



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 30

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 10, 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

| | |
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| 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
Wednesday, November 10, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

**Speaker's statement — in recognition of
Remembrance Day**

Speaker: I have some notes here before we proceed with Orders of the Day that I want to read regarding Remembrance Day.

Thursday, November 11 is Remembrance Day. It is a day when Canadians are encouraged to take time to honour those who have served and continue to serve in the Canadian Forces.

At this time of year, we remember the men and women who have defended Canada during times of war and have brought peace to troubled parts of the world. While Remembrance Day has always been a day to remember those who died in the service of Canada, lately we have become more aware that the price paid by our service men and women sometimes extends beyond their time in uniform. We must remember this and continue to support these fellow Canadians. At this time of year, we also wear poppies to honour the memory of soldiers, sailors, and air force personnel. In doing so, we often reflect upon the great battles that they engaged in.

This year, I will remember Alex Van Bibber, his brothers, Archie and Dan, as well as their friend John Adamson. This triumphant group of aboriginal northerners did their basic training in Vancouver and Wetaskiwin and later took advanced training in Currie Barracks in Calgary. John Adamson and Dan Van Bibber saw service in Europe while the younger brothers, Alex and Archie, were not deployed to Europe before VE Day and instead began training for service in the Pacific. Their training ended when victory over Japan was declared in 1945. They were all discharged by 1946.

Upon returning, we must also remember that treatment of our aboriginal veterans during this period was not the same as for non-aboriginal veterans. This remains a stain on our history. While this was later corrected, it must be part of our thoughts on Remembrance Day that these men and many others served for ideals that were not afforded to them.

We will always be grateful for their service as well as the service of all of our soldiers. While not all served in battle, they did their duty when called upon. We do not celebrate war on this day, and we must remember that war is a human failure — a deep scar on our humanity — and the best result is to avoid the heavy human costs of wars. Sadly, this is not always possible.

Today, we remember the actions of soldiers, sailors, and air force personnel during times of war. We remember the legacy they have left to us. The freedoms that we exercise daily are exercised largely because of the sacrifices made by brave individuals who have served Canada over the years, sometimes in unimaginable circumstances.

As Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I am reminded of this every day. Canada is a country where free and fair elections are held, where elected officials at all levels can openly debate government laws and policies, and where the rule of law prevails. It is easy to take all of this for granted. We have been born into a country or have come to a country where these institutions already exist and are supported, not just by laws, but, most importantly, by our beliefs in them and our commitment to them.

The establishment of this institution and the ideals that they embody was only possible — and their continued existence is only possible — because there has been and continues to be fellow Canadians who are willing to serve and risk and pay the ultimate price to protect them. This is one reason why we shall remember them.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for those words. Speaking of legends in the Yukon, we are honoured today to have some more heroes and legends here in the gallery. I am going to start and ask my colleagues to help me in welcoming — starting with Joseph Novak, retired lance corporal, recently appointed a knight of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour. Mr. Speaker, this is the highest declaration in France. He served with the Canadian Army Service Corps during the Second World War. Thank you for being here today.

We also have with us Joe Mewett, president of the Whitehorse Legion Branch 254 and as well, no stranger to the Legislative Assembly, former Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms for the Yukon Legislative Assembly. We also have Red Grossinger with us today — past president of the Whitehorse Legion Branch 254. We have Rose Davies with us as well — a US veteran and also a Whitehorse Legion member. Thank you very much for being here today.

We have Peter Zwikirsch — my apologies for the pronunciation if I didn't do it justice. Peter is a Canadian Ranger, Whitehorse patrol. We have with us, as well, Al Parker, with the Canadian Rangers — thank you for being here today, sir — and Ken Putnam, with the legion.

Thank you very much for all of your service and for joining us here in the gallery today.

Applause

Pursuant to a November 15, 2021 Order of the House, the following comments made by Joseph Novak are included in Hansard

Mr. Novak: Mr. Speaker, may I have the procedure in the Legislature? I would like to say a few words if I may.

This is the medal. I accepted the nomination, but I told the general at the time that I will not accept the medal in the name of Corporal Joseph Novak; I accept it on behalf of all of the veterans from the east coast to the west coast, from the north to the south, including all of the aboriginal and all of the boys and girls who served overseas. When I see one of the white crosses daily in my mind — because I was told, when I joined the army — the commanding officer of the training camp said, “Boys — which you are boys — any reason can be found to take you out of the army, but nobody ever will take the army out of you.”

The army is completely in me. That’s why I appreciate the honours that are being bestowed to me in the name of all of the other veterans, not only myself; I’m not unique. All the boys and girls who served deserve the same attention that I have been getting up here.

As I said to a few friends lately — one of them called me from Montréal because he saw it on Facebook about my nominations, and he asked me, “Where do you live?” I said, “I live in Canada’s paradise.” He said, “What’s that? I never heard of that.” Well, I said, “Claude, you’ve never been to Whitehorse. If you come, come with only one thing in mind. Buy a one-way ticket, because once you get here and see what you see, you will not want to go back down south.” Thank you for listening to me.

Applause

Ms. White: I think we would be remiss not to recognize Terry Grabowski who is here in the gallery today with us. He is the living embodiment of the importance of intergenerational friendships. I think, from the outside looking in, that if it wasn’t for this friendship that happened, we wouldn’t know about the incredible service of Mr. Novak — that he has done such a good job of supporting his friend and bringing your service to the forefront. We’re grateful for that because we’re grateful for you, but we’re also grateful for the continued support and the advocacy that you do on behalf of veterans, so thank you so much for joining us today.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Remembrance Day

Hon. Mr. Silver: I want to thank Mr. Novak for his words. I would say that those are probably the most selfless words that have ever been uttered in the Legislative Assembly. I humbly put that forth for you, Mr. Speaker, and I completely agree with the one-way ticket concept. That’s the reason why half of us are here.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of Remembrance Day to pay tribute to the many courageous Canadians who have served on our behalf.

As we know, some of those brave individuals are with us here today in the gallery, and we are very grateful for their presence — brave individuals like retired Lance Corporal Joseph Novak, who served with the Canadian Army Service

Corps during the Second World War. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your service and for the impact that you made on behalf of Yukoners and on behalf of the rest of the country as well and for your selflessness. We are very grateful for your sacrifices, and we are very proud of your recent recognition by the French National Order of the Legion of Honour.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the attacks on 9/11, which was the starting point of our country’s longest war. Forty thousand Canadian troops would eventually serve in Afghanistan between 2001 to 2014, primarily in Kabul and Kandahar. Sadly, we lost 158 soldiers and seven civilians during this war. The others who returned had significant trauma, both physical and mental. Thank you for your words today recognizing that. Their sacrifices continue to serve as an example of courage and strength for others right across the country and across the globe.

In addition to fighting battles, our soldiers also built schools. They dug wells for clean water and they sought to give a whole generation of children an opportunity to experience freedom.

Tomorrow, across the country, Canadians will gather in school gymnasiums, in arenas, and around cenotaphs to honour those who have served and to remember — to remember those who did not return.

While many of the in-person aspects of Remembrance Day that Yukoners cherish will be reduced in order to protect our veterans and our community members from COVID-19, Yukoners will hopefully, regardless of where they are, remember — remember those who kept our country safe and kept our country free. We will remember the 66,944 Canadians who died in World War I, the 45,300 individuals who died during World War II, the 516 Canadians who died in Korea, and those who died in Bosnia, Somalia, and the Middle East. We will also remember the civilians who lost their lives during these terrible conflicts.

I encourage all Yukoners to participate in a moment of silence tomorrow, wherever you are. Wear a poppy and join your local legion, as we all come together in appreciation and memory of our great, great veterans.

Lest we forget.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to this Remembrance Day, to those who have served or continue to serve our great country.

Over a century, hundreds of thousands of Canadians have earned enormous respect by answering the call to fight against tyranny and evil around the world in engagements such as World War I, the Korean War, World War II, Afghanistan, and many other international military operations. Today, we remember the courage and dedication of the Canadian men and women, some of whom are here today — Corporal Novak, Terry, Joe, Mr. Putnam, Red, Pete, and Rose — thank you. You fought gallantly over the years to defend our freedoms and rights, making it possible for us to live in a peaceful, democratic country where we enjoy one of the best qualities of life in the world.

Vimy Ridge defined our country. Ypres, Normandy, Sicily, Hill 355 in Korea, Kandahar — that is where so many made the ultimate sacrifice. In these battlefields, we honour and remember those who fought so gallantly. It is our duty to remember the Canadians in the past and who serve now who so selflessly defended our freedoms.

As we recall our proud history, let us also remember how early Canadians and First Nation and Métis people fought together like never before in the War of 1812 to repel the American invasion and help lay the foundation for an independent Canada.

Remembrance Day also provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the many sacrifices made by Canadian families who were forced to endure their loved ones being away at war and on dangerous missions abroad. We must support those on the front lines today, but also those who come home and transition back into regular life.

As a Canadian Forces member, I am honoured to wear a uniform that is recognized across the world as a symbol of courage and democracy. We can never repay the debt that we owe to the men and women who paid for our freedoms with their lives, but we can remember their sacrifices and pay tribute to their bravery and patriotism. As always, I would like to give a huge thank you to our local Legion Branch 254 for all you do for veterans and their families here in the Yukon and for ensuring that Remembrance Day continues to hold meaning for all Yukoners.

While Remembrance Day events will be scaled down significantly this year due to the recent restrictions, we are fortunate to be reminded daily of the sacrifices that our veterans made as we drive around our communities thanks to the lawn signs campaign by the organizers for Yukon Remembers. So, please wear a poppy.

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, Remembrance Day is when the country stops for two minutes of silence to pay respect to those who gave their lives and to our veterans who fought for our freedom. Lest we forget.

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP in honour of Remembrance Day, of veterans past and present. Ceremony is such an important step in remembrance. It's one of the reasons we mark celebrations and important moments with ritual. Without large community gatherings in the Yukon tomorrow, it's more important than ever for individuals to remember the importance of November 11.

Yesterday, Legion 254 President Joe Mewett sent out a heartfelt message to members about the cancellation of the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Canada Games Centre, which reads — and I quote: “As veterans, our primary objective has always been to keep the public safe and help when necessary or called upon. We ask that you take time out of your day on 11th to remember the veterans who sacrificed so much for this great country. All veterans, their families and friends, will each remember in their own way, and it's unfortunate that we cannot get together as a community on this Remembrance Day, but please reach out to your fellow comrades, friends and family that may have a tough time on this day. It is important

that we look out for one another and strive to keep each other safe and healthy.”

For many veterans, Remembrance Day is every day. Mr. Speaker, it's for this and for so many more reasons that we cannot forget the importance of this day. Tomorrow, whether it's in a quiet moment watching the sun rise, climbing a hill to watch the ravens play, with a deep breath of November air, watching children play, or over a quiet cup of tea, it's important that each of us hold veterans and their families close.

Think about our grandparents, our friends, and our neighbours who served or continue to do so to afford us a life that we hold so dear. Remember their stories, share them with others, and honour them in the best way that we know how. We cannot forget the sacrifices, past and present, made on behalf of Canada. We owe our continued thanks and remembrance to veterans and their families. Lest we forget.

Speaker: I would like to ask all present to stand as we observe a moment of silence in honour of Remembrance Day.
Two minutes of silence.

Moment of silence observed

Speaker: I'm just going to read a short poem before we continue with the Order Paper.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Thank you.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?
Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 5 — response

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today to respond to Petition No. 5. The petition urges the Government of Yukon to immediately rescind any and all requirements for mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations in Yukon, first announced on October 15, 2021. The short answer, Mr. Speaker, is no.

COVID-19 continues to spread and endanger the lives of our citizens. We need to take action to increase vaccination rates to keep Yukoners healthy and safe, and that is what the government is doing. The Yukon's acting chief medical officer of health has recommended mandatory vaccines for public servants and those working with vulnerable populations and requiring individuals to show proof of vaccination to access non-essential settings, like bars and restaurants. Science is our best guide when dealing with a pandemic, and we will continue to follow the recommendations of our public health experts.

I urge individuals who are hesitant about vaccines to speak to a nurse or a doctor about their concerns. The vaccines are safe and effective at preventing serious illness, including death. Vaccination is our best protection against COVID-19 and the fastest way out of this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I will note for the record the significant difference in position being taken by the Yukon Employees' Union and the Public Service Alliance of Canada's national component, which represents employees in the federal government — Canada's largest workforce.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada has noted publicly that employers have an obligation to keep workplaces safe — and I quote: “No one can be physically forced to get a vaccine against their will. However, according to the limited case law available, grievors must live with the consequences of refusing to get vaccinated.”

They go on to urge their members that the best and safest thing to do is to get vaccinated. That choice still belongs to individuals. Whether they want to be vaccinated or not, the choice is the individual's. Our choices do have consequences, however, and our individual actions have an impact on the health of our entire territory. Our government has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners, and we take that responsibility extremely seriously.

With regard to the petition itself, which was tabled by the Member for Watson Lake, it contains several duplicate signatures, as well as names of residents outside of the Yukon, and the name of a white supremacist who killed 51 people at a mosque in New Zealand in 2019.

The day the Yukon Party tabled the petition, there were several supporters outside the House, including one carrying a sign that said: “COVID is a hoax”. Ten Yukoners have died from COVID-19, Mr. Speaker — this is no hoax.

The leader of the protest was a former Yukon Party staffer and a former federal Conservative candidate. This is very disappointing to see the Yukon Party embrace this group and their position. The events that day served to undermine our public health system, and the Yukon Party was only too happy to stand by that behaviour. Front-line health care workers have been subject to increasingly hostile behaviour in recent weeks, including verbal and physical abuse. It is absolutely irresponsible for any leader to embolden this behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully ask the NDP to take a clear stance on the public health measures that are being introduced to increase vaccination rates to protect Yukoners. Do they stand behind all of the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health — yes or no? We need to work together, as a territory, to limit the spread of COVID-19, to protect the health and safety of our family members, our neighbours, all of our Yukoners.

