



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 28

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 8, 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 | Government House Leader* 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 |

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 8, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes which have been made to the Order Paper. The following motion has not been placed on the Notice Paper as the motion is out of order: Motion No. 187, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I ask my colleagues to help me welcome some important guests here today for our tribute on National Indigenous Veterans Day.

First, I will start with Josephine Holloway, niece to Ralph Edward Good, who was a pilot officer in the Air Force. Thank you so much for coming today. Joe Mewett, president of the Whitehorse Legion Branch 254; Red Grossinger, past president, Whitehorse Legion Branch 254; Major Theriau, detachment commander, Joint Task Force North; Captain Rector, detachment liaison officer for the Joint Task Force North; and Peter Zwikirsch, Canadian Ranger, Whitehorse Patrol.

Thank you so much for coming today for the tribute.

I would also like to welcome my husband back to the Legislative Assembly — Rick McLean. Thank you all for being here today.

Applause

Ms. White: Today I invite my colleagues to join me in welcoming two important people here today in the gallery. In 2019, she was elected to represent Nunavut, and with that, she told indigenous people that they belonged in places where decisions were made. She has changed the face of Canadian politics, and although she chose not to run in this last election, we have not seen the last of Mumilaaq Qaqqaq. Thank you for being here.

As we say, we are a product of our families, and today joining Mumilaaq is her mother Pia. So, Pia is a retired educator — retired teacher — who spent her entire career in the Arctic, and Mumilaaq has said that it's not a surprise that she turned out the way she did, and her brother is also on the hamlet council.

So, thank you, Pia, for being such an influence and for being here today with us.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am wondering if we can also welcome Mr. Dave Brekke, who is a long-time advocate around voting systems here in the territory — if we could welcome him, please.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Indigenous Veterans Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to National Indigenous Veterans Day. More than 500 indigenous soldiers died on our behalf, while serving on land, sea, and in air.

It has been 20 years since a major monument commemorating indigenous veterans was unveiled in Ottawa in 2001. At the time of this unveiling, indigenous veterans were still being denied equal benefits, and the concept of reconciliation was only starting to enter into conversations. It would be another two years, in 2003, before the Government of Canada extended full veteran's benefits to honour and recognize the dedication and sacrifice of indigenous soldiers.

National Indigenous Veterans Day is meant to shine light on the incredible valour and contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who served in uniform and to better understand their history, including the unequal reception and discrimination that many experienced after returning home.

Mr. Speaker, it is tragic that, while indigenous soldiers were fighting for freedom in other regions of the world, their own freedoms at home were being violated by colonization. Imagine putting your life at risk for others' freedom while your own family suffered terribly in residential school systems. Now, as we continue to uncover mass gravesites of children connected to residential schools, the sacrifices made by indigenous soldiers should be even more front of mind for all Canadians.

One of the Yukon's most famous indigenous soldiers who survived the perils of World War II was veteran Chief Elijah Smith. Chief Smith was fuelled by the suffering that he saw upon returning to Canada. He was inspired to lead in the creation of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, an enormous contribution to our country.

National Indigenous Veterans Day is an opportunity to salute indigenous veterans who fully understand Canada's legacy of abuse and decide how we, as Canadians, will use the freedom that we were gifted at the expense of so many indigenous people. I hope we are able to truly reflect on this as we move forward on the path toward reconciliation.

In closing, I want to acknowledge all of the incredible artisans working throughout our territory and nationally to create lovingly beaded poppies. I am wearing a poppy created by my niece, Brenda Lee Asp. In her own words, it is created to honour the sacrifices that our families have made to help fight for the freedom of this country.

It is made with glass beads, porcupine quills, and a single centre bead made of tourmaline, a protection stone to acknowledge the sorrow and grief that goes with war.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Indigenous Veterans Day, a day observed annually on November 8 in Canada. This special day recognizes the significant contributions of indigenous veterans, past and present. During the great conflicts of the 20th century, indigenous people voluntarily enlisted at a higher rate than other Canadians. This enthusiasm is well documented for First Nation people. Today, approximately 2,300 regular force and primary reserve members have identified themselves as indigenous, representing 2.5 percent of the total population of the military.

Among the other reserve forces, indigenous peoples occupy an important place among the 5,000 Canadian Rangers. I would say that here in the Yukon, at least 50 percent or more are indigenous, and across the other territories, it is probably even higher. The role of the Rangers is so important to protecting Canada's sovereignty in the north. Thousands of indigenous people have served over the years, voluntarily enlisting in the Canadian military from all regions of the country, and they have been on the front lines. They have made contributions to war charities and have volunteered labour in wartime industries.

I want to highlight something that shows just how important our First Nation veterans are to Canada. In 2014, Canada's top soldier, the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Thomas J. Lawson, headed to his regular 11:00 a.m. briefing, a briefing where he would hear of national issues, like there has been a terrorist attack or there is need for humanitarian aid. His staff said, "Sit down. Alex Van Bibber has died, sir. He's a Yukon legend." At 98, Van Bibber was one of Yukon's last surviving aboriginal veterans from the Second World War. They then began to spend the complete briefing, one hour long, telling of Alex's life. Over 8,000 people came to his funeral in the tiny community of Champagne, many military dignitaries among them. This, Mr. Speaker, is a testament to how valuable our First Nation veterans are to our great country of Canada. They came together for our country, and we come together in recognition of their contributions.

So, we thank all indigenous veterans for their services, for their contributions, and for their efforts and sacrifices for us throughout our history and especially today. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve among many of them. Lest we forget.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to National Indigenous Veterans Day. We all honour all indigenous Canadians who have served, and continue to serve, Canada both at home and abroad.

Indigenous Canadians have stood tall for their values since the beginning of time. Across nations, indigenous people are guided by ideas of community and generosity. In the first, second, and Korean wars, over 12,000 indigenous people

volunteered to serve. I use the word "volunteered" because indigenous people weren't actually eligible for conscription. During these wars, indigenous soldiers who enrolled lost their status but were still not considered Canadian citizens.

The Yukon had many First Nation citizens who served in different wars. In the Second World War, Chief Peter Moses and the community of Old Crow raised money to send to Europe to support children who lost parents and for other relief programs. Chief Elijah Smith, who helped launch *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*, as well as Alex Van Bibber, who was a Champagne and Aishihik citizen, both served in the Second World War. Abroad, these veterans witnessed unimaginable violence and faced impossible choices on the front lines. Many of these veterans were young, and many did not return. Yet, after so much trauma abroad, indigenous veterans came back home and found themselves with little to no support. The Canadian government failed people like Chief Smith and other indigenous veterans. Indigenous veterans were no longer able to access programs and services provided by the federal government on their reserves. At the same time that they were unable to access services on reserves, indigenous veterans were not able to access the same services provided to other returning veterans because they were Indians.

So, as we celebrate National Indigenous Veterans Day, it is important to remember that it wasn't until 50 years after the Second World War that indigenous peoples were allowed to lay remembrance wreaths at the National War Memorial. They weren't allowed to remember and honour their friends and colleagues like other veterans were able to do.

Every day we remember the generosity of spirit and community that indigenous veterans had and continue to have. Today we thank and remember all indigenous people and their families who have given their kindness, dedication, and lives to the Canadian Armed Forces and to their fellow Canadians. Lest we forget.

Applause

In recognition of veterans' mental health services

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize that we are entering the week of Remembrance Day. This is a time to remember those who have sacrificed for our country and those who continue to serve.

For many of us, it is hard to imagine what our Canadian veterans and soldiers have been through; however, it is easy to understand how their duties and experiences can affect one's mental health. We must recognize that many veterans and soldiers have long-term effects from their experiences, including possibly post-traumatic stress disorder, or what is known as PTSD. We need to be supportive in every way, patient, kind, and caring toward each other because we never know who might be living with the effects of PTSD or other mental wellness issues.

If you or someone you know is struggling, do not feel alone. Mental illness and mental wellness issues can affect anyone. It is perfectly normal to feel angry, anxious, lonely, sad, or worried, but do not deny yourself access to the care that you might need. Mental health is a huge part of our overall

health and wellness and should be a priority for everyone. It is okay to reach out for help no matter where you are, your age, your history, or what you are going through. You don't have to go through it alone.

In addition to many other services, our team at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provides services for people living with all kinds of issues, including severe and persistent mental illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder. For many, these more targeted wraparound supports are the key to helping them manage their trauma. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services also provides services to those caring for and supporting people with severe mental illness. Yukoners can also access services through the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon Division and All Genders Yukon. Collectively, Mr. Speaker, these services provide a light through the dark with their counselling services and support groups.

This week, we should all take the time to think about what veterans and those who are currently serving have lived through and to take the opportunity to thank them for their sacrifice, their bravery, and the example that they set for us all.

This is a chance to honour our Yukon veterans and our First Nation veterans and those who continue to serve. Our freedoms were earned by each and every one of you. Thank you for your service and sacrifices.

Applause

In recognition of Wounded Warriors Canada

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to recognize the importance of national support for our veterans in the area of mental health and wellness.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, our little community of Haines Junction was lucky to have a veteran, Paul Nichols, come talk to us Rangers and Junior Rangers about why he rode across Canada in 2015 to raise awareness for PTSD mental health issues — just some of the issues that veterans face when returning to civilian life.

He mentioned that most of us, many, still have the vision that our veterans are 90-year-old men who once stormed the beaches on D-Day. Actually, Mr. Speaker, the young lady working behind the counter in a convenience store has three tours as a combat nurse in Afghanistan. The young man doing maintenance on a fence survived a roadside bomb on his second tour in Afghanistan.

They live among us today but may struggle with the transition from soldier to civilian when they return home. They left a military family; they leave a brotherhood, sisterhood, and sometimes struggle to find their place back home. That's what a contemporary veteran is today.

Whether serving domestically or abroad, at some point during our service, many of us have experienced a traumatic event that changed our view of the world and changed ourselves. Depending on a range of factors, some people's reactions may last for just a short period of time while others may experience more lasting effects. Why some people are affected more than others — there is no simple answer.

In Canada, it's estimated that up to 10 percent of the veterans, including war service veterans and peacekeeping forces, will go on to experience a chronic condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder while others may experience at least some of the symptoms associated with this condition.

Today, I want to tribute, thank, and highlight organizations that help soldiers with mental health issues in transitioning back into the community: Wounded Warriors Canada is a national mental health service provider utilizing clinical best practices and evidence-based care to create an environment of compassion, resilience, and hope for Canada's veterans, first responders, and their families; Veterans Affairs Canada's mental health and wellness supports, online resources, special events, and apps all focus on improving well-being for releasing and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces or the RCMP, family members, and caregivers; and the Royal Canadian Legion understands the toll that serving our country can take on individuals and offer assistance in helping veterans to access help and supports available through the service officer of the Legion Service Bureau Network, and they will help veterans understand what supports are available, help to access benefits and services through Veterans Affairs Canada, refer veterans for mental health services, and provide information on community-based supports.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Nichols, on his visit to Haines Junction speaking of the transition back to civilian life — he and his wife run a successful horse clinic in BC where they bring veterans in and people with mental health issues — said that he knows that Canadian people love their troops. He said that he knows that we love our veterans; it's just that sometimes we forget who they are. If they get good support from community in the difficult time of transition, our troops will do really, really well moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, time doesn't heal all wounds. It is imperative that all governments, including ours, help to support our veterans in their time of need and that we support those organizations that help, day to day — listening to Yukoners, lending an ear, and lending a hand to help our veterans every day.

I would be remiss, because we have members from the legion here and service members here, if I didn't thank them.

Thank you, and lest we forget.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling today an e-mail dated November 8, 2021 to Hidden Valley school parents regarding their meeting tomorrow.

Ms. White: I have for tabling today two letters. One is dated today, November 8, directed to the Minister of Health and Social Services, asking to make nasal Naloxone accessible to all Yukoners. It is signed by Grand Chief Peter Johnston and eight NGOs in the territory. I also have for tabling a letter dated

November 7 from members of the public, asking for rapid tests to be available in school settings.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Kent: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement new rapid-testing protocols for schools that will allow staff and students to safely continue with in-person learning as much as possible while identifying and limiting the spread of COVID-19.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the agenda for the Yukon government's November 9, 2021 meeting for Hidden Valley school parents should be changed to allow parents to actually ask questions instead of being stuck listening to prepared remarks in a one-sided exchange.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support rural Yukon by urgently recruiting full-time mental health counsellors to meet the needs of each Yukon community.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement the use of rapid antigen tests for COVID screening for all Yukon students.

I also give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reinstate the position of physician recruitment officer and expand the role to include the recruitment of health care professionals where shortages exist.

I also give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make available the Shingrix vaccine for all Yukon seniors, free of charge.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Draft Dawson regional land use plan

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to share with the Assembly and all Yukoners that we have had a chance to review and comment on the draft Dawson regional land use plan. The Dawson Regional Planning Commission has been conducting a thorough public engagement, and I want to thank all those who took the time to get involved and provide feedback.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the government want to congratulate the Dawson Regional Planning Commission with

the support of the Yukon Land Use Planning Council for their hard work in developing this draft plan. We can see the efforts being made to achieve a balance between many different interests through creative and collaborative means. We know that this is a special place for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well as many other First Nations that have been, and will continue to be, on this land for generations.

