. Dixon: I concluded my question with one question related to — what would the operations model look like? Who would operate it? How would it be funded? What would that look like once the facility is constructed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: For this year, there has been about \$100,000 budgeted toward this particular project. I'm just looking to pull our next year's numbers for this — so, more advanced. If I don't have them right now, I'll make sure I get back with them.

Really, we're looking to centralize a number of different parts of Tourism and Culture. In the current state, we have leased space throughout the City of Whitehorse for our different units. The idea is really for us to pull a number of our folks into the same space. There will be some shared amenities, I think more around loading part of the collection as it comes in. This is, of course, complex in that we have all of our First Nation governments that also have an interest in different ways, whether that is for our government to be housing parts of that collection — what happens now — and so we still have the responsibility to oversee those points of the collection. There are different relationships around the collection. In many cases, we just have it stored in a secure, safe place. That's our role. Again, we're looking for the Tourism and Culture team to be looking after building and operating it, not having anybody else in there, and then looking to see what's the most appropriate way, based on the relationship with different First Nations, pending if they have a space that they have in their community that's appropriate. I think there are at least one or two nations that have big parts of their own collections that are housed in their own communities.

For the budget item — \$100,000, which was touched on, for this year. I think we're looking at \$2 million for 2022-23, and then again, leading to that, we have budgeted out in the latter years — but again, for the building of it for 2023-24, 2024-25. I just want to make sure, because what we've seen is this absolute disruption in the supply chain. We know that we are probably into 2023 to see the supply chain level off, depending on what it is. We also saw construction materials really move in increased cost. Looking at all those things with lots of good work done by my predecessor and now just taking it and looking at it within this current construct that we are dealing with on supply chains needs, labour, all of those things, we are just trying to make the most appropriate financial decisions for the Yukon taxpayer and for Yukoners, all the while understanding that we do need this space. We are all putting our heads together both at Tourism and Culture and Highways and Public Works to come up with what we think will meet the needs that have been long needed but, at same time, do it in the most appropriate manner.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the answer from the minister. What steps have been taken to develop a new Yukon museums policy?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As a department, we are pleased to support 19 museums and First Nation cultural centres through financial agreements and expertise in collections management

and conservation. These supports to museums and First Nation cultural centres are guided by a policy that is now quite outdated. It no longer reflects the current realities and operational practices for museums and cultural centres. A new Yukon museums and First Nation cultural centres policy is being initiated to update the roles and supports in the museums and cultural centres community.

The policy will be high level with a clear vision and the overarching goal of providing the foundation for a sustainable sector. This year's annual museums and cultural centres roundtable is focused on this initiative. We look forward to, of course, some healthy dialogue.

I did get to speak a little bit to folks in the beginning of this roundtable. It is very early in the building of this, so it's just really for us about starting to work with the sector. We have signalled to them that we are committed to this and we know that there is a real need for this policy to be updated. I am happy to bring it back to the House as progress is made on this policy development.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

This summer, I attended an event that was hosted in Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. It was a cultural festival related to Mexican heritage. I understand that they were able to access some funding for that.

I am wondering what kinds of funds were available this summer in 2021 for local organizations to host local events throughout this past summer.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On Yukon Time, which is one of the funding pots — one of the things that was done this summer was that, first of all, we took \$500,000. That is what we had put in place to support —

On Yukon Time — we call it the "Great Yukon Summer Edition" — up to \$15,000, I believe, was the allotment that we provided. I can give you the breakdown exactly. There was \$141,446 committed to 23 organizers of events that were receiving funding. Essentially, we topped up what they were getting, and they were either getting that through the arts fund or the arts operating fund to just help amplify and increase the reach of those events.

On top of that, we also provided \$362,485 to 34 groups of public events that were not funded through other arts programs. Those awards were up to \$15,000 and available to non-profit societies, industry, community associations, First Nations, municipal governments, Yukon businesses, and collectives. Events eligible for funding took place between June 21 and October 31.

The department put out the information, and we did it through a number of different types of media platforms. Then folks could apply. My understanding was that it was really just first come, first served. I am very happy with the success of that. If you have been around event management — we had a very short period of time for people to make that decision and to get those funds. The department did a really good job of working to get the applications identified and approved, and our summer was difficult. We wanted to be extremely sensitive.

You have people going through a really significant threat and damage to their homes through flooding. You have

individuals who are dealing with threat of fire. In June, when we started to roll this out, we were dealing with significant focus around our fear on what was happening with COVID — so trying to balance.

The department did a really good job of, in some cases, being flexible with the terms and stretching out the opportunity of when this event can happen. That really helped — over 50 events across so many different sectors and types. Everybody who did apply this summer did receive funding to that program. That was good. We didn't have to turn anybody away.