I respect the decision of Yukoners to sign a petition and to voice their opinion; that is democracy.

I believe that we are doing what is right to keep Yukoners safe, and our government will continue to be guided by science and the recommendations of public health experts.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?

Petition No. 6

Ms. White: I wish to present a petition today that reads: To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:
This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT parents have been watching with increasing alarm the rising number of COVID-19 exposure notices at schools over the last number of weeks;

THAT the recent announcement by the Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health of the return of COVID-19 community spread to Whitehorse has heightened the fears of families with school-age children still too young to be vaccinated that there will be further growth in cases within our school system;

THAT it is necessary to be proactive in protecting students aged 5 - 11 who cannot yet be vaccinated against COVID-19;

THAT the health risks and interruptions to learning that result from potential exposure to COVID-19 are both avoidable and unacceptable, so it is necessary to use every tool available to keep classroom-based learning in place;

THAT the enactment of a mask mandate in schools under the Civil Emergency Measures Act is an important step, but on its own may not prevent school and classroom closures due to positive COVID-19 cases in schools;

THAT it is necessary to introduce further measures that allow classroom and school closures to be a last resort so to mitigate the significant negative social and economic impacts of classroom and school closures on Yukon families; and

THAT the Government of Yukon possesses a stock of rapid tests for COVID-19 that will expire if not used;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to: (1) immediately implement rapid testing protocols at all Yukon schools where the epidemiological conditions suggest testing will help identify and limit COVID-19 infections, to align with actions taken in other Canadian jurisdictions, to manage COVID-19 caseloads in school populations; and (2) change the Yukon Communicable Disease Control's directives to require, rather than recommend, self-isolation for any unvaccinated staff or student who is considered a close contact of an individual infected with COVID-19, thereby establishing a consistent approach across all Yukon schools rather than downloading the responsibility onto teachers and administrative staff.

Mr. Speaker, it has 137 signatures.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the chair of the Standing Committee of Rules, Elections and Privileges to follow through on his commitment to call a meeting of that committee before November 12, 2021.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to live up to the government's commitment to provide Hidden Valley school parents with minutes from the September 22, 2021,

meeting at the school attended by the minister, department officials, RCMP, and parents.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to promptly follow through on the government's commitment to provide Hidden Valley school parents with a recording from the November 9, 2021, virtual meeting.

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

THAT this House urges the chair of the Standing Committee of Rules, Elections and Privileges to follow through on his commitment to call a meeting of that committee before November 12, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review its hiring policies to facilitate employment of veterans within the Government of Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reinstate hospital privileges for Yukon doctors and allow them to provide in-person support and be included in birth care teams at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct climate risk assessments that assess both the greenhouse gas emissions of and the risk of a changing climate to all new infrastructure projects.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

COVID-19 vaccination requirements

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Since Friday, November 5, we have confirmed more than 115 cases of COVID-19 in the Yukon Territory. Our active case count is over 150. We also have widespread and untraceable community transmission in Whitehorse. This means that there is a high risk of COVID-19 exposure throughout the city and increased risk in our rural communities.

To respond to this unprecedented spike in cases and increased risk of transmission, our government has declared a state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. Declaring a state of emergency allows our government to implement new temporary measures that have been recommended by Dr. Elliott to rapidly reduce transmission and ensure that our health care system is not overwhelmed.

We are also fast-tracking the proof of vaccination requirements for designated settings to align with the new recommendations. As of this Saturday, November 13, Yukoners will be required to prove that you are fully vaccinated — that's two shots — to access a designated setting. The list of

designated settings has been finalized and will be available online today at yukon.ca. The list is based on the BC model, with Yukon-specific considerations, as recommended by the acting chief medical officer of health. For example, a proof of vaccination will be required to access personal services establishments, like hair salons.

Starting on Saturday, people will be required to show the paper or digital copy of their proof of vaccination credential, as well as a piece of government-issued photo identification, in order to access those establishments and services on the list of designated settings.

Yukoners can request their proof of vaccination credential online at yukon.ca/vaccine-proof. You can also access this service over the phone via the COVID-19 information line at 1-877-374-0425. This line is open seven days a week, 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

A Yukon-specific QR code reader app is being developed to support local businesses and organizations to verify vaccination status. The app will securely verify an individual's proof of vaccination credential. It will be able to read any QR code that follows the Government of Canada specifications for proof of vaccination credentials. The app does not need an Internet connection to verify QR codes and it will be available for free on app stores in the coming days.

We will be supporting our business community and other impacted organizations as we implement this requirement. Officials will be hosting information sessions for businesses and organizations on the new app starting this week. I want to thank the businesses that have already started to adopt these measures and that are working with their clientele to help them adjust. We ask that Yukoners are patient and respectful of businesses and organizations as they introduce these new requirements. Please remember that these measures are designed to protect public health and to keep us all safe.

Mr. Cathers: In rising today to respond to the ministerial statement on vaccination requirements as the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, I want to first of all state that the Yukon Party Official Opposition encourages everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated against COVID-19. As the Leader of the Official Opposition stated previously, the Yukon Party caucus believes that vaccination is the best tool to protect Yukoners from COVID-19. We believe that the vaccines that are available to Yukoners are safe and effective and offer us the best opportunity to move forward beyond COVID-19. We urge all Yukoners to get vaccinated.

Like other health care decisions, vaccination should be based on the principle of informed consent. We thank everyone who has rolled up their sleeves and made that choice. We continue to have concerns and disagree with some parts of the government's policy. In a pandemic, public health measures are necessary, but they must be balanced and understand the negative, unintended consequences of those decisions. We also must continue to respect each other as Yukoners and show compassion for people who see things differently than we do. We are hearing from many Yukoners about their mental health

as they experience anxiety related to the possibility of losing their jobs a month before the holiday season.

I also want to make it clear that, when it comes to the health care sector, particularly our hospitals and continuing care facilities, there is a need to take an evidence-based approach to keep patients and providers safe. Patient safety and keeping our hospitals from being overwhelmed must be the top priority.

It is also important for government to treat health care employees who choose not to be vaccinated with fairness and compassion and to consider options, such as alternative job placements, if possible. The government also needs to provide our hospitals with significantly more financial resources.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard concerns from EMS and fire volunteers who provide coverage in rural communities on what this announcement will mean for coverage in rural Yukon. We are concerned that this will create gaps in coverage that the government needs to carefully consider. If gaps are created due to this announcement, government needs to step in to provide adequate coverage for emergency response.

We have heard about unintended consequences of this announcement impacting essential service workers in the health care sector through loss of childcare. We have also heard many concerns from businesses about lack of clarity in these rules. Yesterday, I sent a letter to the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Community Services with questions and concerns on behalf of businesses that are looking for clarity about what rules apply to them. These include clinics and businesses that have been trying to get answers from this government since mid-October and restaurant and bar owners who have outstanding questions that the government has replied to with a form letter that doesn't actually answer their questions. We have also heard from sports organizations that are seeking clarity on how to implement this and on what support will be available to them. Once again, the government could have done better.

While we agree with the need for specific measures to protect our health care sector and patient safety, we continue to have outstanding concerns with parts of this policy.

Ms. White: At the onset, I want to say that the Yukon NDP supports the vaccine mandate, but that doesn't mean that questions still don't exist. If the Premier has found our communications difficult to understand, he now knows how Yukoners have felt these last weeks and months about his government's COVID communication, especially since the mandate announcement.

It does make us wonder what took so long to explain further requirements, but instead of stewing on the mistakes of the past, let's look at life going forward. For weeks, we have been asking this government for more information regarding vaccine mandates. Small businesses and NGOs have been left with countless questions going unanswered, and just last week, I tabled a motion urging this government to communicate with NGOs and business owners. I asked that they communicate more details by November 10, which is today, so I guess with this morning's press conference, they are following through.

The only issue is that, when I decided on today's date, it was based around a deadline of November 30, and now the vaccine mandate has been pulled forward to start on Saturday. This leaves businesses with two and a half days to figure out how to implement these new requirements, and one of those days is Remembrance Day. Many businesses have been left with big questions about the logistics of how their small staff, sometimes of one person, can handle the burden of this on their own. To enforce a mask/vaccine mandate, businesses are worried that they will need to hire an extra employee to stand at a door checking vaccine status and ID. So, where are employees expected to find these extra employees in a time of such staffing shortages?

What about security? Every day we hear stories about violence and harassment directed towards employees in the Yukon and in other jurisdictions. Can the minister tell us how a staff of one person or how any staff is supposed to deal with this?

The minister spoke of a free QR code reader app that should be available in the next few days. Can the minister confirm that this app will be ready to download by Friday morning, giving businesses time to learn how to use it?

What is the plan for citizens who don't have smartphones? Will a printout of their vaccine status or one of the Yukon health blue vaccine cards suffice? Will government help them access these and make printouts, and if so, where should they go?

Proof of vaccination needs to be accompanied by ID, so what is the minister's plan to ensure that all Yukoners have sufficient ID by Saturday, November 13? Although this seems like a small thing to some, a government-issued photo ID costs \$30 and it takes about a month to receive it. Does the minister have a plan to cover the costs of these for those in need, or is the plan to just exclude our vulnerable population from accessing businesses and services that they may need?

Another question that we have heard is that personal services have been lumped in with bars, restaurants, and gyms. These types of establishments have had exposure notices several times while personal services have never had an exposure notice — zero times. Personal services deserve credit as they have been working hard for months to ensure the safety of their clients, so we thank them for all of their collective efforts in keeping their clients safe. We ask the minister why they are being grouped with restaurants and bars while their safety factor is very different.

What about NGOs? Many run near 100 percent with the help of volunteers. What systems of enforcement are in place for them? Will the organizations now be expected to keep detailed files on the vaccine status of all volunteers? Which organizations will be enforcing this and checking said files?

This is a lot to take in for all Yukoners. We are back in the danger zone; we are back in the state of emergency. People have so many questions, and with the Delta variant going rampant, people are worried. Yukoners are looking for leadership, and right now, it's hard to find.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We know that these new measures are broad and will have significant impacts on Yukoners, but that is precisely the point. We need to act decisively to stop the spread of the virus in our territory. We need to be courageous, to make sacrifices, and to work together to protect the public health and well-being of all Yukoners and to ensure that our health care system is not overwhelmed.

Each and every Yukoner has a role to play in keeping our community safe. We truly hope that the requirements of these measures cause Yukoners to pause and to act kindly and respectfully toward one another. We need to keep in mind that our choices do have consequences — sometimes for others — and our individual actions have an impact on the health of our entire territory. This is not something that most people have ever had to face in their lives before, but they do now.

We strongly encourage everyone to get vaccinated, and since the vaccines have become available — not always been the case with respect to the opposition. I'm very happy to hear them today encourage people to be vaccinated. Vaccination remains the best protection against COVID-19 and the spread of this disease. It also reduces the chances of severe symptoms, including death, if you do get infected.

As I have noted earlier in my ministerial statement, there are supports for businesses and organizations. Training and information sessions are starting this week. NGOs are being supported. We all have a role to play in keeping our territory safe and healthy, and we need to be kind and helpful to each other because we are in this together.

I encourage all Yukoners to continue to practise the “safe six” and to continue to wear a mask when they are inside public places. We do have supports, again, working with local NGOs for our vulnerable persons — their identification. The cost of that identification will be covered.

We know that these measures work to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is especially important to stay home if you are sick and to get tested. Our government introduced a paid sick-leave rebate program at the outset of the pandemic, and it is still available to employers and self-employed individuals. I encourage you to find details online at yukon.ca.

Yukoners need a strong and stable leadership to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to get us on the path to recovery. I ask all Yukoners to be respectful and thankful to our front-line health care workers. They are there to help us all.

Thank you to the members of this Assembly who are focusing on solutions for the Yukon Territory. We must continue to do everything to protect one another and to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: First Nation school governance

Ms. McLeod: Watson Lake and several other school communities will have a referendum in January 2022 about whether or not to eliminate their school councils and instead have their schools fall under the control of the new First Nation school board. School councils around the territory have made it

clear that they don't feel that the process has been well understood or well communicated by the Liberal government.

So, as this important vote will begin on January 11, 2022, what is the government doing to ensure that school communities are well informed about this referendum? What are they doing to ensure that those voting have all the information they need to make an informed decision?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand and speak about the Yukon First Nation school board. Yukon's future prosperity will be built through strong partnerships with First Nations. This is especially true when it comes to education. Our government is committed to supporting all Yukon learners. Education is a key area of our reconciliation efforts, Mr. Speaker. We are working with partners to improve First Nation education and to ensure that First Nation perspectives are reflected in Yukon schools.

I wanted to start with that, as we enter into this discussion today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I will absolutely get to the answers to the questions that are on the floor, but I want to start with the motivation behind this first and to talk to Yukoners about the importance of First Nation education in this Yukon Territory.

Ms. McLeod: At an information session hosted by the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, government officials committed to consider requests from school communities to support the hosting of town halls or other community meetings with the purpose of providing information to parents, teachers, and members of those school communities.

How many public town hall meetings will the Department of Education support in each school community that is going to referendum in January?

Hon. Ms. McLean: 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: by a school council resolution, which is what has happened in the five schools that have been mentioned here today in the preamble of the Member for Watson Lake's question; and another way is through a petition of electors in an attendance area submitted to me before December 13 in this process.

We know that there may be other school communities that will be potentially submitting petitions with 20 percent of their electors, but as of October 31, five school councils have passed resolutions to trigger a referendum. We are working very closely with Elections Yukon to conduct those referendums. We will be working toward ensuring that folks are informed about the information.

Ms. McLeod: You know, Mr. Speaker, as is common with this minister, she did not answer the question. My question was: How many townhalls will the government support?