Centring these values within the plan is highly important for the long-term sustainability of this region. I am happy to see the plan considering broader themes from an economic, ecological, and social perspective and embodying different kinds of land use to reflect the diverse needs in the area.

Some highlights include: a well-rounded approach, acknowledging major values and issues that exist in the region; innovative ideas used to deal with complex issues; consideration of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people in the context of land use; clarity on individual values being considered in each land management unit; and a creative communication style that provided stories about what the area means for people.

The opportunity to provide feedback is an integral part of the planning process and allows us to reflect on whether the direction of this plan is representative of what Yukoners envision for the future.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that our opportunity to provide clear, evidence-based feedback is a serious responsibility. While we believe that the draft plan is a good start, we must also be clear about ways we think the plan can, and should, be improved. We want to see more clarity and intent around the land management units. There are many specifics around this issue, but ultimately it is about providing certainty, upholding conservation values, preservation of the Fortymile caribou herd, and ensuring access to both highly mineralized areas and areas for tourism and other uses. We would like to see further clarity around how to manage cumulative effects and how to apply adaptive management to certain activities. We are in the latter stages of developing a policy to manage wetlands across the Yukon, and we hope to see this policy, when finished, reflected in the new version of the plan. Additionally, we would like more detail and prescribed actions around managing and identifying heritage and cultural resources. We appreciate that inclusion of missing and murdered women and girls and two-spirit-plus people is a part of the plan, and we encourage the endorsement of the *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy* in the Dawson region.

Finally, we want to ensure that this is a plan that we can successfully implement. In the end, the plan will guide us and it will be up to the parties to make it happen on the ground. The Dawson region is a unique place for each of us here in the Yukon, and we will continue to strive to embrace the opportunities that exist and protect the things that Yukoners hold most dear.

Mr. Kent: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to today's ministerial statement regarding the Dawson land use plan.

First off, I would like to thank the Dawson Regional Planning Commission for their extensive work to date. They are doing valuable work that will set the future of the Dawson area for generations. The commission has wrapped up four and a half months of consultation on the draft plan.

I would also like to extend my thanks to all those who attended one of the open houses in Dawson City or Whitehorse or provided input in various stakeholder meetings and workshops, the survey, and in community meetings.

The final recommended plan is slated for release in the spring of 2022. The minister has mentioned a number of changes that the Yukon government would like to see with the plan. I checked the Dawson planning commission website this morning and was unable to find a copy of the document, so I am curious if the minister can tell us where we can find written submissions regarding the draft plan and, in particular, the submission prepared by the Yukon government. If it's not available online, I'm hoping that the minister will commit to tabling that submission here in this Legislature.

I also want to bring up point 3(d) under section 4 of the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP that talks about the future land use planning processes. It says that the Liberal and NDP caucuses — and I quote: "... are committed to accelerate the pace at which the Land Use Planning (LUP) process, mandated under Chapter 11 of the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements, takes place." The CASA also goes on to say — and I quote: "As such, adequate resources will be committed to complete ongoing LUP processes and to initiate new LUP processes as agreed to with First Nation governments."

I am hoping that, when the minister responds here today, he will tell us how that pace will be accelerated and what additional resources have been put in place to accelerate land use planning. Can the minister also provide us a prioritized list of regional land use plans and timing of when they will be initiated?

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP is happy to see that the third out of eight land use plans is nearing completion. When the *Umbrella Final Agreement* was finalized in 1990, the Yukon government committed to the importance of land use planning and committed to the completion of those plans. We all know that land use planning minimizes actual or potential land use conflicts, and we have seen first-hand how these conflicts can grow worse without planning. It recognizes and promotes the cultural values of Yukon First Nation peoples and that certain cultural activities are intrinsically linked to the land. Land use planning ensures sustainable development by developing social, cultural, economic, and environmental policies that apply to the management, protection, and use of land, water, and resources in an integrated and coordinated manner. Land use planning spells out how and where land uses may or may not occur and increases land use certainty. Land use planning is also one of the strongest tools that we have to protect critical wildlife habitat and important ecological areas.

Thank you to the Dawson Regional Planning Commission members, past and present, for your hard work on this

enormous task. Thank you to the members of the public and stakeholders who made submissions. Your input is so important to creating a strong plan that reflects the needs of the community.

Yukoners know from experience that, when the government provides political direction to a land use planning process rather than submissions based on science and data, the public can lose faith in the process. We saw the result of this when the Yukon Party played politics with the Peel plan. So, when this Liberal government submitted its conservation values map to the commission, there were some curious and glaring omissions. The discrepancy between the Yukon government's map and the one submitted by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is stark. The map submitted by the Liberal government suggests that less than half of the planning area has conservation value. A highlight of this absence is that the core range of the Fortymile caribou herd was not included. Large sections of mining claims are cut out from the conservation areas suggesting that they too hold no environmental value. To be clear, this means that, according to the Liberal government, more than 50 percent of the planning area has no conservation value. However, the mining values map that they submitted is very different. Every square inch is shown to have at least moderate value for mining.

So, it leaves Yukoners wary of what they saw with previous government interference — and they asked the question: Is this map highlighting areas of conservation value produced by biologists, or did the Liberal government, like previous governments, help along the way?

The minister spoke about centering the values of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in the plan, but we ask ourselves if the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are in agreement with these statements. With only four percent of the area set for legal protections, the vast majority of the Fortymile caribou herd's range will be open for development. As the minister rightly stated, we still don't know what the wetlands policy will hold for so many sensitive areas.

With the recent climate talks in Scotland, ecological protection has never been more important. I look forward to continued public participation in this process and a push for stronger and clearer protections for vital wildlife habitat and cultural sites in all land use planning.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would also like to thank the members opposite for acknowledging the work of the planning commission and for all those Yukoners who submitted comments to the draft plan as the commission now will work toward preparing a final recommended plan.

I understand, from talking with the department, that there were lots of submissions, so I'm sure that it's going to take a little while for the commission to get everything up online. I'm happy to commit to tabling our response. Of course, there are lots of elements that are technical and so it's a lengthy response, although the parts that I believe that Yukoners and members here will be interested in are more focused. I'm happy to submit that.

We have made a commitment to land use planning. When we go to the Yukon Forum, we hear that it is a priority across the territory. We will work through the Yukon Forum and, of course, we also have to work with the Government of Canada to set priorities, but I have been tasked through my mandate letter to accelerate land use planning, and I will continue to follow up on that work.

I would like to note for everybody that, when the draft land use plan was tabled — I think it was in June — I was in Dawson City for the event where I joined the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in thanking the commission for all their hard work. I also announced that day that our government had temporarily withdrawn the remainder of high conservation value areas identified in the draft plan. That included just under 45 percent of the area of the plan. That's counting Tombstone Park, so all the areas that the commission had identified as being for conservation were then set aside so that it would not create any conflict. These interim withdrawals will help to ensure that wildlife, wetlands, and key conservation areas remain protected during the remainder of the land use planning process.

Land use planning is vital for the future of our territory. It is important for environmental, cultural, and economic reasons, and successful plans take into consideration the diverse interests and values of Yukoners and provide certainty for those who work and live in the area.

Our Liberal government fundamentally believes that it is vital to respect the land use planning process to ensure that it is effective. We have seen what happened in the past when the process was not respected. After years of turmoil, the actions of the government of the day, for the Peel planning process, went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. What Yukoners already know is that our territory cannot afford for the same mistakes to happen again. This is why our government is committed to openness, transparency, and respecting the process. That's what Yukoners deserve.

Again, I want to congratulate the Dawson Regional Planning Commission with the support of the Yukon Land Use Planning Council for their hard work in developing this draft plan. We look forward to reviewing the feedback from Yukoners as the commission develops a final recommended plan.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before we begin Question Period today, the Chair will make a statement regarding a point of order raised by the Member for Lake Laberge during Question Period on Thursday, November 4, 2021.

After reviewing the Blues, the Chair finds that the statement made by the Minister of Education, including terms such as “spread misinformation” in the context of calling a member irresponsible, is tending toward accusing another member of uttering a deliberate falsehood.

I would caution all members to temper their remarks so that it is always clear that they are not accusing members of uttering deliberate falsehoods, either directly or indirectly. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

This brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Mr. Dixon: Last week we raised a number of concerns about the ongoing operation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its impact on surrounding businesses and residences. When we noted that at least one business had cited the emergency shelter as contributing to their decision to close their doors, the minister dismissed that. She said that the emergency shelter did not drive the decision to close. Once again, the minister is putting words in the mouth of an affected stakeholder, and once again, they are telling us that they found the minister's words insulting and wrong.

As we said last week, the changes that the Liberals have made to the operations of the emergency shelter are negatively impacting businesses and surrounding residences. Will the minister agree to review the operations of the emergency shelter and make changes to ensure that surrounding businesses and residences aren't faced with the type of negative impacts that they have experienced in the past few years?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It won't surprise anyone that I don't agree with the preamble to that question. As a matter of fact, I know that business owner personally and would never presume to speak on her behalf.

I'm very pleased to share that we have implemented most of the recommendations of the 2020-21 community safety plan, including those related to ensuring the safety of shelter clients, drop-in guests, and staff and enhancing the shelter's strategic operational governance.

Developing the community safety plan included bringing together government and community partners identified as key service providers or groups directly impacted by the shelter's operations — nearby businesses, the community, nearby schools, et cetera. We continue to explore the options that support creating a safe and harmonious community for shelter clients, neighbouring residents, and businesses. Our goal is to increase access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed supports and services to increase wellness for all.

Mr. Dixon: I'm glad that the minister mentioned the community safety plan, because when the government led the creation of the 2020-21 community safety plan, they heard the same things that we're hearing today. According to that plan, more work is needed to be done to address the challenges created by the shift in operational approach that the Liberals brought in when they took over the facility in 2019.

The plan notes challenges such as large and sometimes unruly gatherings outside the shelter, property damage, vandalism, theft, sexual acts, and littering within the shelter's proximity as well as increases in openly shared public drinking and drug use, and the list goes on.

So, beyond just exploring options, what steps is the government taking to address the numerous issues that were brought forward during the creation of the community safety plan, and continue to be raised by the business community, that are affecting the viability of businesses in the vicinity of the emergency shelter?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government has established an agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop a program to enhance safety in the shelter vicinity and to strengthen cultural programming within the shelter.

It is important to remind Yukoners that, when the shelter was chosen for that location, the former Yukon Party government was in power. In fact, that shelter building was designed and placed where it is with absolutely no plan for any management or programming for clients who might come to the shelter — all negligible on their behalf.

All of the work that we have done to not only open the shelter, but to determine the appropriate way for clients to be able to interact and to be safe in that space, has been done by our government. We continue to explore the options and support creating a safe and harmonious community shelter for clients, neighbouring residents, and businesses. Our goal is to increase access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed supports and services to increase wellness.

Mr. Speaker, I will no doubt be accused of repeating that, but it bears repeating. Yukoners need to hear from us with respect to the plan going forward and the work that is being done.

Mr. Dixon: As many businesses have noted, the emergency shelter has been in that same area for a very long time; however, the real problems began in 2019 when the Liberals took over the facility and changed a number of the operational plans for that. There are a number of key action items that were contemplated in the 2020-21 community safety plan that are in response to the growing number of negative behaviours and incidents that have resulted in the shift in programming that the Liberals made in 2019. Those include: expanding Yukon government security services to include the shelter and exploring the feasibility of implementing a community program that provides a uniformed presence in and around the shelter.

So, can the minister update us as to whether or not those things have been completed, and will she also recognize that the steps taken to date haven't been enough and that further changes are needed? Will she agree to review the ongoing operations of the emergency shelter and agree to consult with affected businesses and residences about further changes to the way in which the shelter is run?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to note, as did the member opposite, that our Liberal government has had a shift in programming — first of all, there was no programming — but it was absolutely a shift in programming to a client-centred approach.

As part of the agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations, we will develop an engagement and consultation strategy to gather the perspectives of all interested and affected parties, including businesses, NGOs, Yukon First Nations, homeless and street-involved persons, neighbours, RCMP, bylaw officials, Emergency Medical Services, Health and Social Services, Justice, leadership, and staff — a broad spectrum of individuals who will help us go forward and solve the issues that are of concern to the neighbours. Again, our goal is to increase access to culturally appropriate, trauma-informed

supports and services to increase wellness, something the shelter has never focused on before.

Question re: *Child and Family Services Act* review

Ms. Clarke: Last week, the government tabled the annual report for the Child and Youth Advocate office. That report highlights significant concerns with the government's current approach toward the review of the *Child and Family Services Act*. As we know, the former Minister of Health and Social Services launched a review of this act in 2018. In March and again in November 2020, the Child and Youth Advocate requested information on the status of that review. According to that report, this information request is still outstanding.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us why the government is withholding information from the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Once again, it won't surprise anyone that I don't agree with that accusation of the member opposite. We continue to work together with respect to the *Child and Family Services Act* and the legislative amendments promised. As a matter of fact, I spent pretty close to three hours on a Zoom call with the Leader of the Official Opposition during the last election talking exactly about early learning childcare and the importance of that and the importance of the changes to the *Child and Family Services Act* as part of that conversation.