We felt that it was important to get Yukoners out. It has been a rough journey for everybody, and to get out and safely spend time and be able to really enjoy their summer — that reach went out to 10 different communities in the Yukon overall that were hosting events from this funding.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister tell us what happened with the mountain music festival and whether or not that ever happened?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We still have funds available for this fiscal. We got to a point where our decision — and working with partners — they didn't feel that, with everything that was happening, this was an optimal year.

Some of our initial work was done with MacBride Museum on this. They had come back and said that they didn't feel that they were in a position to host the event this year. Also, a number of other organizations across the Yukon that focus on providing this type of event — whether it be the Yukon Arts Centre, Dawson City Music Festival, bluegrass festival — a number of organizations have all put their hands up and said, "We're interested in being part of this as well."

Our plan, moving forward, is to host planning sessions over the winter of this year. We want to bring in some subject matter experts that have produced and delivered events and festivals that are similar to what we're looking at, which is really the goal here — to touch as many communities in the Yukon as possible over a defined period. That can be anywhere from 10 days to two weeks.

Whether you are going to Haines Junction to the event centre there or you're going to Watson Lake, there are different types of music being delivered across the Yukon. We really want to focus on that for the shoulder season. We hear that from tourism operators: "How can we extend the season a little bit more?" We think that there have been different things tried over the last number of years. We believe that it is an optimal time to host events like this. Our hotel occupancy starts to retreat a little bit. It's a phenomenal time when the northern lights are out. We really want to be able to drive as much of the traffic for this event to communities.

What we have seen in other jurisdictions is that the actual host communities work with a central committee that has expertise in this, but those local folks in many cases use it as an opportunity for a fundraiser through the sale of some of the goods, whether that is food or alcohol, that are sold. At the same time, a bigger committee is working to look at the revenue that is coming in from the ticket sales for the event.

We still have work to do. We felt that the right thing to do this year was to take the funds that were defined and use them

to properly plan and get as much reach as possible for next year. We look forward to some discussions over the winter to get ready and to start our marketing plan for the fall of 2022.

Mr. Dixon: I just want to return briefly to the arts and heritage centre planning that the minister indicated was underway. He mentioned that there was consideration that there could be a partnership with different First Nations. I just wanted to confirm if it is the intent that this facility would be in Whitehorse, or is the minister considering hosting or building that facility outside of Whitehorse? Is there any consideration being given to linking that facility with Yukon University and the studies that are underway there?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to clarify, I will have to go back in the Blues. I don't think that, in my preamble, I said that there was a potential partnership with First Nations, but I will touch on the fact that, in January 2020, I travelled with the then-Minister of Tourism and Culture to Roundup. There was an event that was hosted by the First Nation Chamber that focused on opportunities for development corporations.

At that time, the minister tabled that idea, saying: "Look, we have this building we need to build, and we are looking for partners." Really, after that, my understanding was — and I had discussions subsequent to that with a number of different affected corporations that were there. There really wasn't any interest that we heard of at that time. I think that, to date, the real tangible thing is — I believe that Highways and Public Works and Tourism and Culture have reached out about a potential location, and that discussion focused on potentially working with Kwanlin Dün.

So, to date, the idea is still that the building gets built in Whitehorse. As I am getting briefed by departmental officials, that is what they are still focused on — maybe the potential of a location that would be on leased land, potentially, but still, I think those were early conversations, but not a bigger dialogue around the university. That could still be a live conversation. In my conversations with officials, that is not something that has come up. I know that there has been an interest and it may be something that we need to ground-truth to see if things have changed on that discussion. I guess the key is that, when we think about the location, the thing that officials continue to say is that we just really need to be up on the bench, and that has to do with the collection and concerns for a thousand-year event type of thing. I don't want to say that loosely, but a very significant event — and it would be important to put it up on the bench by the Beringia area or on campus or something like that.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that time is running out here, so I will ask one further question and perhaps he can respond as long as he wishes and then we can carry on.

I did want to ask a question in follow-up to one that was asked earlier, and that was about the work that had been done so far about the possible return of passenger rail to Whitehorse. I am just curious if the minister can update us further on what work has been done so far to consider the options for bringing passenger rail back to Whitehorse.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There have been some very preliminary conversations between department officials and

White Pass. I think that the response that we have heard is that all ideas can be on the table. That is at least what we have heard from the private sector, and as private sector players, it just has to make financial sense to them. So, it's very early in that sense, and if there are any further talks of substance, we will have an opportunity during Question Period or in the springtime during debate to discuss that.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Acting Government House Leader that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Speaker resumes the Chair

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Madam Deputy Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the Acting Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 1, 2021:

35-1-26

Yukon Hospital Corporation Consolidated Financial Statements March 31, 2021 (McPhee)