Earlier this week, I asked the minister about what this process would mean for staff. According to the documents provided to school councils by the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the new First Nation school board will have broad authority over staffing, including the hiring of principals and teachers as well as dismissals, discipline, promotion, and demotion. This has raised a lot of questions and concerns among our teachers.

Can the minister tell us what consultation has been done with the Yukon Teachers' Association and particularly teachers in schools that will go to referendum?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue with my answer around this, because I think it is vitally important that Yukoners are given the facts around this and know that there will be plenty of time for them to receive information to then make an informed decision about whether they support a Yukon First Nation school board in their catchment area. As I have stated, there are five school boards that have passed a resolution to move toward such a referendum.

We are working with the chief electoral officer around conducting these referendums. There will be information that will go to folks and there will be information sessions that will be held to ensure that everyone has accurate information as they make their decision to say yes or no to a Yukon First Nation school board in their catchment area.

I want to go back to the importance of this and the connection to reconciliation with Yukon First Nations in our territory.

Question re: Teacher staffing

Mr. Kent: Over the course of this Sitting, we have raised a number of concerns about the significant number of teacher vacancies in our schools and the shortages of teachers on call. Earlier this week, the Minister of Education said — and I quote: “We are ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools...”

Can the minister tell us which schools will receive this support from the department?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to talk about the challenges that are happening in our schools right now. Effective teachers are one of the most important factors in student success at school. We work to attract and retain the best educators that we can. I have spoken about this a few times during this Sitting in terms of some of the challenges that we have had in recruiting teachers from across Canada. I want to thank all of the administrators, educators, and staff who are working hard for the benefit of our students and all Yukoners.

I want to remind folks that this is the third school year impacted by COVID-19, and we acknowledge the stress of the pandemic and the fatigue that many are feeling. I have heard this first-hand. I have reached out to all of the school councils. I have been meeting with them. During the first two weeks of each month, I have had very late nights, meeting with school councils and hearing directly the impacts of teacher shortages in our schools.

We are working hard to fill the vacancies, and I will continue to build on my answer and talk about the deployment of Education staff to those schools.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned earlier this week, what caught our attention was when the minister said that they were ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools. As the minister mentioned, she has been meeting with a number of school councils recently, as have we. She has been hearing about the incredible strain, I am sure, that is on our teachers right now. Like us, she has probably been hearing that the Liberal government is not doing enough.

The lack of available teachers on call has meant that specialty teachers are often forced into action to fill in for absent teachers. Even principals have had to spend considerable time in classrooms, on top of attending to their regular duties. Teachers have asked us what the minister meant about deploying teachers from the department.

Which schools are eligible to receive this additional support from the department, and how will the department deploy these resources?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue on with the answer around the teachers on call. We are working with school communities to identify root causes with teachers on call availability and identify potential actions to address the situation. As of November 8, 2021, we have registered the number of teachers on call at 199 — 154 of those are in Whitehorse, and 45 are in the communities. We do have an additional 22 applications pending — 15 in Whitehorse and seven in the communities.

In terms of our current vacancies with teaching staff, we will continue to work to fill the vacancies until they are filled. Again, we are having a lot of difficulties attracting teaching staff to the Yukon right now, as we are in, as I have said, the third school year of the pandemic. I was in a call just last night with a school that is experiencing a lot of difficulties, and the school council has actually made a decision to go to full remote learning. I can tell you that departmental staff are working to fill the gaps there with them.

Mr. Kent: Everything the minister said is all very interesting, but it has nothing to do with what was asked.

What we are asking for and looking for answers about is regarding deploying teachers from the Department of Education, something that she mentioned earlier this week, which was that they were ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools.

So, we know that many of the staff in the Department of Education belong to the Yukon Employees' Union, and substitute teachers are members of the Yukon Teachers' Association. Can the minister tell us what consultation has taken place with the Yukon Teachers' Association about deploying certified teachers from the department into the schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am really not sure if the member opposite is saying that he is supporting schools or not. I mean, I think that we are working hard with every single school community to ensure that they have what they need — to have

the supports that they need — and every school is different. I have a meeting with all the school communities. I know that we have more pressure in some schools than in others. As I have stated, we are working closely with each and every school community to ensure that they have the supports, and we will continue to do that, and deployment of departmental staff, if needed, will be done.

I can assure you that the Yukon Teachers' Association — our senior staff are in touch with them quite regularly, and I have met with the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association recently. I think that, in those discussions, Mr. Speaker, what I know is that we have the same interest, which is the well-being of our children.

Again, I would ask the members opposite to not politicize the issues within our schools.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. White: Two weeks ago, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services to address the shortage of primary health care professionals, including doctors. With no walk-in clinic for the entire territory, there are thousands of people with nowhere else to go but the emergency department. There are people in the emergency department who just need a prescription refill. There are people in the emergency department who just need a blood test. Many people are in the emergency department because they have nowhere else to go for primary health care. One solution is right in front of us: open a public walk-in clinic. It is not a new idea; it is not even an original idea, and it is certainly not an NDP idea — plenty of other Canadian jurisdictions have them.

When will the minister listen to Yukoners and open a public walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government is well aware that a local physician has closed their primary care practice and transitioned to working in an acute care system. We completely understand and recognize the concern of Yukoners that this closing of a single walk-in clinic here in Whitehorse has caused.

We have continued our conversations with the Yukon Medical Association. I have personally met with individual physicians to discuss their suggestions for how we might address this particular issue. Like many complex problems, it's not necessarily a matter for government to solve alone. We work with our partners, including the Yukon Medical Association, and their advice about how we might be addressing this situation.

We have implemented part of the *Putting People First* report, and we are moving forward with adding more nurse practitioners, expanding access to virtual care alternatives, and exploring other options for primary health care. I will no doubt continue with my answer.

Ms. White: While we appreciate the speaking notes we have heard before, there are people who are still waiting in the emergency department for basic health services.

I'm glad she mentioned nurse practitioners. One recommendation from the *Putting People First* report is to expand the scope of practice for nurse practitioners to have

hospital privileges. It would be an easy fix. Nurse practitioners in the hospital would mean more trained health professionals to see patients who are currently waiting in the emergency department. It would help doctors with the huge workloads they are facing right now, and it would mean more people with access to primary health care.

Nurse practitioners have hospital privileges everywhere else in Canada, and yet nurse practitioners in the Yukon have almost no power. Their scope of practice is narrow, and their case loads are slim.

When will the minister expand the scope of practice for nurse practitioners so that they can work in the emergency department?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak about our health care system here in the territory.

I will stop just for a second to address the concept of notes. Many members from the opposition, both the current speaker and others, have criticized us for having notes. I think, actually, it's our responsibility to come prepared to answer questions to Yukoners, and we should absolutely have our notes. We should have information that Yukoners are asking about through the opposition parties, and so, that criticism is always puzzling to me, that we do, in fact, come prepared and answer questions that are brought here on behalf of Yukoners.

The concept of nurse practitioners is one we absolutely must explore. The member opposite calls it "an easy fix". I appreciate that this is the perception here, but scope of practice and conversations about hospital privileges are something we work on with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Certainly, members opposite will have the opportunity to ask the Hospital Corporation directly about that in the very near future, and I look forward to the next question.

Ms. White: This morning, I received an e-mail, and I know the minister received it, too. The person describes a situation that, unfortunately, we have heard before. Because of lack of primary care, this person has not been able to find proper mental health support. Their mental health situation deteriorated, and this person had to go to the emergency room.

I quote from the e-mail: "We spent a week trying to find any option other than emergency."

This person waited almost seven hours, most of the time alone, in a curtained room. When they were finally able to see a doctor and ask for paperwork to be completed and a referral for a psychiatrist, they were told "no". Even if they had a referral, they were told it would be a nine-to-12 month wait.

What does the minister suggest that these people do without a primary care provider and after they have exhausted every other available option to them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would first like to take a moment to thank, respect, and acknowledge the work of our front-line health care workers, including those in the Whitehorse General Hospital emergency room. They are working night and day to serve Yukoners. Yes, they have seen an increase in individuals there for issues that need to be addressed. They are triaged properly, and the work continues. Unfortunately, that does mean that, sometimes, individuals have to wait. I am certainly

not commenting on the individual case brought up here, because I do not have knowledge, nor would I speak about it here on the floor of the House, even if I did.

Available and timely psychiatric services for Yukoners is a priority for this government. Referrals for psychiatric services can be made through an individual's general practitioner or, as noted, through the environment at the emergency room.

We now have, in total, three resident psychiatrists in the Yukon. In addition, there is a child psychiatrist embedded in Yukon's pediatric program. This is an absolute increase in our efforts to reduce wait times for private psychiatric care. We have increased the availability of these services for Yukoners.

Question re: Finlayson caribou herd management

Mr. Istchenko: In 2018, the Yukon government made the decision to close hunting of the Finlayson caribou herd for both outfitters and resident hunters. At the time, the minister made the argument that the decline in size of the herd necessitated such closures; however, the minister also made commitments to take action to help recover the herd. In an October 28 news article, a former minister said that the government would have what she called a "collective management plan" within six months. Then in November 2018, she told the Legislature that the closure would remain in place until they could come up with a long-term management plan.

Can the Minister of Environment tell us: What is the status of the development of a management plan for the Finlayson caribou herd?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: At the outset, I would commit to the member opposite to return to him and to the House with the future plans with respect to the closure of the Finlayson caribou hunt, but I would also advise as follows: The Department of Environment is committed to collecting robust data to make high-quality, up-to-date information available for decision-making. We are planning to collect data, as I said yesterday, in four moose surveys for the lower Stewart River, Whitehorse south, Teslin River, and Sifton-Miners areas combined. These four moose surveys will cover an area of over 30,000 square kilometres. We are also planning to collect data in relation to several caribou herds, including a census in the Coal River, a collar deployment in the Wolf Lake area, and a range assessment for Clear Creek.

Aside from moose and caribou, we are also conducting surveys this year for our other harvested species like wolves, deer, and fish, as well as non-harvested species like pika, bat, and ground squirrels. Biologists from the Department of Environment use this data in combination with available harvest information to make decisions about harvest allocation and the sustainability of wildlife populations.

I will continue my response shortly.

Mr. Istchenko: I do thank the minister for that answer. I look forward to — hopefully the minister will table that plan in the Legislative Assembly before the end of this session.

The minister was just speaking about science-based management plans for many of the wildlife populations, and it sounds like they are gathering some scientific data and

population estimates. Specific to the Finlayson herd, what actions has the minister taken to gather this new information?

If those new studies do indeed — if the minister has been privy to them — show that the herd is in decline — and what actions has the minister taken to begin the recovery of the herd? Most important is the recovery of the herd, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As indicated in my first response to the Member for Kluane, I will certainly commit to return to indicate the data that I have from my department with respect to the perceived health of the Finlayson caribou herd and whether there is a prospect for the hunt to open in the foreseeable future. Certainly, as I indicated in my response yesterday, I will always be guided by the best available information which exists. I have certainly directed my department to employ the resources that we can bring to bear to come up with the most robust data that we can to inform our decisions with respect to the various hunt areas, whether it's moose, caribou, or the other species that I've mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the wildlife surveys and data collection, the Department of Environment conducts ecological assessments to better understand the Yukon landscape, the habitat needs for fish and wildlife, and the potential impacts of human activities and a changing climate. These assessments are essential in interpreting the results of wildlife surveys and data collection and in forecasting the long-term viability of wildlife populations. We prioritize which areas to survey based on a combination of factors, including harvest levels, access, community concerns, land use, planning needs, planning data needs, how long it has been since an area was last surveyed, and human activities taking place —

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the reason I'm asking these questions is because, since 2018, the hunting community has been waiting to see some action from the government on the development of this new management plan for the Finlayson caribou herd. There have been concerns that the government was quick to shut it down, but they have been slow to take action to gather information, develop a plan, and start helping the herd to recover.

Will the minister commit to a date for the development of a recovery plan for the Finlayson herd? When can we expect to see some real action to help this herd recover?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Kluane. I'm not in a position today to provide the response to the member as to when the hunt may reasonably resume based upon the best available data. The member opposite will know that I was not in this chair in 2018, but I certainly will commit to review the history of the first closure and the steps which have been taken since 2018.

We hope to rehabilitate the numbers and provide the member opposite and the House data we have with respect to the numbers and whether it is that the hunt can in fact be responsibly opened in the foreseeable future. I thank the member opposite for his questions.

Question re: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport reopening of international travel

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, last week the Government of Canada announced that they were easing restrictions on international flight arrivals. According to that release, international flights carrying passengers will be permitted to land at eight new Canadian airports that have previously been shut down.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us if there have been discussions about opening Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport to international visitors, and if so, when would we expect an announcement about that?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for her question. I think that the short answer to this is that I do not have information with respect to any short-term plans for the welcoming of international travelers to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. The member opposite will know that, at its strictest enforcement, there may have been four international gateways across Canada. That was recently expanded. Another four gateways were opened within the last month or so. Whitehorse was not in the second tranche of consideration.

I will certainly review what the status is with respect to consideration of the so-called smaller volume airports. For the benefit of the House, if there was to be a resumption — we hope that there will be a resumption — of, for instance Condor flights in mid to late May 2022, we would certainly hope that the issue of international arrivals will have been resolved for Whitehorse far in advance of that date.

Ms. Van Bibber: The press release from the Government of Canada says that the airports that have recently been reopened to international visitors are working in cooperation with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Border Services Agency, and Transport Canada to implement the measures to start safely welcoming international passengers.