We continue to work with our Yukon First Nations on the child and family services branch legislative changes, responding to the report that was, in fact, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. I look forward to further responses as we go forward.

Ms. Clarke: To quote from page 18 of the Child and Youth Advocate annual report — and I quote: "To date, YCAO has not yet been provided with requested information about policy or legislative changes and was not further consulted regarding the obligation of governments to ensure children's rights are meaningfully considered in decisions." As indicated, these information requests were first submitted to the government in March 2020. This is over a year and a half ago.

Can the minister please explain why, after such a long period of time, the Liberal government has still not provided this information to the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government is always committed to working with the legislative officers. In fact, I used to be one, so I completely respect their jurisdiction and the understanding of the work they do.

In July 2020, the Child and Family Services Act Steering Committee was established, with representation from 12 Yukon First Nations, and is co-chaired by the Council of Yukon First Nations' executive director and the director of Family and Children's Services. That steering committee has provided direction and advice on proposed amendments relating to the *Child and Family Services Act*. That work continues.

There has been incredible dedication and support shown by Yukon First Nations to this legislative work. This collaborative work does not go unnoticed. I want to thank the steering committee and members for their continued efforts as

we work together toward a new piece of legislation and amending the act.

Ms. Clarke: By withholding this information from the Child and Youth Advocate, the Liberal government is actually impeding the advocate's ability to do her job. According to her annual report, the requested records are necessary for the advocate to provide a child's rights analysis or proposed policy and legislative amendments by the government. By not cooperating with the advocate, the government is preventing this important work from being completed.

Will the minister start working with the advocate and agree to provide all the requested information immediately — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I won't make that commitment on the floor. I will make the commitment to work with the Child and Youth Advocate with respect to long-awaited *Child and Family Services Act* amendments — and the focus that we have at the moment of working with Yukon First Nations to determine how the act amendments should go forward.

This legislative work will make a real difference in the lives of children, youth, and families. These efforts are focused on supporting children to remain connected with their families and communities where possible. It aligns with our government's commitment to address the overrepresentation of First Nations children in care.

Working collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments at this stage of the process, and the Council of Yukon First Nations, has provided us the opportunity to bring forward amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* that respond to the 2019 report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. It is work that is absolutely critical and we are doing it.

Question re: COVID-19 school protocols

Ms. White: There aren't many schools left in the Yukon that have not reported a positive COVID case. We're not talking about a few isolated cases anymore. In some schools, multiple classes have been exposed to COVID. Many of these kids are under 12 and too young to be vaccinated. With the rapidly increasing number of positive COVID cases, we can only expect more cases in more schools. Parents are worried, and for good reasons.

What's the government's plan to curb the fast spread of COVID-19 throughout Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The health and safety of students and staff is one of our first priorities. I want to start with that.

We know that it has been a very challenging time, and the start to the year has been very difficult. We work with the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit and the office of the chief medical officer of health to ensure that necessary measures are in place to protect all students and staff when there are cases connected to schools. As we started out — there are a number of cases connected with schools.

We continue to monitor and adjust school operations to support students and families based on the current COVID-19 context and recommendations from the Yukon's chief medical officer of health.

We are seeing more positive cases for sure, which are requiring exposure notifications to schools; however, widespread transmission is occurring at the community level in Whitehorse. Rather than within schools themselves, that is really where the challenge is. Schools still remain a low-risk environment for transmission and are safe and available for students who are able to attend school.

I will continue building on my answer around this. It is an important discussion for us to have on the floor of the Legislature.

Ms. White: Although I appreciated the response, maybe the minister could just direct parents to where they could find that plan to stop the spread of COVID in schools.

Today, we tabled a letter from parents concerned about the COVID situation in schools. At 10:00 a.m. this morning, there were 53 signatures, and at 12:30, there were 79. That number keeps rising.

The first request in the letter is for rapid testing protocols to be implemented in all Yukon schools. We are hearing from parents who have had to take their child for COVID testing more than once. Kids are finding the experience more traumatizing each time. Someone told us that their three-year-old will not submit to the test again and that they will need to be sedated if they need another test. Rapid testing is less invasive and less traumatizing for small children. It also provides much faster results.

Will the minister direct her department to use rapid testing to assist schools to respond faster to COVID-19 outbreaks?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question raised by the member opposite. I can indicate, as the Minister of Education has done, that the spread of COVID among youth of all ages — even up to adulthood — is a critical concern. I can indicate that the chief medical officer of health provides the needed information to this government and all Yukoners with respect to the details as noted in this question. That would include rapid testing and its use in schools.

I appreciate the comments and concerns made by the member opposite, but we need to take medical advice from the chief medical officer of health.

I just do want to note for Yukoners that once a pediatric vaccine for children, or individuals between five and 11, is approved and recommended, our immunization teams will begin training and mobilizing to reach the subset of that population across the territory.

As Dr. Theresa Tam has said recently, we expect approval by Health Canada with respect to vaccines for youngsters as soon as possible — weeks, not months.

Ms. White: Unfortunately, Yukon is also stand-alone and one of the only jurisdictions not using rapid testing. So, now facing the worst spread of COVID-19 that our territory has seen, parents and families are becoming more and more concerned and are being left with too many unanswered questions. In some schools that have had a positive case, a whole class, including a teacher, was asked to self-monitor, but in other schools, students and staff who were not fully vaccinated were recommended to stay home and self-isolate. If rapid testing was available, this wouldn't be such an issue.

Why is this government not requiring students or staff who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate when they have been in close contact with a positive COVID case at the school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. I will continue on in my answer. Again, this is a very important and timely question. I am surprised that it has taken this many days for it to be spoken about in the Legislature, to be quite frank.

I know that there are plans. The member opposite has asked where the plans can be found. Each and every school has an operational plan that is found on their website that is based on the guidelines from the chief medical officer of health. I know that there are a lot of pressures in schools. School exposure notices are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine operational adjustments and staffing needs as well. We are ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools in their initial response to YCDC COVID notifications.

I think that one other point I would really like to make while I'm on my feet is that the department, from the beginning, coordinates its COVID-19 response through the Education emergency response team, which is in place to oversee the implementation of Health and Social Services guidelines. There has been a person in place embedded in the Health and Social Services team since the beginning of the school year.

Question re: Chief medical officer of health authority

Ms. Tredger: So, COVID cases are spreading across the Yukon. It has gotten so bad that the chief medical officer of health has — and I quote: "... confirmed there is now widespread community transmission".

Every day, we have new public exposure notices on planes, in shops, at restaurants and bars, and, as my colleague just pointed out, in so many Yukon schools. The Yukon fourth wave is still in full swing, and yet we are the only jurisdiction in Canada without a mask mandate. Masks are one of the easiest defences against COVID-19. They protect everyone. From the vaccine-hesitant to children under 12, masks work.

How many more cases will it take for this government to bring back the mask mandate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to the members opposite for the questions on a very serious consideration. We will continue to do what we have done since the beginning, which is to take the recommendations from the public health officials. We heard from the acting chief medical officer of health last week on the full round of different measures that are being recommended from the chief medical officer. At that time, she was confident in her recommendations. I hope that the Yukon NDP are also confident with the chief medical officer of health's recommendations.

Now, we do know that there has been more clusters and more cases. We do know from *Forging Ahead* — that documentation talked about how we need to be stood up quickly and we need to focus in on particular communities if we need to, but we also need to act based on science. That's what we'll continue to do. I'll be meeting with the chief medical officer of health this afternoon and I will absolutely bring up

the questions from the members opposite at that time. But again, we have a chief medical officer that has been keeping up with NACI recommendations and also following other jurisdictions' epidemiology and different testing methodologies in all other jurisdictions. We are very confident in the office's approach when it comes to testing. We do know that there is a need right now to make sure that our communities are safe with Delta and we will continue to follow the advice of the chief medical officer to do so.

Ms. Tredger: Well, we are all talking about the chief medical officer of health, but since August, power has actually been stripped from the CMOH. Without the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, orders on COVID-19 come from the government, not from public health experts. Sometimes the CMOH can strongly recommend, like when it comes to mask wearing; other times, she can mandate, like self-isolation, but that is because the chief medical officer of health does not have broad ordering powers under the *Public Health and Safety Act*, only limited ones.

Will this Liberal government give the chief medical officer of health the power to mandate broad public health orders needed to manage COVID-19?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'll have to disagree with the member opposite. The chief medical officer of health has those abilities now with the *Public Health and Safety Act*. So, that is absolutely not the case. Again, with the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, when necessary, the government would be in a position to invoke that act immediately. Again, the premise of the question is not necessarily the case. I don't know why the members opposite think that the chief medical officer has been stripped of any powers. We do know that the Yukon Party has gone back and forth on whether or not they want to support or endorse mandatory vaccinations. What we need right now is all political parties to 100 percent back the medical advice that we are getting from this office.

Ms. Tredger: Last week in the House, we heard that the chief medical officer of health did not have the power to institute a broad mask mandate; today we are told that she does. I would hope that the government is a little clearer internally than they are at communicating externally. Frankly, because the chief medical officer of health's recommendations are not made public —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Tredger: — because the CMOH recommendations are not made public, we only have access to what the government is saying. We are left with second-hand information. Right now, Yukoners are facing the worst rates of COVID-19 transmission to date, yet the CMOH has less power than ever since the start of this pandemic. On top of this, all of the advice from the CMOH goes through the government first. Public health advice should be just that — public. We need to hear directly from the experts. Yukoners need orders directly from the chief medical officer of health.

Will this government make all recommendations from the chief medical officer of health public?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have weekly updates with chief medical officer of health press conferences. Those have been re-established. For the last 20 months, we have seen a very open and very transparent process when it comes to the recommendations. We have been criticized by the members opposite that, when the recommendations hit the floor of the media room and people get that information at the same time that we are getting it, we don't consult. Now we are being told we need to be more open and transparent and that we need to have more connections with the chief medical officer of health.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that, if you take a look at the meetings that the chief medical officer of health has, whether it be with First Nation governments, municipal governments — our team, the public advisories as well — this is probably the most open and transparent that I have seen. Again, that direct conduit with other levels of government really speaks to the openness and transparency of that particular office.

We will continue to take in all of the recommendations with the rationale from the chief medical officer of health as the Yukon Party and the NDP pick and choose which ones they will support. But we will continue with that method, and we will keep people updated as we have with these press conferences.

Question re: First Nation school governance

Ms. McLeod: October 30 was the deadline for Yukon school councils to pass a motion that would put the question of whether or not to join the First Nation school board to a referendum of the school community on January 30, 2022.

It's our understanding that five school councils have decided to pursue that option. Can the minister confirm that number for us and tell us which schools will be holding referendums? Has there been a public announcement about this?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to have this question on the floor. We have been working very closely to re-establish our relationships with Yukon First Nations since 2016. This is a very important milestone that we have embarked on with Yukon First Nations to establish a Yukon First Nation school board in the Yukon. We want to ensure that schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and to offer all students the opportunity to learn about Yukon First Nation histories, cultures, and languages.

We have been working with the Chiefs Committee on Education on options for establishing a Yukon First Nation school board under the *Education Act*. We believe that this framework agreement and the establishment of the Yukon First Nation school board is an additional option to enable Yukon First Nations to meaningfully shape their children's education and improve their educational outcomes.

The process to establish a school board can start in two ways. I note that the member opposite is looking for something really specific here, and I will get to that.

There are two ways. One is for a school council to pass a resolution. Another way is for a petition of 20 percent of electors in an attendance area to present a petition, and I will continue to build on that and confirm the schools.

Ms. McLeod: I look forward to getting the answers to my first question.

At a presentation on this topic at the recent Yukon Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees at their fall meeting, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate mentioned that they would be advocating in support of joining the school board. A number of members of the affected school communities are wondering where they can get information about what this means for their respective schools.

Is the minister instructing her department to host information sessions? If so, when will they begin and how many are planned for each affected community?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I will continue to build on the question. This is a complex bit of work that we are doing with Yukon First Nations. As of October 31, five school councils have passed resolutions to trigger a referendum of the electors within their attendance areas and parents and guardians of any current students in the schools.

As of November 7, the department is aware that there may be two schools that will be seeking petition packages. They will have until December 13 to have those petitions completed.

Then we will be — maybe I'll wait and move to the other information.

The school councils have passed resolutions at: St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction; Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake and Watson Lake Secondary School in Watson Lake, which is a combined council; Ross River School; the school in Old Crow; and Grey Mountain Primary. We're working with First Nations on a government-to-government basis on education priorities for their citizens, as well, in their traditional territory. We are working with the chief electoral officer to oversee these referendums and then further election

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. McLeod: I appreciate the confirmation of the five school councils. However, I haven't received answers to the rest of my questions.

A number of staff members in affected schools have reached out to us as well. They have many questions regarding the transition in operations if the community agrees to move to the First Nation school board governance.