What action is the Department of Highways and Public Works taking to ensure that our international airport is ready to welcome passengers, and what new measures will they be putting in place?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The first answer that I will give to the Member for Porter Creek North is that, yes, we will advocate, certainly vigorously, on behalf of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport with our federal counterparts so that we are considered for approval for international travel well in advance of the time that it would be anticipated that we would have any meaningful international travel. Obviously, there could — I suppose, in theory — be flights from the panhandle and from Alaska, but that is not, to my understanding, a significant volume. The larger concern would be the summer potential resumption of travel from Europe and specifically from Germany via Condor. Yes, I will commit to the House and to the member opposite to advocate strongly on that behalf.

With respect to measures at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, health and safety is a priority at all Yukon airports. As of October 30, 2021, Transport Canada implemented new rules for the federally regulated

transportation sector. These rules impact passengers and workers at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. I will continue in my third response.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Government of Canada indicated that they are working closely with airports and aviation operators to ensure that appropriate procedures are put in place to protect travellers and workers. Here in Yukon, we know that the tourism industry has expressed a lot of interest in the activity.

Has the Minister of Highways and Public Works held any discussions with the tourism industry about the reopening of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our protocols have been — inside of our caucus and within Cabinet — that most conversations, if not all, with the tourism industry have been led by the Department of Tourism and Culture and those responsible for it.

There are two areas we have been focused on. One is watching what is happening with air travel, as my colleague has touched on — the first tranche that was announced and now the second tranche — as we look toward what is going to play for the summer of 2022. I have spoken in the House. There have been some changes with the Condor flights, on what they will be arriving, but again, they continue to book. We are looking to see the signals from Canada and what will happen on that third tranche.

Also, I think it's important to note, we are engaging with Destination Canada, the Crown corporation that leads the conversation on tourism, but also with a multitude of partners and with PNWER. We are actually looking at having discussions with representatives, the state senator from Alaska, as well as MLAs and ministers from BC, because we do have concern as well about the effects on border crossing and what will happen with the cruise ship industry.

Those are the two things right now that the department is focused on. We know we have about 90,000 visitors into the Southern Lakes in the summertime, out of approximately one million visitors. Once again, we will be making sure we support the industry and make sure we have a thriving tourism industry in 2022.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Motion No. 200

Clerk: Motion No. 200, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make Naloxone nasal spray publicly available and free of charge at front-line agencies, government facilities, and pharmacies.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping today that this can be one of the conversations that we have had in this Chamber before where we have talked about hard things and come together to make right decisions — things like PrEP coverage, things like trikafta. This is an important thing along those same lines.

Back in 2017, the Government of Yukon took a step in the right direction of harm reduction by making intramuscular injection of Naloxone publicly available and free of charge. This happened because the opioid crisis was emerging in the Yukon, and it was recognized that Naloxone kits can help save lives. So, here we are four years later, in 2021, and the Yukon has broken yet another devastating record of overdose deaths.

It is with deep sadness that I recognize the many people who we have lost to overdose — grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and sons and daughters. Each and every death reflects a life that was cut short. Each reflects a loss to a family and community in the Yukon.

In an August press conference held by the Yukon's coroner, there were 14 confirmed overdose deaths — all involving fentanyl — between January 1 and that date. Mr. Speaker, the year isn't over yet, and if we continue on that trajectory, we are almost certain to be at a point where Yukon will have surpassed the deaths of even those in British Columbia.

The community has experienced a spate of tragic and preventable losses in recent weeks — young lives — young women gone too soon. In response to the ever-increasing numbers of overdoses, a letter urging the adoption of a new tool was sent to the government and opposition parties this week. The letter was signed by Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Safe at Home Yukon, the Yukon Status of Women Council, Yukon Women's Transition Home, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and the food bank. Mr. Speaker, I tabled that letter in this House.

It asks that Naloxone nasal spray kits be made publicly available and free of charge, just like the injectable kits have been since 2017. It's important to note that the intranasal option was not yet available in 2017 when the take-home Naloxone program was first announced and rolled out. Today, I am asking my colleagues in the Liberal Party and the Yukon Party to support this important initiative and vote to make Naloxone nasal spray available under the take-home Naloxone program. At present, some Yukoners can even get them covered under a drug plan at the pharmacy.

Mr. Speaker, a number of weeks ago, I discovered that, as a Yukon government employee, under our drug coverage through Great-West Life, we can get Naloxone nasal spray covered at up to 80 percent. The challenge is that, of course, we need a prescription from a doctor, which means an individual has to contact a doctor to get a prescription and then take it to a pharmacy to have it filled. The cost of those prescriptions varies anywhere from \$220 to \$300 — is what I found.

People receiving social assistance can sometimes get Naloxone nasal spray from the pharmacy, but we know that

many people who use drugs are not getting their Naloxone from the pharmacy. We understand that the program is spotty, only some people will get approved under social assistance, and not all pharmacists are on the same page.

We understand that there is still so much stigma associated with drug use that many people don't want their health care providers to know that they use drugs. Non-insured health will cover it in some cases, but again, there is stigma, and access is spotty.

There are also many Yukoners who are not on social assistance and cannot afford to purchase it from a pharmacy. Again, Mr. Speaker, under my coverage, I was able to buy it for \$50, instead of the \$300 that it retails for — cost is a barrier.

We know that access to Naloxone nasal spray is not a low barrier. Many people struggle to access these programs or a pharmacy at all. We also understand that there is no access to this important drug in rural Yukon. People must travel to Whitehorse to get it from the pharmacy.

So, folks might be wondering how the injection Naloxone kits are made available currently. I think that's a great question. Kits are purchased by the Mental Wellness and Substance Use team and distributed free of charge to Blood Ties Four Directions and other social service NGOs, to pharmacies, and to rural health centres. It is the belief of front-line service providers that Yukon government should be making the nasal spray available in the same way.

Mr. Speaker, I started talking about the opioid crisis, I think, really a lot more frequently in 2016. That was after I was contacted by a mother whose son and his girlfriend had used drugs in their basement. They had overdosed. He didn't pass, but she did. The mother reached out to me to talk about how important it was. I think one thing that I've said often in this House is that there is no one type of drug user. One of the problems is that there is so much stigma associated with drug use that people don't talk about it as openly as I think they should, which is why I started talking about it in this House and why I talk about it all the time.

Mr. Speaker, I went and got my training as soon as that program was announced — the take-home Naloxone program. I went to Blood Ties Four Directions. Jesse showed me how to inject an orange — you know, you go through the motions and you practise and you fill the needle and you inject the orange. I did all those things. I carried around a kit in my car. It was in my car in the summertime; I took it out in the wintertime. I carried it in my basket. I carried them for years. I would replace it when it expired; I would go get a new one.

And then this summer, I got myself an e-bike, and so I started riding my bike to work, and I came across my first overdose. It's the first time I ever — first time. So, I talked about it a lot. I talked about the importance of making sure people were supported, because I really believe it, even though it had never been something that I had to deal with. I tell you, I watched this person go to the ground, and he was so lucky, because he had two people with him. They obviously knew what to do — they knew.

He sent his partner — she ran to the shelter to go and get a kit. I didn't have a kit; I didn't have a kit with me, and so I went

to the Woodcutter's Blanket, and I interrupted a conversation at the bar, and they handed me their Naloxone kit, and I went back. So, there is a young person lying on the ground who is being supported, and at this point, other people have come around. I think that is really important that we know that there are helpers everywhere, Mr. Speaker — there are helpers. So, this young person is on the ground, and he is surrounded by people. He has now, at this point, had three injections; the ambulance has been called, and the situation is under control.

I think about the young person who was the first responder, and he said, "I left my nasal spray at home; I never leave my nasal spray at home." I didn't have it, and he was beside himself because he was worried about his friend — he didn't have what he would normally have, and all I could think about was, even if I had that needle kit in my bag at that point in time, would I have been able to fill the vial and then inject it? Would I have been able to do that? I'm not sure.

Since this program rolled out in 2017, Mr. Speaker — I am older; I wear reading glasses now to do anything up close. I can't fix my bike without reading glasses, because I can't see the parts, because my arms aren't long enough, and so, could I have filled that vial without reading glasses on? I don't know; I mean, I could have tried — I would have tried, for sure. Let's be clear: I would have tried, but I didn't have a kit with me. I ride down the river trail every day now, twice a day, and all of a sudden, I was without a kit. I thought, man, I have been talking about this for such a long time. It is so important that, when the opportunity arose, I asked the Liberals to partner — to make sure that we made a supervised consumption site happen and that together we made safe supply happen, because of how important I think it is — but I had never seen an overdose; I had never been involved, and so I was super upset. I left this place — the ambulance came, and the young person was coming to.

We talk about stigma, and I can tell you — he said, "I was just having a nap; I was just having a nap." He didn't want to get in the ambulance; he was just having a nap. I can tell you that is not how we nap, but because there is still so much stigma associated, he didn't want that; he didn't want that.

I left that spot, and I was like, okay, I am going to Blood Ties Four Directions; I am going to go get myself a new kit, and then I realized, because the Yukon government has done such a good job about making these kits available, I will go to the pharmacy — and I did.

I went to a pharmacy, and I walked in, and I saw my friend, the street nurse, and he said, "How are you?" Mr. Speaker, sometimes I am super honest, and I said, "I'm really not well; I'm pretty rattled", and he said, "Why?" And I said, "I just saw my first overdose." And he said, "Yeah, it's tough, right?" And I said, "Yeah, yeah, it is tough."

And then he said, "You're a person of means; you should look at getting the nasal spray." And I was like, "Yeah, okay."

So, I walked up to the counter, and I talked to my friend, the pharmacist, and I said, "Can you tell me about the Naloxone nasal spray? Can you tell me what this means?" She said, "Just a second", and she opened up my file, and she said, "Your drug

plan will cover it, 80 percent. Instead of costing you \$300, it will cost you \$50." And I said, "Great, sign me up."

At that point in time, the pharmacist and I couldn't decide if I needed a prescription from a doctor or if the pharmacist could prescribe it. So, I went away, and she gave me homework. She said, "Call your provider and ask them: Does it need to be prescribed by a doctor or can a pharmacist prescribe it?"

I did that, and I was told that a pharmacist could, and when she contacted them, she was told a doctor had to. So, that's also another barrier. Since that time, I called my doctor, and I got a prescription and I took it in, but life-saving drugs shouldn't be dependant on whether or not you can get a prescription, on whether you have access to a doctor. Heaven forbid you should have to go to an emergency room to ask for that right now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone who has gone out and taken the injection training and who carries a kit with them, because carrying that kit is an act of love, because you care enough about helping someone else. I want to thank the people who aren't using alone, because right now, we know the worst thing that can happen is you using alone, and that's some of the tragedy that we have seen in this territory.

I want to thank the people who are being safe, who are choosing not to use alone, and who are using with groups or with friends, and I want to thank those groups and those friends for having kits, because it's their love that is going to save their community.

We know that there are lots of people who aren't willing to inject a needle into another person, much less a total stranger, and I can tell you, faced with it myself, it was rattling. I would have done it, but it was uncomfortable. Needles are stigmatized, and they are especially stigmatized for folks who use drugs. Needles are often seen as dangerous, and that's why we have all the sharps containers in bathrooms around the territory, because needles are inherently dangerous.

What I'm asking today of my colleagues is — I want them to help ensure that we have a low-barrier, readily available supply of intranasal Naloxone doses available to Yukoners across the territory and in every community and in every health centre so that the Naloxone nasal spray reaches every corner of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, if we make Naloxone nasal spray available, more overdoses can be reversed, because not all overdoses lead to death. It's important to know that.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is about equipping as many people as possible with a life-saving tool because this motion is about preventing death. When we talk about harm reduction, it's important to note that what we are talking about is preventing death. It's not about sobriety; it's not about teetotaling; it's about preventing death.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is an easy fix and I know that it will make a huge difference because we know, and the community knows, that making Naloxone nasal spray available will save lives.

I'm looking forward to hearing from my colleagues. I'm hoping that we have unanimous support for this motion so that what we do here is an act of love for people around us, because,

again, harm reduction is that — it's an act of love. Even if it might seem a bit odd, it's a way that we show people that we care. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by thanking the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this motion.

To start with, I would like to say that I support the motion. I'm going to talk about a few things today with respect to it. I will start with this notion that we should try to protect people. The opioid crisis has been horrific on the country and on the Yukon. If this is a good way to try to help address this, then I think that it makes this important.

I had to try to do a bunch of research on the Naloxone nasal spray. I didn't know about it. I did know about the injection. The member opposite, in her introduction of this motion, talked about the work that Blood Ties Four Directions is doing. They held — at the end of August, I think, there is a day that was International Overdose Awareness Day — a public event down at LePage Park downtown.

I saw quite a few politicians there that day — some colleagues, but also some folks running in the federal election. I can't remember whether or not that election had started, but there were a lot of people there. It's good to see folks getting informed. This was when I got trained about using the Naloxone injection.

My home is in Marsh Lake, but during the week, I usually spend my time here in Whitehorse. I stay in a basement apartment, my mother-in-law lives above, and I happen to be right across the street from our first Housing First project. I watched the old group home being taken down, and I watched the new Housing First project being built. I have gotten to know folks from across the street over time. One of the things that has happened is that there are occasions when there has been a need for me to call for an ambulance and help people out. I thought that, yes, I should be trained in this. I keep the kit right there by the basement window, which looks over Housing First. When I get up in the morning and I look out, if I see something — or if on my way walking here to the Legislature, I see something — then it's right there.

I want to give a shout-out to Blood Ties Four Directions. That day was really informative. We didn't inject into an orange; we injected into this sort of foam ball. It was great. I have to say that I was really surprised because there is this thing that happens where the needle retracts. There is a spring load where you do this thing and it pulls the needle back, but I didn't see that action. What I thought was happening was that it was breaking it off into the ball itself. I thought to myself, "How can you do this into someone's thigh where the needle would be left in there?" I gasped, and the person who was training me said that it was okay and that the needle came back. I was like — oh, okay.

I have not had an occasion to need to use it since I got trained at the end of August, but I do feel that it is important to have that. I have seen people over the years who are just sort of resting there on the ground. I have called an ambulance and hung out with them to try to make sure that they are okay.

Another thing that I will just mention — in that training that was given to me, the person who was talking to me from Blood Ties Four Directions said to not be surprised if the person, as they respond to the injection, becomes a little — not just disoriented — but they can have a negative reaction when they wake up.

First of all, of course, they are going through a traumatic moment, but they don't necessarily know me. They are not oriented to who I am and what I am doing there and why I would be standing next to them. The fellow from Blood Ties Four Directions said that they might get up and run away. Try to talk to them. Try to tell them you are there to help and stuff like that, but if they run away, okay, it happens.

When the Member for Takhini-Kopper King was presenting her arguments about the Naloxone nasal spray, she was talking about this notion of protecting people and harm reduction. She also talked about the shame of people around drugs and needles. It is a tough, tough thing, as a society. I am really glad that we have opened the safe consumption site. I hope that it becomes a safe injection site as it is able. These are really important things.

I think that if we have a nasal spray, that is even less complicated for those of us who would be more used to it than needles. Needles themselves can be frightening, so that is great. All of those things are good.

It's not a concern that I have around my support for this motion, but I am just going to talk a little bit about how we work and our process here as MLAs and these types of motions. I was looking back to try to look at this issue, and I started thinking about all of the motions that we have brought forward over time to try to improve our health care — by bringing forward motions here. One of the things on the list, of course, has been opioids. We have discussed that in motions here previously, but we have also talked about some of the big initiatives like aging in place and *Putting People First*. We have talked about funding for health. We just recently had a motion brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin about reviewing our social assistance program.

We talked about diabetes and the strategy around it. We have talked about continuous glucose monitors. We have talked about medical travel, and, of course, we have talked about COVID-19. I'm not talking about tourism and culture, which is important, but I am talking about the health sides of COVID-19, including vaccines. We have had all these conversations.

When I think about these types of issues, as I was researching last night — nasal Naloxone — and today, knowing that the motion was coming forward, I looked across at other jurisdictions and tried to find out who is using the nasal spray and who is not, and where it is provided and where it is not, and what the trend is.

That type of analysis is almost always done by government. If there was time to do more, I am sure that we would have done that analysis. One of the things about opposition motions that come forward every second Wednesday is that, while we know that there is a list of motions — I think that it is about 150 long. When I looked at it yesterday, there were about 140, but we have added a few more

today, so there are a lot of motions on there. It is not possible to research them all. Of course, we get some heads-up — what is currently an issue — and I think that opioids are definitely a very important issue that has been with us all along, but even lately there has been some additional concern.

I think to myself that, when I am taking decisions around health care, I would like to talk to health care professionals. I am not a health care professional. I don't know of any of us in here who are — although, as many Yukoners, people have varied backgrounds and maybe there is that background with someone, but I am not sure. I think that it is really important that we get that professional advice. In this case, when I looked at this issue, I thought to myself that this is pretty straightforward and I don't see the downsides. But I do want to talk about the importance of us trying to speak with health care professionals when we are talking about health care issues. If we are talking about building a bridge, we should talk to an engineer. If we're talking about lawsuits, we should talk to lawyers.

These are things that we would get that professional advice — that experiential advice — from people who are working on the front lines, like Blood Ties Four Directions, et cetera.

There have been two examples lately that I have thought about where I have thought that I would really like to hear from health care professionals. I am going to briefly talk about those two examples and why I think that it is so important that we seek that advice so that we don't misstep, as MLAs, when we're here trying to do the right thing, trying to help Yukoners, trying to support them and make them safer and as well as we can and reduce their harm.

One example comes from the petition that was tabled today, which was talking about parents who suggest that we should have rapid tests for COVID. I heard yesterday when the Leader of the Official Opposition also brought forward questions and expressed a need for this. Earlier today, I listened to the chief medical officer of health, when she was talking publicly to Yukoners, now as we're back in a state of emergency and the risks that we are facing have increased as of late. She talked about rapid tests — and why not? She said — and I am not going to get this exactly right — that we have a high-quality testing system right now and that we, the territory, use some rapid testing, but they concentrate where there are symptoms and where there is the possibility of spread.

Again, I will try to listen to the recording of the livestream to make sure I have this right — but if you use rapid testing where you don't believe that you have spread, one of the things that you do is set people up, because the testing is not perfect, and you have some false positives or some false negatives. There is a difference in the quality of that testing, if it's done by health care professionals or if it's done by you or I, Mr. Speaker. If we are doing the testing, we wouldn't know. Then, if you get a false positive, you are trying to run that down and could overwhelm the rest of the testing system, which you want to keep available to support those Yukoners who are symptomatic — so, there are risks.

I don't think that I would have thought that through, but there is the health care professional, and I think that it's really

important that we be thoughtful, as we look at this motion on the Naloxone nasal spray, that we are not doing something that would inadvertently create a problem that we don't perceive, because we are not health care professionals.

The other example that I'll give is around testing, again, and it was — as we brought forward the recommendations on October 15 from the chief medical officer of health that our employees of the public service should be vaccinated, we reached out to the union, and the union said to us, "We think that you should allow for testing in place of vaccination." We turned around and talked to the chief medical officer of health, and when I met with the union, when I sat down to talk with them, I said to them, "Shouldn't we should ask for that health advice, because you and I are not health professionals?" — we should ask.

We did; we went to the acting chief medical officer of health and asked her if testing was a strong alternative or a way, rather than vaccination. The chief medical officer of health basically said no. So, we are trying to set up a meeting with the acting chief medical officer of health and the president of the unions so that they can talk directly to each other and hear that advice back and forth, but that is what led us to this question about leave without pay.

Even today — somewhere, maybe it was on the radio — Dr. Ryan Warshawski was on the radio this morning —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. White: I fail right now to understand how talking about the vaccine mandate is at all reflective of a Naloxone motion, and I would reference Standing Order 19(b)(i), the question under discussion.

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I had tried to point out earlier, as I was talking about the importance of us, as we debate things like Naloxone here, that there is also an importance for us to discuss with health care professionals, and I was using these as examples. I will work to get back to the Naloxone pretty quickly here.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order.

Would the Government House Leader continue with the topic?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will try to be brief on this second example and get back to the nasal Naloxone.

I think I was talking about Dr. Warshawski, who I think is the president of the Yukon Medical Association. He was on the radio this morning. The question that came from Elyn Jones in the interview was, "Aren't you worried, from a health care perspective, that when we bring in the requirement for vaccination for Yukon government public servants, that you would end up with some areas where you don't have a service

provision?" I think we had a question on that today in Question Period. Dr. Warshawski said that, right now, we have the risk of COVID spreading through the territory, which will definitely disrupt service. It's a very challenging question. Of course, we care about that question, but the health professionals have this other perspective that it's important to get, which brings me back to nasal Naloxone.

When I did my research last night on this topic, my sense is that it is a pure win, that it would just help improve harm reduction, but I don't know what the costs are. The member opposite has had some experience talking with the pharmacists in an effort to try to help support Yukoners, which I appreciate. Through that, there is a cost, but we have just not had this opportunity to talk to Health and Social Services, or other allied agencies, to try to understand this, but the principle that is put before us in the motion, I think, is solid. If this is a more accessible means and a better means, in some instances, and given that it is addressing the opioid crisis, I think it is important that we move in this direction.

I appreciate the motion, as put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and I'm supportive of this motion. I look forward to hearing from the Official Opposition as well.

I think the next steps, naturally, will be for the Minister of Health and Social Services to reach out to her department, if she hasn't already had a chance, to try to find out what some of the logistics are of this. I think it is important that we be thoughtful here in the Legislature, that we aren't inadvertently, in our attempt to make things better for Yukoners, doing something without some of that professional advice, because we don't have that specific knowledge.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we agree very much that the opioid crisis is a serious concern for all Yukoners and certainly agree that more can be done to combat opioid deaths. I appreciate the Leader of the Third Party's comments about how she believes making the nasal Naloxone spray more available will help with that. As such, we agree with the motion and agree with proceeding with this.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand today to speak to Motion No. 200. I thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing this motion forward and giving us an opportunity to share our commitment to addressing this very important issue to Yukoners. I thank you for the personal stories, and I thank my colleague, as well, for sharing personal stories about how this is connected to our lives and the importance of supporting Yukoners, wherever they're at.

I'm going to take it in a little bit of a different direction, so please bear with me a little bit on this. To my colleagues, I want to speak to Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls strategy, and its vital calls to action described within, as well as the important initiatives regarding community safety and wellness.

The Yukon strategy is in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and their final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, released on June 3, 2019, which acknowledges the contribution of the

commissioners of the national inquiry in bearing witness to the truth and part of the historic relationship between indigenous peoples and Canada, their critical role in hearing from families and calling for justice. The final report acknowledges genocide and identifies four pathways that continue to enforce historic and contemporary manifestations of colonialism and lead to additional violence, and they are: (1) historic and multigenerational and intergenerational trauma; (2) maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; (3) social and economic marginalization; and (4) ignoring the agency and expertise of indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA people.

The Yukon strategy, Mr. Speaker, addresses all four of these pathways to violence and maps out four corresponding paths to dignity and justice. They are: strengthening connections to supports; community safety and justice; economic independence and education; and community action and accountability.

The vision of *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy* is to ensure healthy, safe, and violent-free communities where indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus Yukoners are respected, inherently valued, and treated equitably with dignity and justice.

This vision is supported by a number of foundational values, which are: culture, language, spirituality, and relationship with the land, Yukon First Nation and other indigenous values and principles, truth and reconciliation, self-determination, and indigenous self-government. There are a number of implementation principles that I will get into a little bit as I move through. They include: inclusivity and interconnection, equity and equality, sustainability —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate that the minister said to bear with her as she was going to come around to the point, at this point, we have been going for eight minutes without talking about Naloxone or nasal sprays. I am just wondering if this is really speaking to the matter at hand or if it is of other things.

Speaker: Minister of Education, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McLean: On the point of order, I am laying out a foundation for the systemic issue that we are talking about here today. I will move my comments into Naloxone, which is an emergency tool that is addressing these absolutely systemic issues that we are facing.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Could the members who are speaking to the motion please remain on topic to the motion? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am deliberately taking us down a bit of a trail here because the goals of the strategy on missing and murdered indigenous

women and girls — the Member for Watson Lake may find it funny. I did hear her laughing during the last comments. It is not funny. It's not funny at all.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The minister, I believe, is in contravention of two Standing Orders: 19(g), imputing unavowed motives to another member; and 19(i), using insulting language. The Member for Watson Lake, who the minister just spoke disparagingly of, was laughing at how far off-topic the minister was in her content. She certainly appreciates the subject matter. It was also a surprise that the minister is choosing to speak to matters that are very far off the main topic of the motion.

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the member is suggesting that there are false or unavowed motives. I think that the minister is just referring to responses that are here in the Legislature. There is no abusive or insulting language. I think that this is just a dispute among members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: On the point of order, if a member has an issue with another member's laughter, it is my job as the Speaker to make a determination as to whether or not there is a point of order.

Can we please refrain from bringing forward a member's action on the floor? We will leave that up to me to call a point of order when they are out of line.

Can we please stick to the topic of the motion that is at hand? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do that, absolutely. I have the utmost respect for you and as Chair.

Again, the reason I'm going down this path is to point to the systemic issues of opioid use in our territory and throughout Canada.

The goals of the strategy for our MMIWG2S+ strategy is: to implement coordinated and effective violence prevention and intervention and crisis response across Yukon that contribute to safer and healthier communities for indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people, and violence against all indigenous people in Yukon, in particular women and girls and two-spirit-plus Yukoners; to increase the economic independence of indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people; and to increase public awareness and engagement with the community in ending violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

Providing publicly available and free nasal Naloxone spray is an emergency tool to address opioid-related overdoses in Yukon. We know that the majority of opioid users in Canada are indigenous men; however, we also know that the experience of trauma — and especially the intergenerational trauma — of

indigenous Canadians is part of how people come to use opioids.

Indigenous people make up the majority of opioid-related deaths in both British Columbia and Alberta. Two-spirit-plus people are also more likely to experience trauma due to very high rates of gender-based violence among this group. This crisis has significantly affected indigenous Canadians across Canada and in our territory.

The University of British Columbia researched women who have had a child removed from their home and found a link between subsequent opioid overdoses, especially among indigenous women. The number of opioid-related deaths in Yukon has been increasing over the past few years. We know that we must work upstream to address this crisis. A very good friend of mine just lost his daughter — a young, vibrant, beautiful woman. To me, she is one of our numbers in the Yukon of women who have died. Yes, I draw it to this. This is not a little thing for me. Yes, I'm emotional. I should be emotional. We all should be. That is why this work is so important.

Mr. Speaker, we outlined this work in many of the actions in Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. There are 31 of them. They are all within these four pathways. I won't go into all the specifics, because clearly we support this motion, but I wanted to outline why we are here. I recognize that we need emergency tools, but some of these things are band-aids.

I spoke to two of our elders at the Yukon Forum who told me about this specific issue, in terms of how we need to go deep; we need to go to the systemic reasons for so many deaths in our communities. They said that we have to go into all of these areas that we work so hard for — these two indigenous women elders who have worked their life for this. So much great work is underway, Mr. Speaker, on this front, in collaboration with Yukon First Nation governments and other partners on implementation plans.

Again, I am not going to go into much more detail on this other than saying that we have a technical working group working really hard right now to finalize the implementation plan on this strategy and to bring action to the work that we have all worked so hard on. All members of this House signed that declaration to implement this strategy. I am working toward having that implementation plan done in early December, and we are working toward an accountability form, which is also found within the strategy. It is in the fourth pathway around accountability. It is currently planned for February 14 and 15, 2022 to bring all of our partners together and be accountable to one another. Again, we must move toward systemic change in our territory. That is what this strategy is about, and it speaks very clearly to implementing *Putting People First*.