Can the minister tell us where we should direct staff in order for them to get their questions answered? Will there be information sessions for them? How much engagement has been done with Yukon Teachers' Association to date?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I have been throughout the territory meeting with school councils since my time in office. I'm having active conversations with those folks, but I note that our department has conducted one particular and very large information session with school councils. There was also, as the member opposite indicated, information provided at the recent general meeting of Yukon school councils. We are now in the area where a referendum will happen in January, so we will be releasing more specific information around that.

Yes, of course, information sessions will happen to inform folks about what to expect and what the establishment of a Yukon First Nation school board will mean to them. Folks will

have an opportunity to decide if that is something that they want to have happen in their school community.

So, again, I am very proud of the work that we are doing with Yukon First Nations. I want to come back to that — a huge milestone for Yukon First Nations to obtain more ability to have a say over the education of their children.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, 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

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Community Services — *continued*

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Good afternoon, Madam Chair and everyone. I just want to welcome my officials, Phil MacDonald and Matt King, to the Chamber this afternoon to help me with this departmental debate.

We had a deep, meaningful, and cordial discussion about this department a few days ago, and I'm happy to be back again to discuss it a little bit further. I will say that we ran right into the debate right of the hop and we had a really good discussion about many matters. I wanted to set the table this afternoon about what we are talking about this afternoon, which is the

Supplementary Estimates No. 1. I am very pleased to discuss it this afternoon. It totals about \$12.89 million in operation and maintenance expenditures, of which the largest portion of that figure is for flood response and recovery, which is almost \$11 million.

As this Chamber will know, the majority of the budget increase is for the unprecedented flooding that we saw this past summer in the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge regions and a few others — Kusawa. The Chair may know that the record snowfall combined with spring melt conditions led to runoffs and rising water levels for waterways throughout these regions. With those unprecedented floods — we have never seen anything like it — came a robust response that saved homes and infrastructure and ensures ongoing support to impacted communities. From Carmacks to Teslin, Carcross, Tagish, Marsh Lake, and Lake Laberge, we did what was necessary to defend homes, infrastructure, and property and to keep people safe.

Our response started early and has been sustained through to this fall. More than 200 people were actively engaged in flood response and mitigation. This led to an extraordinary effort of volunteers, residents, local contractors, businesses, and communities that banded together to bag sand, build berms — enormous berms that come up almost to my chin — and support each other through the emergency. Of course, we acknowledge and thank all of the people involved in responding: citizens, residents, volunteers, local contractors and businesses, Yukon government personnel, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, Manitoba flood specialists, flood incident management professionals from Yukon, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, and, of course, the Canadian Armed Forces. This was indeed the largest flood relief effort in the territory's history with more than 550,000 sandbags and 2,000 super bags deployed to hold back waters that measured 40 centimetres in Lake Laberge and 20 centimetres in Marsh Lake above the previous record seen in 2007.

The almost \$10.97 million included expenses incurred and funds for anticipated recovery costs to come. Expenses included personnel, equipment, rental, transportation, travel, materials, and services. More than \$6 million of the total that I just spoke about is directed toward local contractors for their work on the ground, hauling and stockpiling sand, equipment, and groundwork and related infrastructure. Additionally, more than \$700,000 was used for additional ground support from Yukon First Nations Wildfire who built and maintained flood infrastructure in various locations.

I would like to emphasize my thanks and appreciation to the more than 50 businesses and contractors for their assistance. They diverted resources in order to offer their invaluable support to the overall flood relief effort. I also want to extend a huge thank you to the staff of Protective Services and from across the Yukon government for stepping forward to help. Wildland Fire Management led the incident command alongside the Emergency Measures Organization, and the team did an excellent job in rostering government resources and managing the emergency situation on behalf of the government.

It takes a team of skills, planning, logistics, operations, finance, procurement, communications, public information, recruitment, and more to do the job. The team showed depth, experience, and action. As a matter of fact, when I toured the incident command centre, some of the techniques that we were using in the Yukon went far and away beyond what the BC government was using to manage some of its emergency situations in that province. We were doing some pretty innovative and amazing things here in the territory.

I want to also place an emphasis on the volunteers who came out to support their neighbours, families, and friends and who filled thousands of sandbags among other support jobs. Their efforts — your efforts as Yukoners — saved homes throughout the region.

I want to acknowledge the federal minister for quick action to the request that I made for military assistance. I discussed the need for assistance with the minister, and on July 3, we submitted a request for support to Public Safety Canada through the federal assistance program. The next day, on July 4, Public Safety Canada responded to the request and announced a commitment of more than 100 military personnel to support Yukon's flood relief efforts under Operation LENTUS. The Canadian Armed Forces were on the ground in Whitehorse by July 6. That is literally three days after the formal request was made. Working under the direction of the incident management team in the Southern Lakes, those troops helped build berms, fill sandbags, and place super bags at Army Beach, Carcross, Lake Laberge, South M'Clintock, and Tagish. Their support was invaluable. We couldn't have done it without that unprecedented support.

In all, response personnel and volunteers had built approximately 5.5 kilometres of berms at the height of up to 2.4 metres in some cases at Army Beach and M'Clintock, in addition to the installation of sandbags on properties from Carcross to Lake Laberge. With as many as 120 homes under an evacuation alert for much of the summer, it was a relief to end the state of emergency on September 14, signalling that the worst was behind us. We also recognize that there is a lot of work ahead. Waters remain high, and our team continues with maintenance, cleanup, and recovery planning. As a matter of fact, my colleague, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and I were even discussing some of that recovery planning and cleanup on the break, so it still continues in real time.

Our team is working closely with engineers and technical experts to develop a remediation recovery strategy. This will ensure support to homeowners to recover from floods, to fix community roads and infrastructure, and to plan for longer term mitigations to be better prepared for future flood years.

2021 has been called a "once-in-200-year event", but we also know that climate change is skewing the trend and we can only expect floods to occur again and more frequently. This is why we have entered a state of emergency here in the territory, it is why we are demanding action, and it's why our citizens are demanding action on climate change, because they can see that the effects are on their doorsteps and washing away their front lawns, in this case. They demand action from us. They want us to take action and start to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions

that the territory creates. So, the recovery efforts and long-term flood mitigation plan will be critical as we look to the future.

Madam Chair, I'm going to end this section here. I have more on the actual budgetary items within the supplementary budget this year. I will weave that into our narrative this afternoon as we pursue other questions, but in the interest of getting to the questions of the opposition and the Third Party, I will now relinquish the floor and look forward to hearing their questions.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the officials for being with us here again today. It is not my intention to be long this afternoon. I'm happy to hear the minister start his speaking with a discussion of the flooding.

Can the minister provide us with a breakdown of the flood expenses to date?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite, the MLA for Watson Lake, for the question this afternoon. The question was — because there was a bit of a pause: What is the breakdown of flood cost-tracking? I believe that my colleague, the Premier, has already addressed this on the floor of the Legislature, but I am happy to do it again for the member opposite.

The cost of bringing teams from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba — because the territory hasn't had many experiences with floods, so we did bring in experts from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to inform our decisions as we fought this unprecedented event this summer. That cost us \$372,000 for those three teams to come to the territory. Personnel from Yukon government and our department of Community Services came to \$462,000, and that was for overtime, casual hires, et cetera. The contracted workforce was roughly \$700,000. That included Yukon First Nations Wildfire crews. Equipment rental came to \$1.2 million. Those are the actuals to date. That was for heavy equipment rentals — commitments to date. So, the actuals to date are \$1.17 million. There is \$1.35 million with heavy equipment, so that brings it to \$2.5 million for equipment rentals. Equipment replacement was about \$210,000, and that was for purchasing hoses, pumps, et cetera. For transportation, we spent \$63,000 to date — those are the actuals. The commitments signal an amount to about \$177,000. So, we have commitments for \$177,000 for transportation and we have received invoices for \$63,000, for a total allocation for vehicle rentals of \$241,000.

Military transportation — this would be buses to transport military to flood sites — came to \$77,000. Non-vehicle fuel came to \$9,000. Travel for meals, accommodation, et cetera — this would be the military, labourers in the field, military accommodation at the cadet camp — there were no costs there.

The total for travel, meals, accommodation, et cetera for the whole operation was \$547,000. Materiel — sand, rock, poly, et cetera — the current total that we have is \$2.1 million. In services — this would be miscellaneous rentals, pump-outs, et cetera — it came to \$780,000 — for a grand total cost to date of \$8.1 million.

We also have remediation recovery work budgeted at \$2.8 million, roughly. So, the total supplementary approval is for \$10.9 million in round numbers.

Ms. McLeod: When the minister gets up again, perhaps he could just comment on whether or not that is 100-percent recoverable from Canada. I think I heard that in the briefing — but if he could just confirm that.

Can the minister comment on what infrastructure upgrades — or what is the minister's commitment to investigating the needed upgrades to, for instance, Jackfish Bay Road and M'Clintock Road? Particularly, what kind of work is being done to identify any future work that needs to be done that will leave us better prepared to deal with another high-water year in that area?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to say — and it's going to get a little bit repetitive, but this was an unprecedented flood this summer. At a time when we were dealing with the pandemic — we still are — and at a time when we are dealing with forest fires and a threatening forest fire season — the markers were not great for that either.

We had 130 government employees, contractors, and volunteers assigned to support the flood response, not to mention all the volunteers and everybody else who chipped in. It was a truly remarkable response. It actually led to the protection from imminent danger. I mean, there was an evacuation order placed on 130 residences this summer, as I've mentioned, and we didn't lose a single one to date, which is just absolutely extraordinary and a real success story.

The Member for Watson Lake wanted to know whether it's 100-percent recoverable. There are financial implications from the work that we did this summer. Eligible expenses for the disaster financial assistance arrangement may be reimbursed to the territory under our cost-sharing formula that is based upon rates determined by the Government of Canada and pro-rated to the territorial population.

The first \$3.27 per capita of expenses will be borne by the territory, so we're on the hook for \$3.25, in round numbers, for every citizen in the territory. That amounts to about, let's say, \$138,000 that we are on the hook for. The next \$6.56 per capita — that's approximately \$277,000 that will be cost-shared — the Government of Canada will cover 50 percent of that. The next \$6.56 — again, \$277,000 will be cost-shared. The Government of Canada will cover 75 percent. So, it's a sliding scale, Madam Chair. For the remainder of eligible expenses, the Government of Canada will cover 90 percent.

So, we're on the hook for some money here. By my rough math, it's in the neighbourhood of about \$280,000 and then — so \$350,000, and then we're on the hook for — so it is around \$500,000 that we are on the hook for ourselves, in very, very rough numbers — “back of napkins” math. Math on the fly is always tricky.

Then we have the remainder of eligible costs. So, after that initial, say, \$700,000 or \$800,000, the Government of Canada will cover 90 percent of the costs. So, we're on the hook for some money. This isn't a 100-percent write-off, but we are backstopped very well by the federal government when it comes to flood relief.

Now, the other question that was on the floor from the Member for Watson Lake had to deal with Jackfish Bay and Sawmill Road, I believe. I heard from the MLA that, during the

flood, the road needs upgrading. I know that my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, was on the site, toured it, and had a good look at what was going on at Jackfish Bay Road. Community Services is working with Highways and Public Works to make the necessary improvements as deemed necessary by Highways and Public Works. We will check to make sure that the status of the work is done.

My colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, will be on the floor fairly soon, too, and might have more context more quickly if you want to talk to him directly.

As for Sawmill Road, we believe that work has been done. We can check into that again. Highways and Public Works might be able to provide some detail when they are on the floor to discuss their supplementary estimates, but we knew that were improvements that had to be done to both of those roads. Some of that work has been undertaken. We will get back to the member opposite to make sure that it has been done or with what the status of that work is.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the minister for that. On October 28, the minister advised the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that a formal assessment of library facilities was done in the summer of 2019 and that this report, which came as a result, will inform decisions going forward with regard to evolving library trends.

My question is whether or not this has been posted for interested parties to read and whether or not this report has been shared with all of the libraries.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say, to begin this conversation about libraries, that the 14 community libraries located throughout the territory are managed by staff who are hired by volunteer boards. These libraries are mainly co-located with other groups like schools, community centres, and municipal offices. As the Member for Watson Lake just noted, a formal assessment of library facilities was done during the summer of 2019 under the tenure of my colleague, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. The resulting report is helping with long-term planning to ensure that the community libraries keep pace with evolving library trends related to collection, development, technology, and programming.

Our response to COVID-19 was compatible with the assessment — for example, installing Plexiglass where requested — and we are committed to ensuring that library facilities meet the needs of their communities. The in-depth work and analysis being done now will provide a solid foundation for decisions on library facilities into the future.

The pertinent part of that question was: Is that report available? We believe that it is posted online, but my colleague, Deputy Minister King, will look into that and make sure that it is posted online. If it is not, we will certainly make that available to the public because there is really no reason why it shouldn't be.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that.

I have questions around EMS and fire. Of course, we have had this discussion many times. Recruitment and retention of volunteers is challenging. When was the last time that there was a recruitment drive for new volunteers? Was that in every community where those services are provided?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the Member for Watson Lake. I started out today by talking about the supplementary budget and some of the material that is contained therein. Included in that is roughly \$1 million to enhance the Yukon Emergency Medical Services in Watson Lake and for volunteer recruitment and retention for the 17 Emergency Medical Services stations across the territory.