I thank my colleagues for listening to me today, for allowing me to go down a path that is directly related. We have already seen the benefits, of course, of educating the public on addictions and recognizing the signs and symptoms of overdose and training people in using Naloxone. Naloxone nasal spray would provide Yukoners with a simpler, cleaner, less

intimidating, and more universal method of delivering Naloxone doses, and it will save lives.

We firmly support making Naloxone nasal spray publicly available and at no charge. We are committed to doing all that we can to protect and continue to educate Yukoners.

Again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing forward such an important motion today for us to, I hope, be in support of in consensus today.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Tredger: I do want to start by thanking everyone here who has spoken about the things that affect us, because we are not separate from the world here. We are all affected. I just really want to acknowledge that, for all of us, we are all talking about something that is really hard and affects lots of us in personal ways. I want to thank everyone for that.

It's somewhat hard to know what to say about this motion, because we could talk for hours about it. There are stories to tell. There are stories of the people we are losing, who are dying. We have lost over 20 people this year. They are community members, they are our friends, they are family members, they are parents, they are children, and they are dying. They are dying in our hotels, in our streets, in our homes, and in our hospitals.

There are so many stories we could tell, but it is also simple. It is easy to feel helpless in the face of tragedy like this, but we're not helpless. This is something that we can do. Funding intranasal Naloxone is something that we can do to save lives. How could we possibly choose anything else? How could our answer to this be anything other than, "Of course, of course, we will make this life-saving medication available to people."

I do want to briefly address some of the remarks that have been said today in this House. One of the members opposite talked about how he wished he had more time to do the research on this medication and how he wanted time to talk to health care professionals about it. Mr. Speaker, intranasal Naloxone has been available for sale since 2017. It's over four years, and in that time, people have been dying. We have had four years to do research. We have had four years to talk to health care professionals, while people have died. If that had happened, we wouldn't be bringing forward this motion today.

We are in a crisis. This is a simple, simple decision that we can make that can save lives. How can our answer be anything — anything — other than, "Of course, yes, we will."

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, we are talking about society increasing its capacity to save lives through the use of a relatively simple device that will administer a drug to people, that will save them. The lives that we are trying to save are people who are often in the grips of a terrible chronic illness: addiction to illicit drugs. This is such an important issue to all Yukoners, and I'm very glad it's on the floor this afternoon.

We've heard the emotion in the room; we've heard some of the personal trials and tribulations; you and I have had discussions about this in recent history, so I am very glad it's before us today. I think, while we are talking about Naloxone, there is much more at stake here. It ties into so many things in society that my colleagues and other members of this House have touched on this afternoon.

Society has demonized these substances, these drugs — criminalized their use. We now have multi-million dollar, even billion-dollar, organizations that are supplying drugs to our communities across the country and here in the Yukon. Civil society is struggling to prosecute those responsible. It costs a lot in policing and bylaw time. We're all doing this thing. It's a tax on our resources, on our courts. It's insidious.

The bottom line is that we're spending millions on health care and policing on this issue, and to me, neither approach is working very well. We need new approaches. Several years ago, we legalized cannabis, and society is assessing how that is going. There was a lot of speculation about the end of days happening with that enormous societal shift, and I daresay the worst effects have yet to materialize. The power of the illicit producers hasn't vanished yet, but there is evidence that we are displacing the illegal market.

We know that valuable court time has been saved. We know that people have avoided criminal records for simple possession of cannabis, and we know that consumers of cannabis now have a safe supply. The illicit market, of course, remains, and to curb it, we have to spend millions — as I have said earlier — on policing and with middling success. We are losing far too many souls to these illegal drugs — far, far too many. I don't have to tell you that; I don't have to tell my colleagues that; I don't have to say that in this House — we know that — we are reading about it — far, far too often.

We are in the midst of an opioid crisis in North America, and the Leader of the Third Party has asked that we support deployment of Naloxone nasal spray free of charge here in the Yukon. I know that there isn't a person in this House who would disagree with that. This is important to Yukoners — the member opposite has noted — and we have seen how many deaths have happened, even since January 1. They are dying, though, because our drug supplies are being laced with opioids to cut the price, boost the high and presumably the addictive qualities.

It is devastating the community of Yukoners who have fallen prey to this chronic illness. As I have said, it is killing people — far too many people. We have all spoken about it this afternoon.

Virtually every nation, province and territory, region, city, and town is struggling with this crisis. So, until society builds consensus for a more substantive change in how we deal with drugs, our government is taking steps to deal with this issue — real steps, right now.

We know that every life lost to an overdose is preventable, and like the rest of Canada, the Yukon has experienced this opioid crisis and sees how insidious it is. These addictions start as pleasurable and morph into a need — something you can't live without. They activate powerful reward centres in people's

brains. Those people feel good, but when that feeling wears off, they crave that feeling again — a hunger, a compulsion. Then, for far too many, they are hooked, and far too many people are dying.

So, supervised consumption sites provide a safe and supportive place for people who use drugs to consume illicit substances with trained professionals. Again, the goal is to save lives. With Blood Ties Four Directions, we have opened a safe consumption site in Whitehorse. The location also provides a number of harm reduction services, including Naloxone kits, that support people who use drugs. It offers access to medical attention and offers supports for people who are seeking help with an addiction.

Another element of our harm reduction approach is a safe supply. Again, we have that just recently. My colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, has negotiated an agreement with Ottawa to have a safe supply option for people here in Whitehorse. This allows drug users to access prescription drugs as an alternative to potentially toxic and dangerous street drugs. Again, try to cut the poisons — the poison supply — from the market. This was a commitment in our Liberal platform. It was also a point of agreement with the New Democratic Party across the aisle there, and so it was an easy addition to our confidence and supply agreement.

The program is managed through a person's doctor or through a trained medical professional. That person is closely monitored. This type of initiative is being run in Toronto, London, Ottawa, Vancouver, and now Whitehorse. Again, we're right alongside some of the most progressive cities in the country, and I think we should all be proud of that. Again, this is a program that is being delivered to try to slap a band-aid on a really, really important and crippling societal issue.

Professionals in the field believe the safe supply will have a positive impact in the Yukon, that it will save lives, and I sincerely hope it does. I don't think anybody in this Chamber would disagree. That's another way that we're trying to help, Mr. Speaker. It's another action this government has taken.

Another one is before the House right now: safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation. These changes, if approved, will make it harder for drug dealers and criminals in general to operate in our communities. They currently operate almost with impunity. It's costing a lot of police resources to root them out. So, we're looking for new avenues — new ways.

We know that enforcement alone will fail, but together with other efforts, such as the safe consumption site and safe supply, we will help save lives and keep our community safe for children.

Now, the Yukon Party, we know, opposes these amendments. They are concerned about gun rights. Yes, you heard that right. They are choosing to put gun rights above the safety of children. I question that priority, but there it is. The New Democratic Party has also indicated that they will not support the safer communities and neighbourhoods amendments. This is also a little surprising and disappointing. There is an increasing rate of crime in our communities, particularly in Whitehorse and the downtown core, and here is

a chance to take some action to protect residents living there. We have SCAN protocols in place with nine First Nations across the territory. The First Nations support and want these amendments. They know the issues that they face and how devastating they are. We have been talking about them all afternoon, and they want more tools to protect themselves and their citizens. I hope that our colleagues can find a way to support these amendments to protect our citizens and tamp down access to drugs in our community.

As for nasal Naloxone, we are in agreement. The opioid crisis is rampant and we must take action to curb it. It is killing Yukoners. We have said that a lot this afternoon. Like my colleagues, I have taken the Blood Ties Four Directions training, practising injections into a sponge ball. We did this over in LePage Park. This was several months ago. It seems like yesterday. I keep the kit handy. It is in my truck and I take it into the house because I don't want the contents to freeze.

Firing a needle into someone is not a simple process. Firing a needle into a sponge ball, as my colleague has indicated, isn't a simple process either. It takes some training and a little courage. I look forward to a simpler way. I think that it is all for the best. This is one that I can support. I know that it is one that everyone in this House will support. I thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing it before us today. I think that this is really useful for society, but as I have noted, it does not address the root causes. It addresses a problem that already exists — a problem that is devastating. I know that it will save lives but, as a society, we really need to start to look at far deeper solutions and take some of the hard decisions that will save more lives and change the structure of society so that we don't have as many people addicted to the drugs in the first place.

Ms. Blake: I would like to thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward, and I think it is an important issue that we do need to talk about — having more harm reduction options in place for those who are active opioid users. I have been listening to the conversations unfold in the House, and I appreciate all the feedback that has been given.

I have been reflecting on our situation here in Yukon with the overdose deaths that we have been seeing in the territory and the increases that we have been seeing this year and in previous years. I have been reflecting on my own experiences from when I first learned about what "overdose" meant. I was 16 years old when I first learned of a drug overdose. At that time, it was rare to hear about it.

During my time of being a homeless youth in Whitehorse, I have seen overdoses — not as much as happens now. As I have gotten older, I've been seeing and hearing about more and more of it happening in the territory. It is something that impacts all communities. It impacts all people in the territory. Through conversations that I have been privileged to have with people, I have always been reminded that people don't choose to become addicts; they don't choose to overdose.

With having measures in place such as the Naloxone kit, or the nasal spray, that is a support mechanism that I believe will continue to help people. It's an option that is in place to help save lives.

I am not comfortable using the injection option. I have heard from people who have had the nasal spray and heard about the effects of it and their comfort with it. I believe having the Naloxone spray in place is an option that more and more people might be open to in the communities.

I do understand that maybe more research needs to happen and more conversations need to happen with medical professionals. I think about my work as a front-line worker and what I have seen and the people whom I have been privileged to work with, the stories I've heard — and I go back to support. Any support that we can implement in Yukon for Yukoners, whether it is for drug addiction or to save lives or any other things that we look at as government, that is our responsibility.

I stand in support of this motion, and I would like to extend my thanks to service providers in the community who work the front lines and address opioid overdoses in the city or in the communities. My thoughts go out to them because, when you deal with hard situations like that, I think about the impacts on the mental health of our front-line workers and those long-term impacts that they may carry.

I give my thanks to the Yukon hospital staff, the emergency workers — they work with many of our people in the community who go through the emergency department in an overdose state and they do everything they can to reverse the overdose and save their lives. That's all I wanted to say.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In response to Motion No. 200 by the member opposite, I rise today to discuss opioid use and nasal Naloxone. We have heard many heartfelt and important parts of this debate today, and I thank everyone who has spoken to the matter.

The opioid crisis continues to be one of the most serious public health crises in Canada's recent history. Like the rest of Canada, the Yukon is currently experiencing an opioid epidemic. Every single loss of a Yukoner to this epidemic is a tragedy. They are someone's friend, family member, loved one. It touches us all.

Our government is taking concrete steps to address this crisis and provide supports for people who use drugs. An overdose is a result of an individual consuming more substances than their body can cope with and/or those contaminated with substances that the individual did not intend to consume and did not know they were consuming. Not all overdose incidents result in death. The member opposite, in introducing this motion, made reference to a letter that was sent to me two days ago. I very much appreciate the signatories to that letter and the information that it provided. I will, of course, respond to that letter, but it has not happened yet.

In the first paragraph of that letter — and I quote: "Yukon should use every tool at its disposal in the fight against the opioid overdose crisis." Madam Deputy Speaker, I could not agree more.

We clearly have had the opportunity in the consideration of this motion — but, truly, at the Department of Health and Social Services, in the consideration of all harm reduction opportunities — except that the stigma toward injection drug use is real — it is real in our communities, it is real in

Whitehorse, and it is real throughout the territory — except that the nasal Naloxone is easier to administer and is preferred by many, as you have spoken to yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We continue to take a harm reduction approach across our services, supports, and work with our partners. Harm reduction recognizes that abstinence is not always realistic for those who use substances. Harm reduction programs are often the first point of access to safe treatment and prevention resources for persons who do use substances. That is so critically important. Harm reduction approaches are so important as part of a substance user's recovery process and their access to other primary care services.

Harm reduction approaches are critical, but I thank both of my colleagues for turning our attention to the root causes of why some people use drugs and suffer addictions. It must be something considered by all members of this House as we work to save lives here in the territory.

As part of our harm reduction approach, we have made the Naloxone injectable and Naloxone kits and training available free of charge throughout a number of community outlets for Yukoners since February 2017. Prior to determining which Naloxone kit option to have available in the territory, the Department of Health and Social Services carefully considered the different forms of Naloxone available at that time and how it's administered and made the decision to predominantly provide injection kits. They were available at the time, they were well tested, and they were a good, safe option.

Nasal Naloxone is available through non-insured health benefits and the Referred Care Clinic provides both nasal Naloxone and injectable Naloxone for use by their outreach nurse. When responding to an overdose, multiple doses are often required, as we have heard from the member opposite today.

The injectable kit contains three doses of Naloxone while nasal Naloxone kits contain two doses. Feedback from community members indicate that some prefer nasal Naloxone while others prefer to administer injectable Naloxone. The option is important. Each Naloxone nasal spray kit costs approximately \$113 per dose, with injectable Naloxone kits being approximately \$80 for the three doses. By accessing the intramuscular injection kits, we are able to provide a greater number of these lifesaving kits throughout the territory. To date, in 2021, we have provided approximately 2,300 kits, which is 6,900 doses. We worked in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control's Take Home Naloxone program to adapt training and materials to begin providing these supports in the territory. Pharmacies provide injectable Naloxone kits free of charge — again, as noted by the member opposite — to any individual who requests it. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch orders and distributes these kits, including for non-governmental organizations. Free injectable Naloxone kits are accessible through various supports. I appreciate that we are talking about another option here today, but I think that it is incredibly important for Yukoners to know that they can, like some of our colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly, obtain a free injectable Naloxone kit and training, and they can then get a free kit with supports and services from

the Kwanlin Dün First Nation health centre, from Blood Ties Four Directions, the Referred Care Clinic, Yukon hospitals, all Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hubs, and community health centres, among other places. As we have noted, that list includes pharmacies. Nasal Naloxone kits are available at most pharmacies for purchase. Individuals who receive medication coverage through non-insured health benefits are eligible to have the cost of nasal Naloxone covered. When requested, income-support clients may be able to receive coverage for nasal Naloxone.

Naloxone kits are just one of many ways that we are working to support people who use drugs and to combat the opioid crisis. An opioid outreach prevention coordinator delivers harm reduction workshops and materials in Whitehorse and rural communities. The coordinator also distributes take-home Naloxone kits and harm reduction supplies.

Blood Ties Four Directions provides drug-checking services and Naloxone kits and training at their harm reduction services location and at the supervised consumption site and through the outreach van.

As noted, we recently opened the supervised consumption site in Whitehorse as mutually agreed upon in the confidence and supply agreement. Along with supervised consumption, this site includes connecting people with other health and social services like substance use treatment, housing, and employment assistance. It is such a critical part of the work they do.

Also, in relation to the confidence and supply agreement, along with our government's commitment to support Yukoners, we are expanding access to a medically prescribed, safe supply of opioids.

Opioid treatment services available at the Referred Care Clinic without a referral include a suite of treatment interventions for individuals living with substance use services. This service is low barrier and accepts walk-ins in order to meet clients where they are.

As we move forward in addressing the opioid crisis, we will continue discussions with people with lived experience, pharmacists, physicians, service providers, and other key stakeholders. We will continue to assess the most effective way to provide life-saving Naloxone to the community. We must engage with folks who are living this experience so that our solutions can meet their needs. The implementation of harm reduction approaches is proven to save lives and we remain committed to enhancing these services with our partners.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all complex issues require many solutions. I am proud of our increased programs to address harm reduction here in the territory.

I can confirm for the members of this Legislative Assembly and for all Yukoners that Blood Ties Four Directions currently has a limited supply of nasal Naloxone, which was provided previously to Blood Ties Four Directions with the assistance of our government and the federal government and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. They have nasal Naloxone kits for staff to use and a small reserve for people with disabilities. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch of the

Department of Health and Social Services will be placing an order for more than 100 nasal Naloxone kits that will be dispersed to Blood Ties Four Directions, the supervised consumption site, the Referred Care Clinic, and to offices where mental wellness and substance use services are provided. That is just the initial step.

Our work will continue to meet the terms of the motion, which are to provide nasal Naloxone kits free of charge at the locations specified and others that will work to meet the needs of Yukoners and save lives. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion.

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. White: Before I go on, I just want to apologize to this House for my impatience. I think, to be super frank, that my impatience is because of the losses that we have talked about. I want to honour the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate for grounding her comments, and I apologize for stopping that. I too honour the loss of your friend's daughter. I do, absolutely.

My impatience today has to do with those losses in the community, the funerals that I have attended, the people whom I have spoken to — the parents, the siblings, all those people who have reached out. So, it's with that impatience that I apologize for my behaviour because that was not my intention. We all recognize how important this conversation is. I had no intention of losing focus on that, so I want to apologize.

I want to thank people for their comments, and I especially want to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for her commitment that she just made and for the steps that are being taken. I appreciate very much that the first step has been taken to getting these nasal sprays available in the community and the commitment that it will go farther.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about harm reduction, it's really important that we just don't focus on the City of Whitehorse. It's critical that it goes outside the City of Whitehorse. Not that long ago, I was at a funeral in Mayo where we saw each other for this reason. So, harm reduction just doesn't belong in the City of Whitehorse. Safe supply needs to make it to the communities — absolutely — and these nasal sprays will need to make it to the communities.

I thank my colleagues for sharing important parts and stories, because I really believe, in order for the community to fully understand how big this crisis is, that it will only be with the sharing of stories that we acknowledge and recognize the loss of the people who are no longer with us. It should be preventable.

So, that's what this is about. This is about saving lives; this is about preventing death; this is about making sure that community, like I said, through an act of love, can support community. I thank my colleagues for their words, because today this is an important step. This is another step down our path of harm reduction.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 200 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, 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): Order, please.

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Tourism and Culture — continued

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, we will be fairly brief here today. I think that we have had an opportunity to get through most of the questions, and opposition parties have identified that they are, I think, pretty comfortable with what we have been able to share so far.

I am going to just read into the record a couple of questions — and there are a couple of answers for questions from our previous time in Committee of the Whole — just so that we can have them on the record — asked by both opposition parties.

So, first, it was a question from the Member for Porter Creek North asking how many businesses that cater to the specific German-speaking market have been forced to either close due to COVID — or does the department keep these sorts of stats? The answer to that — further to the response that we had that day, in which we really focused on our economic benefit of the Condor flights and, again, the number of travellers coming to the Yukon on this airline over the last 20-year history — is that we, Tourism and Culture, don't specifically track which businesses cater to the German-speaking market. But an important note is that Germany is Yukon's largest overseas international market, and German-speaking travellers are our highest yielding travellers. As such, the suspension of the Condor flights since 2020 has absolutely and undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on Yukon's businesses.

That said, there have been very few tourism business closures during the pandemic, thanks in large part to folks in our departments doing a really good job with our business relief programs, including Tourism and Culture's three-year, \$15-million tourism and relief plan. I think that we just had our final statistics, as well, on our business relief program, and I think that we have just come in allocating over \$11 million, I believe, to a number of companies, as well as another range of programs that we had.

The next one, Madam Chair, was a question posed by you. It asked whether public rest stops and other facilities along Yukon's highways will be maintained during the winter months. The answer to that is that there is a total of 61 highway rest stops throughout the territory that include one or more outhouses. Six of these rest stops are closed in the winter when a highway, such as the Top of the World Highway, is closed. Another 45 rest stops are maintained year-round, largely by the Department of Highways and Public Works. Tourism and Culture maintains a few sites during the summer months. Frequency of cleaning rest stops that are optional in winter is reduced to match the need, but we can have discussions in the future if there are areas that you would like me to highlight.

Our third answer has to do with another question from the Member for Porter Creek North. It was asking for an update on

the visitor information centre in Watson Lake, including: Are there plans to keep leasing the same space in the recreation centre and what is the annual cost of the space? To answer that, the Department of Highways and Public Works has extended the lease with the Town of Watson Lake for the visitor information centre in the recreation centre until October 31, 2024. The annual cost of this space is \$51,175. Again, the Yukon government is in preliminary discussions with the Liard First Nation to potentially lease space for the visitor information centre in their proposed cultural and community services building.

I just wanted to make sure that those were on the record. Again, if I don't have the chance, I want to thank the officials who are with us here today — Deputy Minister Ferbey and acting finance director Kate Olynyk. These folks came in today to make sure, if there were any questions with a focus on the announcements this week — we certainly know that it was brought up in the House that there are a number of events that have been cancelled. We are monitoring that and we are pulling data together just to see what that impact is. Again, we have had a number of businesses reach out to us really just to share with us what they feel are some of the key items that they want us to focus on. I know that the department has already started building some program submissions for us, if need be, for me to take forward if our current programs — the accommodation and non-accommodation programs — can't be used with an increased scope.

That is some important information for the floor. We have had some discussions today with at least one of the chambers. I know that there will be an information session taking place on Friday morning. I believe that it is the Department of Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services, Justice, and Economic Development. It will be an online format. It is providing information to the private sector on protocols that may need to be in place as well as some information around the app that we would be providing to the business sector through the app store.

As well, I have talked to my colleagues. The one thing that I have shared is that we know that, for the safety of Yukoners, we have to have protocols in place, but I have asked that we just be very respectful of the short time period that the private sector has and be cognizant of the fact that it takes time to deal with staffing issues. It takes time away from your regular business and responsibility to put these protocols in place.

Again, thanks to the team that showed up. For the record, this is a good opportunity to thank our permanent director of Finance — which I have just been made aware of — congratulations.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture?

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

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, 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 \$3,985,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,985,000 agreed to

Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, 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 five minutes.

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Recess

Yukon Development Corporation — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am just going to give some very brief answers to a couple of questions. I know that the corporation has been preparing some legislative returns as well for other questions. Those will come. I will just acknowledge Deputy Minister Ferbey and Ms. Krista Roske who are here from the Development Corporation.

I am not anticipating much debate today, but the two things that I wanted to talk about were — both parties, the last time we spoke about the Development Corporation, talked about the grid-scale battery and the site for the grid-scale battery and talked about the clearing that was happening there. I asked the corporation to give me some information. The land belongs to Kwanlin Dün, and it's clearing that they are doing. We reached out to Kwanlin Dün to ask what was happening with the trees that they were clearing. They informed us that they are saving the larger wood for firewood for citizens and elders. The brush, I think, they will burn or chip. I thank the members for their

questions about that, and I thank Kwanlin Dün for following up with us.

The other thing that I want to talk about for a second is the question about diesel generators and replacement. The Yukon Party put out a press release about this a couple of days ago. I think it is important that we clarify.

As I said when I stood last time, there are two purposes right now for thermal generation in the territory. One is to back up our renewable system. We need that backup because our grid is not connected more broadly to the Outside. It's called an "islanded grid". We have to have that backup in place. That includes the LNG plant and diesel generators, but those are the permanent diesel generators. Those do need to be replaced from time to time. I think that I stated last time, and I will state again that the project is anticipated to be in the range of \$45 million, although that estimate is subject to change based on the results of Yukon Energy's competitive procurement process for materials and services. That number is not a firm number. That's just a working estimate at this time.

There was something that Yukon Energy asked me to just correct. It is on page 538 of Hansard. I don't believe that the challenge is with what was stated here or in Hansard; it's just that they wish to correct the record. This is about rental generators that will no longer be needed after the backup thermal replacement project is complete. The forecast is that this should be completed early in 2024 and that, at that time, it will effectively reduce two rental diesels.

Broadly speaking, the rental diesels are for if we have a shortfall — a gap — between what our hydro facilities can produce and the demand that is out there. As stated before, we believe that those rented diesels are a better option than trying to build an additional diesel plant — a permanent plant — because, once you build that plant, you have to continue to pay it off over time, whereas the diesel generators are a more nimble option and the two costs are virtually the same on levelized costs.

Thank you, Madam Chair. If there are any questions, I'm happy to get up, and if not, I look forward to line-by-line debate.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line by line.

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, 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 nil agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$7,377,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$7,377,000 agreed to

Yukon Development Corporation agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 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 five minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not going to give any more response at this point, but I will welcome back Ms. Shirley Abercrombie, the assistant deputy minister from Energy, Mines and Resources. If we clear today, then this will be the last time that she is here in the Legislature, and I am sure we will all want to give her our love. I will welcome her back. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

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 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried

Deputy 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 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$2,836,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$235,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,071,000 agreed to

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agreed to

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I believe that I am in the batting order, so I think that Highways and Public Works is next; however, matters have proceeded a little more quickly than anticipated. I would ask for a 15-minute break to ensure that I can get my officials here.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a 15-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to continue to speak on the supplementary budget request for the Department of Highways and Public Works for fiscal year 2021-22.

Once again, I would like to welcome my officials: to my right, Deputy Minister Paul McConnell, and to my left, assistant deputy minister Sherri Young.

So, I will proceed where I left off yesterday. The Member for Whitehorse Centre had a number of questions about climate risk assessment and using a climate lens with respect to, really, now all Yukon infrastructure projects going forward. In fact, I believe that there was a notice of motion tabled in the House this afternoon as well.

Understanding the impacts of climate change on the Yukon is crucial to being able to have a resilient society in the years ahead. To this end, I'm happy to report that the Government of Yukon is nearing the completion of a Yukon-wide climate change risk assessment. This risk assessment will help us to determine how vulnerable Yukoners are to deal with climate risks and the different ways that climate change will impact people and communities. It will assess how our built, natural, and social systems need to adjust to climate change and potential damages. It will also help us to determine how we can take advantage of opportunities and cope with the consequences.

We are making sure that Yukoners' perspectives inform the assessment, incorporating scientific, local, and indigenous knowledge. Specifically, we are working with experts in First Nation governments, municipalities, and stakeholders in the health, social, and economic sectors. We expect to release the final Yukon-wide climate change risk assessment report in the winter of 2022. The results of this Yukon-wide assessment will inform decisions related to adaptation and offer ideas for action to enhance climate resilience in the Yukon. These results can also help First Nations and communities plan their actions to support local climate change adaptation and address local climate risks.

Understanding climate impacts and the potential risks that they present is a first step in adapting and becoming resilient to climate change over the long term. To this end, one of the actions outlined in *Our Clean Future* is to conduct climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure projects and major building projects above \$10 million. We are doing this, but before I get into the details, I want to talk about the two components of how we are tackling climate change: adaptation and mitigation.

Under the adaptation category, as our climate changes, there are going to be a number of impacts: temperature increases, precipitation pattern changes, more extreme weather, and species migration. The list goes on. These environmental changes will then cause a number of impacts that, in many cases, will be unprecedented. We only have to look at the snowfall last year and the flooding that occurred to point to examples of extreme weather affecting the Yukon. Climate change impacts can cover a range of scenarios from flooding to fire to increased temperature fluctuations and precipitation events. We will need to adapt to these changes as they happen and be prepared for them as much as possible. The Yukon's climate risk assessment that I mentioned will assist with this.