Emergency Medical Services needs to evolve with the changing demographics in our territory, which includes a growing Yukon population, increases in call volumes and services, and the need to invest in development and supports for our people. \$470,000 of the supplementary budget will increase capacity of the emergency response communication centre, ensuring emergency response communication officers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This investment will improve safety for all emergency medical services providers by providing improved communications and real-time tracking of emergency medical services, vehicles, and related staff.

\$156,000 is targeted toward recruitment and retention of volunteers through an investment in clinical education. This will meet the training needs of our community volunteer responders and ensure an expert resource is available to offer them timely clinical support. This service is a priority for our community volunteer responders, and we are pleased to provide the support they have asked for. It comes with a commitment to enhance psychological wellness for first responders, safety, and mental health services for our employees and community volunteer responders.

The balance of the budget increase for Emergency Medical Services is to make permanent a new staffing model at the Watson Lake ambulance station. This adds much-needed emergency response capacity and creates permanent employment opportunities in the community.

When I was down in Watson Lake, Madam Chair, and speaking to the constituents of the Member for Watson Lake, they brought this to my attention; they said it was important, and I am very happy to be delivering on this service to Watson Lake, which has — among all the communities in the territory, except Whitehorse — a very large call volume and also has a very large geographic area to service, recognizing that it is important that we put some more resources to that region and to that Emergency Medical Services station.

I think that it is appropriate, at this time, to thank the Yukon Emergency Medical Services for their dedication and service by supporting this allocation in this budget.

We place tremendous value on the contributions that volunteers make to provide emergency services throughout the territory. This is why, through Emergency Medical Services, we support community responders by supplying vehicles, medical and safety equipment, uniforms, fleet management services, station maintenance, administrative services, online education, and responder training in 15 communities. We take a collaborative approach to providing emergency services throughout the Yukon, and we rely on our partners in the communities to help us recruit, recognize, and retain volunteer emergency responders. We also rely on our paid responders,

community members, allied response agencies, and local health care providers to help with local capacity needs. Community Nursing, for example, provides really critical services within our communities and works with Emergency Medical Services to provide that support to our communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted additional safety measures for our first responders. Protocols were put in place to address patient COVID assessment and scene safety, crew training and station spatial separation, stockpile of personal protection equipment, facility access restrictions, and safe work practices to mitigate the risk of transmission throughout the territory.

I mentioned earlier that Watson Lake has a fairly high incident volume. We are talking — in 2020, they had 491 calls registered at Watson Lake. Whitehorse had 6,094 calls, to put that in comparison, and the largest call volume beyond that was in Dawson City at 274 calls, which is roughly half of what we saw in Watson Lake.

The total incident volume in 2020 was 8,600, almost 8,700 calls. We have 128 EMS volunteers, as of July 28, 2021, and we have 71 EMS employees. So, the majority of our service is provided by volunteers throughout the territory. I can say that Yukon Emergency Medical Services recognizes that training and education are essential in supporting the effective delivery of emergency medical services. Using a variety of training methods, Yukon Emergency Medical Services delivers a robust program to meet the needs of community responders throughout the Yukon. This includes a training centre, mobile training unit, high-fidelity training mannequins, online learning platforms, local training nights, certificate courses, and two dedicated clinical educators.

Yukon Emergency Medical Services also provides accredited core training and certification for Emergency Medical Services community responders, through the Emergency Care and Safety Institute emergency medical responder program. We do know that, at this time in Canada's history, emergency medical responders — paramedics — are in very high demand. Recruiting more should always be a goal of the territory. We are working to ensure that we have a good supply of paramedics in the territory, and we will continue to do so.

I think I will leave it there, knowing that it is important that we recruit, and by providing the training that I have outlined in the last couple of minutes, you can see that we are investing heavily in having a very good emergency medical response team throughout the Yukon.

Ms. McLeod: On the matter of training for our EMS people, I have heard that the training is too much or that the training is not enough, depending on the community that you are talking to. One of the great topics that comes up is the amount of time volunteers are asked to be away from their homes to take training in Whitehorse.

I am wondering if the minister has looked at any possible ways to make training more accessible and less time-consuming for residents who want to volunteer for these services and, at the same time, look after their responsibilities to their home communities.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, the question posed a few minutes ago was about how onerous it can be for volunteers to get the training they need in the community.

I urge the member opposite, if she is hearing these complaints, to please let me know which communities they are coming from, and we will take a look at it on a case-by-case basis.

I will say that a clinical educator visits every community in the territory four times a year to help with the training of our volunteers. We have enhanced that with this supplementary budget that we are talking about this afternoon with additional resources with an aim to recruiting and retaining more emergency medical services responders. That is really what we're talking about today and that is why this budget item is before the House that we are here discussing this afternoon; it is to make sure that we have enhanced the clinical educator who already visits every community in the territory four times a year.

As somebody providing medical care to the citizens of the territory on a voluntary basis, there are standards that they have to maintain to do that. I absolutely admire and respect those who step forward to do this in the territory because it is a difficult job. I will say that there are different levels of training, and people can choose their own path. Not everybody has to take the paramedic training, which is certainly a lot more intensive and takes a lot more time. They can also go with emergency responder training, which is generally the path used by many of our volunteers in rural Yukon and is a less rigorous training standard to provide that critical service in remote Yukon communities. That is a choice that individuals can make when they are actively stepping up to support and help their fellow citizens in rural Yukon, which is absolutely admirable. We all owe them a debt of gratitude.

We are also looking at other ways we can help to support our teams in rural Yukon. Perhaps there is someone who doesn't actually want to actually provide the medical care, but they are willing to drive and they are great driver. So, maybe we can team somebody who is willing to volunteer as a driver in rural Yukon with somebody who has EMS training so you have some supports for people. We are looking at these new models of service delivery to help expand the volunteer base in rural Yukon and to carry some of the load in different ways.

So, we are looking at many, many ways to support our teams of emergency medical responders throughout the territory. I really appreciate the question. It's an important one. It's one of the reasons why we have \$1 million identified in the supplementary budget, which is to support our emergency medical responders throughout the territory.

There is another point that I would like to make in closing. Currently in Watson Lake, there is a competition underway for two full-time EMS staff — two more FTEs added to the government roster. That hiring process is currently underway. We hope to have those positions filled fairly soon, but that hiring process is currently underway to bring two more EMS professionals into Watson Lake, into the members opposite's riding.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for his comments. I appreciate that.

Currently, Watson Lake has three, plus some auxiliary personnel. The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes was on his feet earlier in this session talking about 3.2 new FTEs for Watson Lake. Of course, the minister just referenced two FTEs for Watson Lake.

So, here's my question: How many people do we have? We had 3.2. Do we have 3.2 new ones or just two new ones? What is going to be the full complement of employees for EMS?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really want to commend the Member for Watson Lake for the question. I think that it is important. It is vital that we bring accurate information to dispel any errors in this House. There are obviously questions in the mind of the member opposite, and I am really glad we can bring some clarity to them.

My colleague, the MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, did rise during budget discussion and referenced a number that had been given to opposition parties, I believe, during their budget briefings. The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes is entirely correct.

This year, as part of this budget exercise that we are talking about now, we are adding 3.2 new FTEs to Watson Lake — three new people providing services to Yukoners in Watson Lake. It is vitally important work, and we are happy to do this because this is the service that people need in rural Yukon.

That brings the roster in Watson Lake to four full-time employees at the Emergency Medical Services station. We will have one paid part-time employee at the Emergency Medical Services station in Watson Lake, and we will have three volunteers at the EMS station in Watson Lake. There will be a total of 3.2 new full-time equivalents in Watson Lake, and that will bring the total commitment to four full-time, one part-time, and three volunteers in that station when it is fully staffed.

Ms. McLeod: This is not really working out for me — this math — because we had three full-time employees and we had one or two auxiliary employees. Now we are adding 3.2 to come up with four, so there is something being lost in the translation here. I am happy to engage with the minister by letter on this issue, but it is certainly going to be an important one for my community because, by my calculations, we are getting one new person, which we appreciate — absolutely. I am going to leave that for now because I have limited time this afternoon.

Can the minister tell us which rural communities have functional fire protection and ambulance coverage in those rural communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: By way of introduction, I will say that recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters is a challenge in the Yukon and across Canada. We continue to work with communities to ensure volunteer emergency response coverage in our communities. We provide oversight, training, and equipment for community fire departments but are only able to do so with a core of volunteers who give their time and effort to train and be available. Throughout the territory, the Fire Marshal's Office presents public education campaigns for life

safety and fire prevention, operates community fire halls, maintains firefighting equipment and vehicles, provides training that meets the national standards, and supports municipalities with training and resources.

I am going to start with volunteer fire departments. It is going to take a little bit of time, and it's going to be quite a comprehensive list of where we are at with volunteer fire departments in the territory. I beg the Chamber's indulgence to go through some of these numbers.

Let me just say to begin that, in the 16 unincorporated communities, volunteer departments require interested community members and assistance to recruit and retain a minimum number of volunteer firefighters. The fire services that are provided by the Fire Marshal's Office include the provision of all fire response equipment and vehicles, training and logistics, as well as the administration of community volunteer fire halls, such as training records, honoraria, and standard operating procedures.

The eight municipal departments require interested community members and assistance from the municipality to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters to provide fire services. The Yukon government supports municipalities by providing funding and provisioning resources on an as-needed basis and as capacity allows. This includes training for staff and volunteers, as well as equipment on a case-by-case basis to cover areas not easily reachable by unincorporated halls.

During the COVID era, volunteers have been trained in infectious disease and blood and airborne pathogens control since 2012, and the use of N95 masks and gloves is standard practice when working around patients. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the policy and use of cloth-based coverings for travel in vehicles to and from incidents and training.

As of February 3, 2021, Beaver Creek in 2020 had six incidents, one fire volunteer, and no paid employees. Burwash Landing had six incidents, seven volunteers, and no paid employees. Carmacks — municipal — had four incidents, and they have nine fire volunteers and no paid employees. Carcross had one incident in 2020, and they have three volunteers in Carcross and no paid employees. In Dawson City, the municipal fire department had 170 incidents in 2020, and they have 29 volunteers in the Klondike and one paid employee. In Destruction Bay, they had no incidents, and they have no volunteers and no paid employees. In Faro, there were five incidents in 2020, and they have eight fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Golden Horn, they had 21 incidents, and they have 25 volunteers and no paid employees. In Haines Junctions, the municipal fire department had 11 incidents in 2020, and they have 15 fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Ibex, they had 24 incidents in 2020, 28 fire volunteers and no paid employees. In the Klondike Valley, outside of the municipality, they had 12 incidents recorded in 2020, and they have 10 volunteers and no paid employees. In Keno, they acknowledged two incidents in 2020, and they have no fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Marsh Lake, they had 11 recorded incidents in 2020, and they have 21 volunteers and no paid employees. In Mount Lorne, there were eight incidents in 2020 and 16 volunteers and no paid employees. In Mayo, the

municipal fire department there had four incidents in 2020, and they have six volunteers and no paid employees. We just toured their new fire facility there. It is just wonderful, and I'm really happy to see that now in service.

In Mendenhall, we had no incidents in 2020, and we have no fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Old Crow, there were no incidents in 2020 and no fire volunteers in Old Crow and no paid employees. In Pelly Crossing, we had one incident in 2020, and we have no volunteers in Pelly currently and no paid employees. I had a good meeting with the people in Pelly when I was up there with the chief and council, and they are looking at resurrecting their fire services in that community, but have not yet finished the training.

In Ross River, we had one incident in 2020, and we have no volunteers and no paid employees. In Tagish, we had two incidents in 2020, and we have eight volunteers in Tagish and no paid employees. In Teslin, the municipal fire department — we have no data on the incident volumes in Teslin as of 2020. We have three volunteers in that community.

In Watson Lake, the municipality has recorded 53 incidents in 2020. The number of fire volunteers in Watson Lake is 19 currently, and they have one paid employee.

Sommet Yukon has 34 fire volunteers. SHOT Yukon has 20 volunteers. Upper Liard has one volunteer and had no incidents in 2020. Whitehorse municipal had 678 incidents in 2020. They have no volunteers, but they have 26 paid firefighters in Whitehorse as a municipality. At the Whitehorse airport, no data was provided on the incident volume. We don't have any volunteers. We have 13 paid employees up there.

For a total, we had 959 fire responses in the territory in 2020. We have 263 total volunteers in the territory, and we have 41 paid employees.

I hope that goes some measure to answer the member opposite's question.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for those numbers. I found them quite interesting, actually.

Is there a plan B for unincorporated communities if there is a fire and there are no volunteers or capacity to deal with that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The delivery of fire services in the Yukon's unincorporated communities is challenging given our remote and small population base. It is a challenge to recruit and retain volunteers, as I have said a few times this afternoon, and to maintain the necessary levels of training and certification to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers.

We have an independent review currently underway. The individual was up here in the territory in September and October. The report is in its final stages. I'm hopeful, after reviewing it, to be able to make it available to the public in fairly short order. That review is well underway, and it examines the current model for the provision of rural fire services across the territory. As I said, I look forward to the improvement that focused recommendations will bring to fire service delivery throughout the territory.

The contractor has drawn upon the expertise of territorial fire chiefs, fire service members, community members, and

community leaders. I really do appreciate — and want to thank everyone who took the time to participate.

In my community tour this summer, at the end of this fall — I guess it was fall; all the seasons are blurring together. But following my community tour this fall, I had the opportunity to talk to municipal leaders and also to talk to fire chiefs across the territory. They had all contributed to this independent review of rural fire services. They thought that it was a great exercise and were looking forward to its recommendations.

Firefighting is a dangerous occupation, as we all know, and occupational health and safety requirements set out by that act in regulations — it is simply not lawful to place individuals in a fire situation with equipment that they are not trained or certified to operate. Equipment and training are available for communities with a core of volunteers who are willing to give their time and effort to become trained and maintain certification as firefighters. I will also say that we have memorandums of understanding with municipal fire departments to provide aid to the nearest fire if they are available to do so.

We work together in this territory so often when it comes to calamity, such as we might see with a fire, and I am really grateful to the cooperation and professionalism and the looking out for our neighbours that we see so often in this territory, as we all lend a hand in times of need, for those in need. I think that we see that in the territory all the time, and I really have to give a shout-out to municipalities that so very often step up to help their neighbours in need, despite the enormous distances that they may have to travel to provide that aid.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that information.

In October of this year, the Building and Safety Standards branch sent out a notice to contractors informing them of a fee if re-inspection was required. Can the minister tell us what the reasoning is for fining contractors if they make a mistake?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. This question revolves around the Building and Safety Standards branch, which ensures that the structures that we live, work, and play in are safely built. From January 1, 2021 to September 1, 2021, building safety inspectors conducted 712 inspections.

That's 712 inspections in a nine-month period. They did 694 building inspections; they did 1,946 electrical inspections; they did 181 plumbing inspections; they did 87 oil heating inspections, 24 boiler inspections, one elevator inspection, and 360 gas inspections. Those hundreds of inspections were done on 712 sites. The Building and Safety Standards branch adopted during the pandemic — sorry, not adopted, adapted — my error — during the pandemic and found creative ways to continue their important work, despite the COVID-19 restrictions we found ourselves under, by way of virtual and digital inspections and strict mask wearing, proper hand hygiene, and physical distancing when inspections had to be in person. The branch completed the same number of inspections in 2020 and 2021 as they would in typical years. We didn't see — despite the challenges of the season, they managed to carry on their jobs and keep those inspections going.

The Building and Safety Standards branch develops, interprets, administers, and enforces building, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical standards, as well as administering area development regulations. Within Whitehorse, the Building and Safety Standards branch inspects all electrical, gas, elevator, ski lift, and large boiler installations. For all their permits and inspections within city boundaries, the Building and Safety Standards branch collaborates with the City of Whitehorse. As well as developing common inspection standards for Government of Yukon building inspectors, the branch works with the City of Whitehorse to develop shared inspections standards. These standards contribute to safer dwellings, workplaces, and public spaces. The branch records work done under permit on a building. This information can be used by the legal and banking communities in their assessment of the properties.

In partnership with the Fire Marshal's Office and Yukon Housing Corporation, the branch contributes annually to seasonal public awareness campaigns to improve home heating safety. This activity focuses on the installation of fire and carbon monoxide alarms in every dwelling in the territory, the installation of fire alarm systems, and the requirement that the work be done by qualified tradespeople. In this Chamber, we all know how important this work is. We just had tributes during Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week on how important it is that we get this work done and inspected properly.

The Building and Safety Standards branch also contributes to national and regional conversations on emerging issues in building safety, such as tiny homes, the effects of permafrost on building foundations, and amendments to the national building, plumbing, and electrical codes.

The member opposite brought a very specific issue to the floor of the House. Right now, I really do need more information on this. If the member could please provide me with the information she has, either through casework or in tabling the information on the floor of the House, going through standard channels, I would be more than happy to casework and get the answers the Member for Watson Lake is looking for this afternoon.

Ms. McLeod: Yes, of course, we will pursue this through other means to get the information that we are after. It certainly is an item of concern for many contractors.

I want to thank the officials for being here today and helping us out. My questions for today are done. I am going to turn this over to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for sharing the floor.

Last time we were here, the minister and I were talking about various issues, including his helpful direction that not all decisions, but some decisions, from the residential tenancies office can be found online.

A question I had is, once decisions are made, what follow-up does the residential tenancies office have? If a decision is made, what kind of follow-up is there?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I welcome my colleague from the Third Party to the discussion this afternoon. I will start this afternoon with the residential tenancies office. Most landlord and tenant relationships are long-standing and mutually

beneficial, but when disagreements arise, as they are wont to do between landlords and tenants, they may come to the residential tenancies office for help.

The office offers a broad range of services, including education, mediation, and formal dispute resolution to landlords and tenants. The residential tenancies office works to help landlords and tenants avoid conflict by educating them on their rights and responsibilities. The office provides the residential landlord and tenant handbook, outreach activities at community events, and workshops. The residential tenancies office continues to provide fair and efficient dispute resolution through mediation and written decisions. The process of dispute resolution gives the party the certainty of legally binding decisions, with significantly lower wait times than if the dispute went to court. The residential tenancies office does not advocate for either landlords or tenants. The residential tenancies officers are neutral third parties. They must maintain their objectivity or they will not be able to resolve disputes without concerns of bias.

I will also say that, to date, in the 2020-21 year, the residential tenancies office has resolved 75 landlord and tenant matters through the formal resolution process. It resolved more than 130 in 2019-20. The office also worked with many landlords and tenants to reach early settlement of disputes so that formal hearings were not required. Since its opening in 2016, the office has formally adjudicated more than 600 disputes.

The residential tenancies office provides information about the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations, as well as legally binding dispute resolution, when disputes arise that cannot be resolved by landlords and tenants.

Decisions are issued by the office in a timely manner, as I said earlier, and orders are enforceable in the Yukon Supreme Court. Minimum rental standards came into effect on January 1, 2017. The residential tenancies office enforces these important health and safety standards for Yukoners living in rental housing.

Educating the public is a key function of the office, as it helps prevent disputes. In 2020-21, the residential tenancies office responded to hundreds of inquiries that were fairly evenly split between both landlords and tenants. Common questions relate to issues such as security deposits, tenancy agreements, repairs, and rules on rent payments.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* provides a binding dispute resolution process that is designed to provide fair, expedient, and accessible dispute resolution for landlords and tenants. It requires written tenancy agreements, notice periods to end tenancies, and provides clarity for both landlords and tenants. Whenever possible, tenants and landlords are encouraged to work together to deal with disputes as they arise. The office is also available to provide mediated settlement through its dispute resolution process for all residential tenancies. The dispute resolution process gives both parties the certainty of legally binding decisions with significantly lower wait times than if the dispute went to court.

The office provides standard forms for tenancy agreements, condition inspections, and ending tenancies, both

in print and online, so that landlords and tenants have the information they need to conduct their business in compliance with the law.

Mobile home pad tenancies are covered by the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* as well. Tenants and landlords of mobile home pads are entitled to the same rights as those who rent apartments and houses, including assessing the dispute resolution services offered by the residential tenancies office.

I hope that goes some way to answering the member opposite's question, and I am happy to answer any subsidiary questions that the member may have.

Ms. White: I appreciate that the minister had an opportunity to read that briefing note about the residential tenancies office and the legislation, but it didn't come close to answering the question that I asked.

What I asked is: Once a decision is made, what kind of follow-up does the office have? So, through that binding arbitration that he referenced, a decision is made — what kind of follow-up happens from that office?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The residential tenancies office will serve the binding decision to both parties, so there is a binding decision issued to both parties. Precedent-setting cases, as I mentioned the other afternoon when we were talking about this issue, are published on the CanLII site so that the community has access to the precedents and will see the current caselaw — the decisions that the residential tenancies office have rendered. They can then use them to see whether or not they have already been applied. That information is available that way.

To answer the member opposite's question, the decision is issued to both parties. In precedent-setting circumstances, those decisions are posted to CanLII for the entire community to see.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the minister as this time it was in the realm of what I was asking, so I appreciate that — referencing CanLII, where he says the precedent-setting decisions are published so that people can see.

The question is this: What follow-up exists? For example, if I'm on the CanLII website like I am right now and I am looking at a decision, for example, that affects 280 tenants — in this case, a mobile home park — the decision says that there is no legal requirement for a tenant to sign a new tenancy agreement with the landlord. How does the office follow up? How do we make sure that every tenant in that park understands that they cannot be forced to sign a new lease and make sure that it is following the decision that was decided by that office?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question.

She is referring to a recent decision that came out of the residential tenancies office that pertains to the actions of a landlord that affects many residents of an area. The complaint came forward from an individual.

The residential tenancies office considers every complaint as unique, so they deal with every complaint they receive on an individual basis. In this case, though, the incident does apply to a much broader range of people. I guess that what the member opposite is probably getting at is that, if people don't come forward and complain or they don't do this, they may not know what is happening in their rental development.

It is a good question. Certainly, in these days of rental shortages, we have to look at this in a more holistic way and we will deal with the department to find a way to better transmit these decisions to the public in these cases, because in certain circumstances, it does affect a lot more people.

To the member opposite's point, we could do a better job broadcasting the implications of that one tenant's complaint to the broader whole. In many cases, it may be on a one-on-one basis and we don't do that, but this is a much broader situation. I will talk with my officials and find a way to broadcast these decisions in these circumstances in a much broader way.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Indeed, he is correct. This time, when a decision is made and affects hundreds of people — in this case, it was signing a new lease that changed a set amount and therefore circumvented the rent increase. It affects hundreds of people. How do we make sure — and how does the office follow up to make sure — that the landlord has followed the obligation, which is that the landlord must communicate with all tenants regarding proposed tenancy agreements? What is the follow-up? That is the question. I appreciate that, and I look forward to hearing back from him either in this capacity or by other means.

I did appreciate it when the minister shared fire coverage across the territory with all those numbers. Although it sounds large with 263 volunteers and 41 employees, it does leave some communities without. I have questions around fire services in Destruction Bay. Sadly, a home in Destruction Bay burned to the ground on Friday. This home is 50 feet from an empty fire station. The fire truck had to come from Burwash Landing, and the firefighters nearly had the fire out when they had to return to Burwash to refill the water tank. It was nearly an hour before they arrived back at the scene.

This is not a criticism to the volunteer firefighters out of Burwash Landing and this isn't a criticism of the folks in Destruction Bay, because everyone did the best that they could.

In a community like this, with 16.5 km between Burwash and Destruction Bay — understanding that the volunteers are coming from Burwash Landing and it is my understanding that Destruction Bay used to have a fire station — is there any capability for the volunteer firefighters from Burwash Landing to fill up their fire trucks in Destruction Bay?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. It ties to many of the things that we have been talking about — about tragedy, about sustaining volunteer fire and emergency personnel in these tiny communities that we have scattered across the territory. It also speaks to the good neighbour practices that we see throughout the territory — as communities that see friends, relatives, and neighbours in nearby communities in a time of need — they rush and try to protect as they can. It touches on all of those themes that we have spoken about this afternoon.

The question is a seemingly simple one: Can the firefighters coming into Destruction Bay fill up their truck there? Frankly, I don't have an answer for my good colleague across the way.

What I can say this afternoon is that we have had, as I mentioned, a review of fire services throughout the territory.

The individual has conducted this review to try to address this very subject, which is: How do we satisfy the need to provide these fire protection services in these very small communities that just do not have enough of a volunteer base to provide the service themselves in a more formal way?

That review is well underway. It's actually in the final stages of development. It will have, I imagine, some of the answers to some of these vexing questions that we have around providing essential services to very, very small communities — places like Destruction Bay, places like Keno — and I look forward to seeing the recommendations contained therein.

I can't get ahead of what those recommendations will be, but I, like many in the territory, are very anxious to see these recommendations and actually get them before the Yukon public.

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): 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.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: I thank the minister for his previous answer, but it didn't actually answer the question, so I asked if there was a possibility for the Burwash Landing fire truck to be filled up with water in Destruction Bay. He said that the review is ongoing and maybe we would find out those answers.

I will draw a similarity to the fires in Keno. The fire truck came from Mayo to respond to the fire in Keno and ran out of water. That would be much longer than just an hour return trip to go back to Mayo and come back. In some cases, when we are talking about depending on the neighbourliness between Yukon communities, it might be helpful if Yukon government also played a role in that, which is to ensure that there was access to water in those communities that didn't have the volunteers. I know that it is a complicated issue and I will just put it out there for the minister and his department in hopes that, at some point, we will hear back that this is being worked on.

When the minister referenced jurisdictions and whether they had volunteer firefighters instances, or paid firefighters, one that really stood out for me was Old Crow. As we all know, Old Crow is a fly-in community with a couple hundred citizens, but to the best of my knowledge, right now, Old Crow doesn't have any kind of fire response. I don't think that there is an alarm system, so if an alarm was to go off — if it could go off — who would respond?