As the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I want to ensure that the infrastructure we are building today is planning for the climate impacts of tomorrow. One way to do this is to do a climate risk assessment on a particular project. One of the purposes of a climate risk assessment is to determine the infrastructure's vulnerability to climate change and use that information to incorporate climate change adaptation measures into the design to mitigate climate change impacts. For example, a climate change risk assessment may focus on determining site and project variables for permafrost, fire, flood, and other risks. We then undertake a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the risks and vulnerabilities. This framework addresses the probability of an identified, negative event occurring and the severity of the consequences of that event on the infrastructure event.

The general approach to evaluating and incorporating climate risk in infrastructure projects is to: (1) determine the project's scope and climate impact assessment study parameters; (2) determine the variables to consider, including infrastructure elements such as signage, bridges, culverts, building foundations, and road surface materials; (3) identify climate parameters that could cause degradation or failure of the infrastructure or affect its use; (4) determine specific

management strategies that could be employed to reduce this risk; and (5) determine the probability of a negative event occurring and what the severity of consequences could be.

We analyze questions like: (1) What can happen? (2) How likely is it to occur? (3) What are the consequences to the infrastructure element? — and so on.

The climate risk assessment recommendations from the analysis are then incorporated so that the final design takes into account possible climate change impacts. The result is infrastructure that is resilient to climate change. In all cases, the point of the climate risk assessment is to be more resilient and adaptable to the possible climate change impacts of the future.

Madam Chair, indeed, we are constantly adapting our infrastructure development processes so that our assets are resilient to climate change. This is important to the Department of Highways and Public Works, and the action item in *Our Clean Future* reflects our commitment to mitigating climate risk and adapting to possible climate change impacts.

On a related note, as outlined in *Our Clean Future*, our government will also complete a road vulnerability study to inform the development of standards and specifications by 2023. The vulnerability study is a key action to inform a system-wide approach, building infrastructure resilience. This action is on track for completion as well by 2023.

I would also like to point out that the Yukon participates in the northern transportation adaptation initiative program. These research projects have helped Highways and Public Works engineers to better understand and incorporate climate change mitigations in the planning, scope, schedule, and budget of the proposed projects. This program supports projects that: (1) develop new knowledge about how climate change is affecting transportation systems in the north; (2) develops tools and practices to respond to these effects; and (3) provides education and training for northerners to help manage transportation systems affected by climate change.

The Yukon is not alone in dealing and adapting to climate change and programs like these help to share knowledge and viable climate responses. Good planning requires that we be aware of what the changing climate could look like and the impacts that it could have on our infrastructure. We are building to ensure that we can adapt to these changes, but it is also important that we do our part to reduce emissions wherever possible to mitigate the impact of climate change itself.

This brings me to the second main component in addressing climate change — mitigation. As we all know, greenhouse gas emissions are responsible for our changing climate. As a global society, we need to reduce our emissions as quickly as possible. To this end, we want to ensure that, in the Yukon, we look at how a project could help to achieve our goal of emission reductions. As I mentioned before, the department has put together an *Our Clean Future* acceleration team to focus on developing and incorporating an energy and sustainability lens into the decision-making processes for major government projects, policies, and programs.

This lens will incorporate both adaptation and mitigation perspectives. Having this lens will ensure that greenhouse gas emissions and climate change resilience are considered

consistently when capital decisions are made across government. In fact, as I previously stated, there are actually training sessions now happening to teach our employees how to employ a climate lens for specific projects such as the work occurring on the north Klondike Highway, which I mentioned yesterday, pursuant to the national trade corridors fund and why this lens is vital to our climate strategy.

Applying a climate lens and focusing on emission reductions is happening across the department in a multitude of ways — from electrifying our fleet, to how we do procurement, to large numbers of building retrofits being done. Reducing emissions is a primary focus. Indeed, we are doing many things to reduce our emissions and to be a part of the effort on mitigation.

Let me speak now toward some of the specifics of climate risk assessments and the use of a climate lens. As I mentioned the other day, some of our projects need to follow the federal guidelines on using a climate lens. Part of this is a climate risk assessment. According to the Government of Canada's model, the climate lens is a horizontal requirement, applicable to: Infrastructure Canada's Investing in Canada infrastructure program, also known as ISIP; the Disaster, Mitigation, and Adaptation fund, DMAF; and their Smart Cities Challenge.

It has two components: the greenhouse gas mitigation assessment, which measures the anticipated GHG emissions impact of an infrastructure project, and the climate change resilience assessment, which employs a risk management approach to anticipate, prevent, withstand, respond to, recover, and adapt from climate change related disruptions or impacts. Individual proponents need to undertake one or both types of assessments, depending on the program funding stream and the estimated total eligible cost of the project.

In the Yukon, many of our projects have been able to receive federal funding because they have followed these requirements. For example, one project that I want to point to is the second phase of the north Klondike Highway upgrade. For this project: (1) a climate risk assessment for this project is planned for completion in 2022; (2) the assessment will consider potential long-term climate change related impacts to the entire project components, including impacts on greenhouse gas emissions from transportation; (3) the assessment will be initiated and underway prior to the completion of any final designs so that the assessment findings can inform project design implementation and future operation and maintenance plans as appropriate; (4) Highways and Public Works staff will be conducting the climate risk assessment and have budgeted funds to hire professional assistance from consultants as required; (5) prior to starting the assessment, project staff will participate in a training course for climate risk assessments organized in partnership with Yukon's Climate Change Secretariat and the Canadian Standards Association; (6) even though an assessment has not been completed yet, Highways and Public Works has participated in dozens of research projects related to permafrost degradation as a result of climate change and several related to assessing hydrological response to climate change; and (7) some of these projects involve researchers from Yukon University.

We also completed a climate risk assessment this past summer for the new school at Burwash Landing and have completed a climate risk assessment for the Dempster fibre project. Furthermore, the Government of Yukon is participating in the northern transportation adaptation initiative, the NTAI, a federally funded project that brings together government agencies and research institutions to address climate change impacts on northern highway infrastructure built in permafrost environments. These research projects have helped Highways and Public Works engineers to better understand and incorporate climate change mitigations into the planning, scope, schedule, and budget of the proposed project.

Climate change mitigations that are already planned to be part of the design include: augmented drainage infrastructure to accommodate flooding; additional embankment structure to raise the grade above predicted future flood elevations; and wider roadside ditches and engineered backslopes to protect against flooding and slope erosion as a result of increased precipitation and extreme weather events due to climate change.

While the federal model is a good starting point, I am excited that we are doing the groundwork and research in collaboration with Yukon University to build a climate lens framework tailored for Yukon's unique geographic conditions. An example of the made-in-Yukon lens is the five-pillar framework that is used to evaluate retrofits and renewable energy projects. This framework for infrastructure decisions takes into account local economic benefits and technology that is suited to our winter conditions. This is an example of how we are using the federal climate lens model and tailoring it to our territory.

As I mentioned recently when talking about the Carmacks bypass, our major transportation projects are being designed to take climate impacts into consideration. The objective of using a climate lens for this purpose is to meaningfully inform infrastructure planning and decision-making. Bridges may be built higher to accommodate increased water flow, and culverts may be bigger for the same reason. Erosive forces, extreme weather events, temperature fluctuations, and permafrost thawing are all aspects that are considered in the design of new transportation infrastructure.

The same is done for our buildings. This is particularly true when accounting for potential permafrost changes. For example, the design for the foundation of the Old Crow health and wellness centre specifically has adapted measures to account for permafrost thaw. Another related example is the thermosiphons that have been installed at Dry Creek on the Alaska Highway. These are designed to maintain the structural integrity of the highway by mitigating the effects of permafrost thaw.

Another example is that, to be more resilient to the risks of permafrost thaw, we are developing and implementing a plan by 2024 to conduct routine monitoring of the structural condition of Government of Yukon buildings located on permafrost. Across the territory, we are —

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order. Member for Copperbelt North, please.

Mr. Dixon: I am happy to turn back to the issues that I was asking the minister about yesterday, in particular in relation to the First Nation procurement policy. I have a few very specific questions, so I will ask the minister if he can respond to these questions and exercise some brevity, as I am sure he has a number of notes about the First Nation procurement policy generally. I am not interested in getting into those lengthy explanations. What I am looking for are a few specific questions.

With that, Deputy Chair, how many procurements since the First Nation procurement policy has come into effect have been conducted with the policy in place? If the number is too big for the minister to draw on right away, I would accept the answer of “All of them” — if that is the case, it would be good to know — “Some of them”, or “Only a few”. What I am looking for is: How widely used has the First Nation procurement policy been since it came into force?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide the member opposite with a brief answer, and then we will probably have to elaborate. The short answer to your question is that the First Nation procurement policy applies to all procurements now. The member opposite will also know — and I can go into further detail in future answers — that there were certain components that came into effect on February 22. Additional measures were implemented on April 26 and then were deemed to be fully implemented by October 4.

I would have detailed notes about what the parameters were on February 22, the parameters on April 26, and then the full implementation of the policy on October 4, which had the bid value reduction, the First Nation business labour participation, and the First Nation business registry, which is an ongoing process right now.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer there. I would like to ask about some of those features that the minister raised — in particular, the bid value reductions and the labour components. I will start with the labour component. The First Nation procurement policy participation measures include the ability for a bidder to include a commitment to hire First Nation labour. There are then commensurate reductions as a result of that commitment to hire labour. That is something that can affect the award of a contract and the relative success of a bidder.

My question is: How does the department enforce those commitments that are made? How can the department look at a contract that has been awarded and evaluate whether or not a proponent lived up to their commitment as laid out in their bid?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just for clarification, specific to this question: Just with respect to the labour participation component?

Mr. Dixon: Yes.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide a more fulsome response in future days as I anticipate that this will be a topic for some further debate in Committee of the Whole with respect to the procurement policy.

But with respect to, generally speaking, the enforcement of contracts, the member opposite will know that Highways and Public Works has contract management processes. Of course,

it is the obligation of the contracting party to comply with the terms and conditions that they have agreed to. If there is an issue with respect to whether the terms and conditions of the contract have been met by the successful party afterwards, there is a dispute resolution mechanism.

Mr. Dixon: So, if a bidder commits to hiring a number of First Nation employees through the course of their Yukon First Nation participation plan — which is an aspect of the policy — and they don't live up to it, it's not known to the government until the project is complete. How do they go back and enforce the contract, after the contract is complete, and determine whether or not the contractor met the obligations that they committed to in their initial bid?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The main — the member opposite will know this — hammer or the main enforcement tool that the Department of Highways and Public Works has over the supervision of the contract is, of course, through the provision of holdbacks at various points in the execution of the contract.

The bigger topic is something that the department has been looking at for years, as I understand it. That is vendor performance review so that all contractors — not just major contractors — can have a report card and so that their performance as it pertains to the discharging or delivering of the service that they contracted for with Yukon government or with Highways and Public Works met certain standards. The member opposite will know that the vendor performance review program came into effect in October.

The new program will evaluate and score vendors on their performance throughout a government contract. Through this new program, we will incentivize good performance for vendors, encourage project managers and vendors to work together, and provide feedback to vendors on how to improve. Once suppliers have had time to build their scores, high performers will receive more points during tender evaluations, which will increase their chances to secure government contracts.

Through this program, we are aiming to incentivize good performance from vendors and encourage vendors and Yukon government project managers to work closely together and communicate throughout the contract and provide feedback to vendors on ways that they can improve their performance. When a vendor receives their scores, they can either accept, reject, or not respond. If a vendor accepts the score, it is applied to the vendor's overall ranking. If there is no response within 15 calendar days, the score automatically applies. If a vendor rejects their score, the project will be mediated with a vendor to come to an agreement. If no agreement can be reached after 15 calendar days, there is an appeal process.

Another connection to this program is through the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. One of the criteria that the vendor can be scored on is the fulfillment of their tendering commitments to Yukon First Nation participation. When the scores are appealed, Highways and Public Works will review and submit a recommendation to the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works for a final decision on the appeal. Scores will be stored in the new e-procurement platform, Bids and Tenders, which means that suppliers will have one location

for bidding and for being able to review their vendor performance scores.

The Yukon government will phase program implementation to ensure that project managers and vendors are familiar with the program before it affects the actual bidding process. In phase 1, which the member opposite will note commenced in October 2021, the Yukon government soft-launched the new program for vendors by capturing scores, but will remove them from the vendor's record after the first year of collection.

Phase 2 will commence one year later, in October 2022, when the Yukon government will capture scores for one year. These scores will lead to the vendor's overall score, but there will be no impacts to the vendors in the procurement process during this phase. I will receive advice from my officials, but I believe those scores are beginning to create the foundation of a performance history on projects; that's correct.

The rubber really hits the road in phase 3, in October 2023, when the Yukon government will take the average of the vendor's score from the last year and will consider that during the procurement process. Vendors will continue to receive scores that will adjust their average score on an ongoing basis.

Based on the tender type, there are up to seven key performance indicators that are assessed for each contract, which creates an average performance score. The key performance indicators are: cost control; health and safety; quality assurance; schedule and time control; staff and administration; Yukon First Nation participation; and functionality and training for goods and contracts.

I have had some fairly lengthy discussions with my officials at Highways and Public Works. I know that this is a long time in the making of a generation that — I'm certainly excited by this project. I think it will, to the member opposite's point, provide some confidence to the taxpayer, I think, but also to all contractors that they are being evaluated on how they are delivering what they said that they would do on these seven matrices.

So, it's starting now and it will be basically fully implemented in October 2023. It overlaps quite nicely with the Yukon First Nation procurement policy because there will be issues about whether a contractor has met their obligation with respect to the labour participation component which they have provided in their bid and the ultimately accepted documents.

There will be objective criteria that have to be met. If they aren't met, then there will be various mechanisms, but most importantly, they will be receiving a substandard report card, which will necessarily impact on their ability to successfully bid for contracts going forward.

In my view, this has been a fairly notable missing component of the overview, maintenance, and evaluation of major — and not so major — contractors in the Yukon over many years. We are certainly excited to see this vendor performance review program implemented and it will hopefully be a success.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.