One of the reasons why this is an important issue is that we have put in a recreation centre that hasn't opened; we're putting in a new health centre; we're putting in a seniors complex and

10 additional units, so does the minister have any thoughts about the fire situation in Old Crow and possible solutions?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. I have a response for the member opposite, when it comes to the residential tenancies office. I think that it's important that I get that on the record this afternoon. Ask and ye shall receive.

We were talking about a certain situation that arose with a multi-unit rental property and a decision coming down. One of the requirements made by the residential tenancies office is that every tenant has to be advised of this ruling. A contact number was provided so that they could get in touch if they had any concerns or follow-up. That notice did go out on the heels of the decision. When I was reading and getting briefed on this package, I did see that notification going out. I should have brought it up in my answer, but I verified with the department that this notice did go out to every tenant in that rental complex, so they were followed up on. They have avenues to complain, or to follow up with the office, if the landlord does not follow through with the order that was given. I just wanted to make that point this afternoon that, in this case, that did happen.

As I mentioned in my previous response, in many cases, it's one tenant and one landlord. In this case, it was one landlord and several tenants. There was follow-up through the office to make sure that they had an avenue to know about the decision, what it meant, and what the implications of that decision were — just so that is clear. I thank you for the Chamber's indulgence to provide that answer, Madam Chair.

We are on volunteer fire departments and Old Crow. I share the member opposite's concern. We have several communities in the territory that currently do not have any fire volunteers — Mendenhall, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Destruction Bay, and Keno among them.

Like I was saying, Pelly Crossing, a self-governing First Nation, is currently in a process of reviewing its provision of fire services, is working to get that up and running, and is working to obtain more volunteers. Old Crow, as a self-governing First Nation, has that option as well. The independent review I referenced earlier, I suggest, will have some recommendations regarding self-governing First Nations and fire services in those self-governing First Nations.

There is also a deputy fire marshal assigned to work with Old Crow to find solutions for establishing a fire service, for recruitment, and for training. I believe, as does the department, that there is a significant opportunity to partner with a self-governing First Nation to provide these services in self-governing First Nation communities. I look forward to working on this file going forward, because it is important. I do know that the independent review I have spoken about a few times this afternoon will have recommendations that will help with communities that don't have any fire volunteers at the moment.

As to the member opposite, we did talk about Destruction Bay and whether the truck can refill their truck in that community. As I said, I don't know, and I will look into that for the member opposite. The independent fire review will have other recommendations. Maybe that's one of them. I'm just not sure what facilities there are in Destruction Bay to be able to

fill a truck like that, how long it would take, where — so, I just don't have those details on the floor of the House this afternoon, but if I receive them in the next hour or so, I will pass them along. If not, I'll get back to the member opposite on that issue.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that. Just in reference to Old Crow, the Yukon government built the new community centre that, in my understanding, was supposed to open up earlier this year. Has that community centre opened? If not, why not, and when is that expected opening day?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have a few things to say about community infrastructure projects this afternoon. Old Crow will be touched by these remarks, because we have advanced nearly 100 community infrastructure projects across the territory since 2016, valued at more than \$690 million in shared investment by the Yukon government and Canada. Canada contributed approximately \$488 million of that total, and we are very appreciative of that support here in the territory under the Investing in Canada infrastructure program.

Community infrastructure is the backbone of our modern lives. I don't think I have to put too fine a point to that. It provides water, sewer, and other municipal services used by Yukoners every day. Community infrastructure also includes public service spaces for gatherings and recreation that enable Yukoners to live healthy and active lives. We do our best to meet the needs of communities, recognizing the infrastructure gap and that desires far exceed the funding available.

As we advance priorities, we are also working with our federal colleagues to maximize contributions to the Yukon with as flexible terms as possible to better meet community and territory-wide priorities. We are working.

It is the communities that identify the priorities they have for infrastructure to us. That has been the process that my colleague undertook, travelling extensively throughout the territory — a remarkable achievement in and of itself — and asking those communities to please put forward their priorities — what they would like to see in terms of infrastructure — and then Community Services and the Government of Yukon have worked and done everything we can to follow up and follow through on the municipal priorities that they have put before us.

As for the Old Crow community centre, we are currently in the process of looking at and getting the status of that project. My understanding is — and we are trying to verify that right now — that it might be a transfer payment agreement with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, which means that we transferred the money — they put their priorities forward and this was one of their priorities. We may have transferred that money to the First Nation for them to procure the project.

So, the Old Crow community centre building replacement was a transfer payment agreement with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. It is \$14.5 million. As the First Nation is going through and actually doing the project on its behalf, I don't have insight into what the status of that project is at the moment, but I will look into that with my officials and will get back to the member opposite.

Ms. White: Along the same lines, what about the status on the update of the Carmacks community arena?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As members will know, the contractor that started that project abandoned it, and so construction has resumed on the project. I believe that it's Ketza Construction that is proceeding with that. We're looking for more details there.

The anticipated completion of that project is the fall of 2022. Legal action is underway with the original contractor, which was Scott Design Build, but this will not affect the current completion timelines of the project. We're going ahead with it, and then we will work on the legal side to reclaim as much money as we can from the original contract holder.

That project currently has resumed. We anticipate the completion in the fall of 2022.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that response. It's not very often that we have — well, I mean it is often that we have ministers responsible for multiple departments, but not always often that we have a minister responsible for two departments where they kind of cross-pollinate.

Is the minister aware of, within his department — so, within Wildland Fire Management. As folks in the Chamber know, I have been talking a lot about presumptive coverage for wildland forest firefighters. Does the minister know how his own department — Wildland Fire Management — feels about coverage for wildland forest firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, there is an aligning of the departments that we haven't seen for a long time. Basically, it is the creation of a de facto labour minister who has the responsibility for Community Services and all the EMS and fire protection services and all the rest of it and Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. There is a very good synergy here. I recognize it, and I am happy to see the member opposite acknowledge it as well.

I don't have my officials here from workers' compensation this afternoon, but that is okay because I have some experience there and have spoken to the president about workers' compensation and I have, of course, been working with Wildland Fire Management over the last several months on several fronts as they fought fires in this season as well as they fought fires in BC. They also provided much-needed flood response throughout the Southern Lakes in addition to everything else they were doing.

I know that, within the department, I have not had, from the Wildland Fire folks, any recommendation that they get a presumption for the urban poisons, toxins, and fumes that firefighters in municipalities and communities face. Wildland fire in the territory is different from some of the other provincial models. They are fighting fires almost solely in the bush, and they are breathing a lot of wood smoke and a lot of smoke from the burning of our boreal forest when they are out in their camps and fighting fires, but they are not tasked with fighting fires in municipal areas as some of our provincial wildland firefighters are.

In the territory, were they to, for some reason, come across fighting fires in a dumpsite or something that may have been taken over by fires, that would be chronicled and it would give them cause to be considered for other cancers.

The key here, as always, is that we try to follow the science and try to follow the evidence. Currently, the evidence states that our wildland firefighters are not exposed to the same types, the same fires, as you would find in an urban or municipal environment, so that is one of the reasons why we have the exception.

In working with Wildland Fire, I have never heard the recommendation that we include them in the presumption for these cancers the member opposite was talking about for first responders, although I have heard that Yukon's wildland firefighters are likely to encounter stressful situations that could have long-term impacts on their well-being.

Wildland Fire Management delivers cutting-edge mental resiliency training for firefighters and supervisors, helping crews recognize the signs of struggling mental health in themselves and their peers, and the training provides our staff with the tools and confidence to reach out and support each other through difficult times. So, we do hear about workplace safety issues in Wildland Fire, and that is the one that has been identified by many in the corps as a pressing matter, and we are providing, and stepping up to provide, that training and the recommendations there as well with the cancer presumption in WCB.

We recognize the invaluable contribution of every Yukoner who fights fires, whether full time or part time, professionally or as a volunteer. Under the existing *Workers' Compensation Act*, 10 cancers are presumed to be work-related for firefighters with the required use of services — not wildland fire, but the others.

During the public engagement commissioned by this government, we heard that Yukoners would like to see additional cancers included in the firefighter cancer presumption. The new act, which is now currently the most progressive act in the country, will add nine cancers to the list under the presumption, including pancreatic and thyroid. This latter recognizes the increasing role that women are taking on in fighting fires, because there are some cancers that are experienced by women that are captured by that presumption.

As I said, there are two different types of firefighter here: There is the one who works in the municipal environment and the one who works in the environment — in the wild — and those ones are not exposed to the same toxins as the other firefighters. Now, I have asked the department — the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — to examine the cost implications of adding a presumption to the wildland firefighting teams. That work is ongoing, and I expect it fairly soon. The actuaries are working on that. It would actually lead to rate increases, not only to the government, but also to one of the rate groups. I believe that it is "Resources and transportation low" — and the implications to that rate group would be quite extensive were this presumption to be added into the rate base. That would lead to increased rates immediately, because the presumption to long-term illness has to be booked according to actuarial rules right out of the hop, or so I'm led to believe.

I am currently looking at the implications for that addition into the act that is before this House at the moment. Again, the cost of that is currently estimated — the initial estimate is in the

millions of dollars and would have quite a substantial increase to one of the rate groups, as well as government. What we have to balance here is whether the evidence supports doing that, because we do have full-time, part-time, volunteer — and wildland firefighters are entitled to compensation benefits if they suffer a cardiac arrest while participating in an emergency response or within 24 hours of the end of actively participating in an emergency response.

In talking to my colleague across the floor and bringing up the presumptions that have been bestowed upon wildland firefighters in BC, one of the things that they were looking for was the presumption for cardiac. That actually is captured in the territory for wildland firefighters. The other thing that is captured for wildland firefighters in the territory is the PTSD presumption. Again, they are, like all employees, captured in that, which was something bestowed upon BC wildland firefighters, and it is actually already in effect and cued up to become the norm here in the territory as well.

Wildland firefighters in Yukon are not typically exposed to burning manufactured materials that structural firefighters deal with. The International Association of Fire Fighters has raised concerns that these manufactured materials specifically release significant amounts of carcinogenic materials when they burn, thereby increasing the cancer risk. That is why those firefighters are captured and our wildland firefighters are not — because they are not seen to be exposed.

That doesn't mean that, under a presumption, a wildland firefighter — were they to develop a cancer in later years and had the terms of service and had potential exposures to these carcinogens and toxins — would not get WCB; it is quite the opposite. If they were exposed to these things, they could actually get coverage for their cancer treatment in the future. The presumption just basically skips the whole assessment process that a wildland firefighter would have to go through if they develop pancreatic cancer in later life. But that doesn't mean to say they would not be covered under the WCB legislation. It just means that they would have to go through an assessment based on what their exposure was. That's also an important piece.

There wasn't an awful lot of discussion about this in the act modernization consultation process. We asked the board to engage the public on the government's behalf in regard to modernizing and amalgamating these two pieces of legislation. Multiple channels were available for all Yukoners to provide feedback and input, including local public meetings, community visits, online surveys, written submissions, targeted stakeholder meetings, and opportunities for one-on-one sessions with board staff. The "what we heard" document was released on August 20 and is available on the Engage Yukon website. The engagement process was an opportunity for all Yukoners to influence and enhance the future of workplace safety and compensation in the Yukon for years to come.

Information related to this modernization consultation was made available to all Yukoners on the website. Advertisements ran in the *Whitehorse Star* and the *Yukon News*, and radio ads were heard on CKRW and CHON FM. The consultation closed on January 16, 2020. Advertisements were published on social

media platforms such as Facebook. Stakeholders and the general public were invited to provide input during the engagement process through several channels. A public open house was held in Whitehorse on October 23. Three outreach events were held in Whitehorse on November 6, 16, and 27, 2019. There were community visits in Haines Junction on November 5, Watson Lake on November 20, Mayo on December 2, and Dawson on December 3. Written submissions could be e-mailed or dropped off at the workers' compensation office. Verbal input could be given through a phone number. Two online surveys were published in French and English. There were 10 external advisory group meetings made up of representatives from government agencies, community organizations, and stakeholder groups representing workers and employers on October 13 and 31, November 14 and 28, and December 11 and January 16 — the date is off here, but I believe it was 2019. Workers' compensation heard from several individuals and groups outside of the public and stakeholder meetings who brought forward issues of specific concern to them. These submissions were included in the "what we heard" report. The number of people actually asking for the presumption to include wildland fires was slim to negligible.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that diatribe. I am hopeful that it means that he will be calling back the workers' compensation legislation. The question that I asked is: Has the minister had conversations with his own department, within Wildland Fire Management, as to their feelings about it? That is the question I asked. I'm not sure if I will get a different response, so I will try again: Has the minister had conversations within Wildland Fire Management about coverage for forest firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have had lots of discussions with Wildland Fire over the last months. I have not heard the presumption for wildland firefighters brought up in any of those conversations.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that short response.

It seems to be going super well for my questions today, so I am going to follow up on something the minister and I spoke about last on October 28, which is the proposed changes that have been tabled but not brought forward for any sort of conversation. Those are the changes to the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act*. The last time we were up, I had asked the minister different questions about that. One question that I have right now is: Has, at any point in time, the Department of Community Services looked at other programs to run a building retrofit program? Have they looked at any other avenues?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My predecessor is not here right now, but I have spoken to him on several occasions. I have actually been party to discussions we have had. Yes, the Department of Community Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation have looked at alternatives to delivering the program this way, and we have communicated it as such to municipalities. I have done that myself. I know that my colleague has also spoken to them about this. There was a very lengthy process of analysis about how to best deliver this

program that would see our greenhouse gas emissions drop by 12 kilotonnes as outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

It is an important piece of our reduction targets. It will make housing more affordable for Yukoners, and it will also help our economy, as many people in the United States, the president included, is talking about how adaptation to climate change is actually a positive for the community. This is one great example of that.

We did look at Yukon Housing Corporation as an alternative. I think that this is where municipalities have, in conversations with me, consistently asked if we could deliver the program through Yukon Housing Corporation. We did look at that.

The short answer is that it is not a good option for Yukoners or the Government of Yukon for many reasons. For one thing, the most important part is that delivering the program through the Yukon Housing Corporation — the corporations would have to offer a personal loan to the person applying to the program. As I have discussed with the member opposite — as we have had this discussion — that would, first of all, increase the interest rate at which the loan can be offered right off the hop. We are looking at an interest rate of the Government of Canada lending rate plus 2.25 percent — I think that is what they had to do to deliver the program that way. Immediately, instead of seeing loans that would currently be 0.25 percent — some of the cheapest money in the country — Yukoners would have to go through Yukon Housing Corporation for a personal loan because it is a personal loan and not tied to a property in any way, shape, or form. The interest rate then goes higher, and the whole process changes. Then you are forced to give people loans at a much higher interest rate.

The other piece is that, because it's a personal loan, people would be less willing to take it on. Not only is it a higher interest rate, which puts in some impediments and makes it less affordable for people, but it also then means that, if you are thinking of selling your property in a couple of years, you may not want to be saddled with a loan like this, as opposed to tying it to your property and having it paid off over 15 years through an assessment to your property, as is currently the process through the well program and the rural electrification. Municipalities have stepped up to do these programs in the past, and so there is an understanding about how it would work.

The answer to the question, as I have said — as the member opposite and I have had these conversations before — is that, yes, the Department of Community Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation have explored other avenues to deliver this program and have discovered that, through that very thorough analysis, the best way to deliver this program is with municipalities through a local improvement charge. It makes interest rates lower, it ties the loan to the property, it transfers with the property, and it will allow the Yukon government — with these amendments that we are putting forward — to deliver this program in unincorporated rural communities next summer, at the very least. With any luck, some of the municipalities will also opt to sign on to this program and then expand the program so that we can actually get to 2,000 homes made far more efficient, saving their owners money, cutting our

greenhouse gas emissions, and helping our economy with the cheapest money in the country.

Ms. White: I am hopeful that the minister has gotten municipalities to sign on, unlike recently when we heard from AYC that they still weren't in support — the City of Whitehorse before the last municipal election. Then, hopefully when he gets communities onside, he will share that information with all members of the House.

Speaking of sharing information, the minister mentioned seeing the RTO decision and the notification that was sent out to tenants in that mobile home park, and I'm hoping that the minister can share a copy of that with me. So, I am just asking for confirmation that the minister will share what was sent out as a notification about the RTO decision.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to share the notification.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$12,896,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$2,280,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$10,616,000 agreed to

Department of Community Services agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, is it possible to recess for only five minutes, just due to the time of the day?

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Highways and Public Works supplementary budget request for fiscal year 2021-22. I would like to introduce my officials. To my left, we have Sherri Young, and to my right, Deputy Minister Paul McConnell.

I have a few comments and certainly understand that there will be further discussion in future days.

I would like to highlight a few matters in relation to Highways and Public Works and also highlight the budgetary requests for which Highways and Public Works is coming to the Legislative Assembly to seek spending authority.

First, I would like to talk about the First Nations procurement policy that our government implemented in full on October 4 of this year. Over a period of nine months, the industry working group was established to provide a forum for interested stakeholders to voice their input as tools and processes were developed to support the implementation of this policy.

I would like to thank the stakeholders who attended these meetings. The discussions that took place contributed to the way we designed the modern review committee, bid value reductions, the process of First Nation business verification, as well as other operational requirements that will contribute to the success of this policy. Consultation on the policy and legislation changes can be challenging, and, in fact, on certain files, it can be more than just focusing on technical aspects.

A stakeholder might ask: Why is a First Nation procurement policy required? Is my current business responsible for past injustices? I would respond that, broadly, indigenous people have been excluded from the prosperity that has resulted from modern Canadian nation-building, and most of them still are. This is about historic reparation and we are attempting to fix the relationship going forward.

Reconciliation has many facets. It is ceremony, it is justice, but arguably it is also creating favourable circumstances to boost economic growth for a segment of the population that has been historically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed. As society and as a government, we have decided to move in the direction of reconciliation, and we are taking concrete steps to get there.

In mid-September, I travelled to Dawson City on the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. On my way up the north Klondike Highway, I saw the national trade corridors fund resources being deployed impressively on various projects along the road. We are upgrading critical sections of the north Klondike Highway over the next decade. These construction projects will increase safety, improve driving conditions, and better connect the Yukon. These road sections will be constructed to a higher standard and will increase the resilience

of the highway to climate change consequences by installing erosion control and oversize culverts as we face increased variability in precipitation, runoff, and intermittent permafrost.

If you drove up to Dawson this summer, you will have seen that we are rehabilitating bridges such as the structure at Moose Creek, as well as replacing others such as the previously suboptimal approach at Crooked Creek, situated just south of Stewart Crossing.

In total, we aim to reconstruct 209 kilometres of the north Klondike Highway through this funding envelope over the course of this decade. With the thawing permafrost in some of these sections, these are indeed major undertakings as we attempt to rehabilitate our road infrastructure to maximize climate resilience.

Speaking of major undertakings, accompanied by my Highways and Public Works officials, I witnessed and learned details on the construction of the Dempster fibre line. I was very impressed by the progress made so far and, in particular, the lack of obvious impact of the already placed fibre line along the Dempster Highway right-of-way.

There are certainly challenges ahead, including a number of significant tunnelling stretches under creeks and rivers, including the mighty Mackenzie River.

Also on the north highway crossing, in the Stewart Crossing to Dawson corridor, in the 1990s and 2000s when I was doing my once-every-two-months court circuits in Dawson, I recall some of the sections. There was thick vegetation — almost tunnel-like — with an almost natural canopy of deciduous leaves greeting motorists. Today, our planned annual extensive brushing schedule, combined with our road traffic volume classification system, attempts to ensure that the high- and relatively high-volume portions of our 5,000-plus kilometre road infrastructure are cleared and brushed with predictable regularity in order to make best efforts to ensure the safety of the Yukon driving public.

I want to commend the department for moving swiftly on the requests made from Yukoners on specific brushing areas of safety concern and of potholes of significance. Some alerts came directly to my office, and some came helpfully from colleagues from across the floor.

I also recall, in the first few weeks of me being in this position, that there were a number of washouts that had to be dealt with expertly by the skilled staff and employees of Highways and Public Works. In certain areas, we also face the invasive plant species, specifically sweet clover, that have made the need for brushing in some segments more frequent.

I am now pleased to speak specifically about the Department of Highways and Public Works supplementary budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year. The Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for public roads throughout the territory — their construction, maintenance, and the clearing of the rights-of-way.

Also, the department supports the rest of government through a centralized network by sourcing office supplies and by providing assistance with fleet vehicles, printing, publishing, procurement, mail delivery, and government travel. On top of that, Highways and Public Works manages and

maintains 28 airports and aerodromes, along with roughly 500 buildings and facilities such as schools and office spaces. With all of these tasks to manage, we must be strategic and make prudent choices with spending so that we can provide the best possible service to Yukoners.

Despite a high level of care and attention, it is nearly impossible to predict everything that happens in a year, particularly this year with historically excessive melt from record snowfalls in the southern Yukon, as well as the ongoing pandemic response, which commenced, as we all know, in March 2020.

The total supplementary budget for Highways and Public Works is an increase of \$8,776,000. Of that amount, \$5,256,000 is recoverable from Canada. I would like to give more detail about the highlights of the supplementary budget.

As members of this House will know, this year we experienced unusual weather events, some of which were, in fact, record-breaking. In fact, in early April, the amount of snow on the ground in certain areas of southern Yukon was nearly 300 percent above normal. When the snow melted, it caused a number of road washouts; therefore, a \$1.5-million increase to the department's budget was needed to repair emergency road washouts, ensuring that our highways were safe and accessible for Yukoners. This is just one example of how unanticipated weather events can significantly impact the department's budget and require additional resources.

Equally important to responding to emergency transportation issues is ensuring that the department has the right equipment to keep the Yukon highway network operational. This equipment is vital to ensuring that Yukoners can access reliable transportation links that get them where they need to go. To meet equipment replacement cost increases, we were required to increase the road and airport equipment revolving fund by \$1.3 million. As well, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to affect our spending this fiscal year. This year, we saw a \$5.2-million increase to continue supporting the Yukon aviation industry, which is 100-percent recoverable from Canada; 12 aviation companies benefitted from this funding, as this sector has predictably been among the hardest hit during the COVID-19 global pandemic. We hear anecdotally that our aviation sector has shown some promising signs of recovery this past summer, but our government certainly recognizes that there is still ground to make up in order to reach pre-pandemic levels.

As well, Highways and Public Works has also contributed \$300,000 toward the contract for the COVID-19 call centre, which allowed Yukoners to access comprehensive and accurate information.

Lastly, we increased our budget by \$220,000 to support additional cleaning measures for schools to make sure that our students are, and continue to be, kept safe during the global pandemic.

We are committed to meeting the needs of Yukoners while responding to external spending pressures and balancing those pressures with our plans in a fiscally responsible manner. Moving forward, the Department of Highways and Public Works will continue the vital work of keeping our

transportation systems moving, our information flowing, and our buildings running safely and reliably all year long.

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

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for his opening remarks and welcome his officials as well.

I just wanted to start with some questions about a news release that went out today regarding the Yukon Resource Gateway program and the awarding of the Carmacks bypass project at \$29.6 million, according to the news release.

There will be a series of questions on this, but when I look at his mandate letter, on page 3, it says that the minister has a leadership role in ensuring that the commitments under *Our Clean Future* are realized, including — the second bullet down — conducting climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure projects above \$10 million that are built or funded by the Government of Yukon. Clearly, this Yukon Resource Gateway project falls into that category.

I know that we are running short on time here today, but I'm curious if the minister can provide us with details of that climate risk assessment, when it was done, and what the results were.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In the spring of 2019, a project agreement for the Carmacks bypass component was signed by the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The project includes construction of a new road and bridge that will allow industrial vehicles to bypass the community of Carmacks, creating an enhanced and safer flow of traffic for residents. It will also improve access to mining activities while enabling the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to benefit from contracting, education, and training benefits associated with the project.

As the member opposite will know, on November 8, 2021, Pelly Construction was awarded the \$29.6-million contract to construct the new road and bridge. This project is a key component under the Yukon Resource Gateway program and a collaborative effort between the Yukon government and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. Right-of-way clearing began in 2020, and the project is still anticipated to be complete in 2024.

I certainly hear the member opposite's question with respect to the climate risk analysis. I have a not insignificant note that I will get into, likely tomorrow, with respect to Highways and Public Works' response to *Our Clean Future*. I will certainly provide some additional information with respect to that specific question, but certainly all of the projects that are being considered now with respect to road building, Resource Gateway, and the national trade corridors fund will all have a climate lens with respect to climate resilience, creating stronger infrastructure in the roads so that there is greater resilience both to intermittent permafrost and upgrading as much of the north Klondike Highway to the BST-3 standard to allow for more significant loads in the spring breakup season, among others.

As stated, I have a lot of notes on the climate resilience piece that I will continue to share with the House, likely as early as tomorrow.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed November 8, 2021:

35-1-15

Nasal Naloxone, letter re (dated November 8, 2021) from Bronte Renwick-Shields, Executive Director, Blood Ties Four Directions Centre, Peter Johnston, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations, Kristina Craig, Executive Director, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Kate Mechan, Executive Director, Safe at Home Society Yukon, Aja Mason, Executive Director, Yukon Status of Women Council, Barbara McInerney, Executive Director, Women's Transition Home, Jillian Hardie, Executive Director, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Véronique Maggiore, Interim Executive Director, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and Dave Blottner, Executive Director, Food Bank Society of

Whitehorse, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (White)

35-1-16

COVID-19 elementary school measures, letter re (dated November 7, 2021) from Fraser Pearce and parents of elementary school children to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services, Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South, and Annie Blake, Member for Vuntut Gwitchin (White)

Written notice was given of the following motions November 8, 2021:

Motion No. 200

Re: Naloxone nasal spray (White)

Motion No. 201

Re: public inquiry into the handling of the sexual assaults at Hidden Valley Elementary School (Dixon)

Motion No. 202

Re: making information from the chief medical officer of health public (Cathers)