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HANSARD

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	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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Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
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*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, December 1, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the motions are out of date: Motion No. 188, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North; Motion No. 224, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; and Motion No. 229, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

In addition, Motion No. 266, notice of which was given by the Member for Lake Laberge yesterday, was not placed on the Notice Paper as it is out of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), the Government House Leader must provide at least 24 hours' oral notice that a motion for concurrence in the report of a committee may be called as government business.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me today in welcoming Heather Jones, Yukon's chief coroner. It has been a hard, hard go since she became the coroner in 2016, and she has been dealing with the opioid crisis that none of us anticipated. She has done so much work to bring the voices of the dead to us. We thank her for joining us today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of opioid crisis victims

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Today, I stand to recognize the victims of the ongoing opioid crisis in the Yukon Territory. I am deeply saddened for the lives lost and for the loved ones who have been left behind.

Two days ago, the Yukon's Coroner's Service and the chief coroner confirmed that the Yukon now has the highest rate, per capita, of opioid deaths in the country. It is clear that everyone has a connection to someone who is impacted by this crisis. Many Yukon families are now feeling a paralyzing emptiness as they grieve. Please know that we all grieve with you. You are not feeling your loss alone.

Each one of the people we have lost to substance use has had an impact on our communities. Addiction does not define a person, and we need to work as a community to see beyond

substance use to the heart of the individual. Everyone has their own story, and each story matters.

We must recognize that addiction is a serious illness. These deaths are preventable. We need to collectively address the stigma of drug use and work together to support those in need. Numbers cannot show the raw pain that is experienced with the loss of a life, but we know that they are necessary for us to understand the far-reaching effects of this crisis. We must listen.

According to the Yukon's chief coroner, 54 people have died in the Yukon due to the illicit use of opioids since the spring of 2016; 29 of those deaths have occurred since COVID-19 first started to affect us in March 2020; and 21 of those deaths have happened since January 1 of this year. These numbers are alarming. They are heartbreaking. They stop you in your tracks as you think about the people whose lives have been forever altered. The Government of Yukon and our partners are taking steps to help address this crisis, but we must do more.

Clients of the opioid treatment services may now access a safe supply through a program at the Referred Care Clinic on a case-by-case basis. Clients in communities can also access this program with help from their health centre. There are also services in the Yukon that are working to help people who use illicit drugs. Blood Ties Four Directions has recently partnered with the Government of Yukon's Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to open a supervised consumption site here in Whitehorse. This space is the first of its kind in the Yukon, and it provides a safe, confidential space for people to use substances.

I would also like to recognize those who strive every day to make a difference: the first responders who give their all to save those who are experiencing an overdose and those who care for those who are left behind. We know that your jobs are not easy and that each and every experience has an impact on you personally. Know that we try to understand the toll that it takes and that we support you in your work.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, we offer our sincere condolences to the families, the friends, and the loved ones of those who have lost their lives as a result of this opioid crisis. I know that words are not enough, but I hope that you can find some small comfort in hearing this today. You are not alone. Your stories matter. The lives of your loved ones matter, and our hearts go out to you today and in all the days to come.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: On behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, I rise to recognize the opioid crisis in Yukon. To have the distinction of the worst case count in all of our country, per capita, is not one that we can ignore. Fact: Opioids are a pain-relieving drug that blocks the pain signals between brain and body and have been used for decades in medical settings. Fact: Opioid prescriptions resemble morphine, and OxyContin was the first drug to raise flags that those who are put on long-term pain relief use became addicted. Fact: Opioids are street drugs, can be easily manufactured, and can be laced with

increasingly dirty mixtures that, with even a few grains of fentanyl, can kill.

Even our beautiful Yukon is not immune to the ravages of drugs. We know that more and more families and communities are being ripped apart by tragedy.

The need to reach a euphoric state with the use of drugs can seem exciting at first but quickly takes over a life so that they are willing to risk anything to get the next high.

I'm sure that the young or middle-aged person, or even that elder, did not wake today and say, "I'm going to be an addict." We must continue to provide compassionate health and social service supports so that those who might need help and who might be ashamed or embarrassed to ask will be free from discrimination and judgment. I know that, with social norms, this is a tall order as we all want to believe that it belongs to someone else — not me or mine — but it can happen to any family, any income or social status level.

I would like to thank all who work in the crisis field. We also send our prayers to those who suffer from daily opioid addiction. We send our condolences to those families who have lost loved ones.

As we near the annual Christmas season when we think about twinkling lights, Christmas carols, and a bounty of gifts and food, remember those who have lost loved ones. Keep them in your thoughts. Be safe out there and take care of each other.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge the more than 54 lives lost to overdose since 2016 and the 21 lives taken this year. Each death represents the loss of a beloved member of our Yukon community. No part of our society is unaffected — mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers, sons, daughters, friends, and neighbours. We stand with the families and friends of those who have been left behind. We hold your loss close to our hearts; we share your grief and devastation.

We heed the words of the person tasked with speaking for the dead when she said that we must take time to listen and really hear what these deaths are telling us, to be moved to turn and face this crisis head on, to find the wisdom and compassion to support well-thought-out initiatives, and to embrace those struggling with substance use. We need to remove the stigma associated with drug use so that all of those who are affected — either through use or those in support roles — are given a voice and aren't forced to carry this load on their own. I'm sharing this poem by John Mark Green in the hopes that the intention of his words will help us all heal:

How do we go on,
after the unthinkable happens?
How can we carry the burden of knowing
the world can be cruel and dangerous,
the future so unpredictable?
How do we grieve with empty arms
and a head filled with echoing memories?

We are stronger than we know,
and this is how we show it:

Holding each other,
giving comfort in the midst of pain.
Loving more fiercely,
through our actions and the things we say.
Making the world just a little bit better,
every single day.
Never taking life for granted,
knowing that it can be snatched away.

This world may bring deep darkness,
but we are the bearers of light.
We'll join our flames together,
and shine in the blackest of nights.

Mr. Speaker, in these extraordinary and challenging times, we need to dig deep to find that important element of kindness, to hold each other up. We offer our condolences to every person living with a loss associated with overdose.

Applause

In recognition of World AIDS Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to World AIDS Day 2021. It's particularly important to recognize World AIDS Day this year because we need to be reminded that the world faces threats other than the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to face a global HIV and AIDS epidemic.

In 2020, about 37 million people worldwide were living with HIV. It is estimated that about 680,000 lost their lives to the disease. This is a staggering number. According to the estimates from the Public Health Agency of Canada, there were about 62,000 Canadians living with HIV as of 2018. We also know that about 14 percent of people living with HIV are not aware that they are infected. Numbers like these remind us that we need to continue our efforts to increase awareness and knowledge about HIV and AIDS and to reduce the stigma associated with it.

This epidemic is also concentrated in specific populations. Across Canada, about 11 percent of HIV-positive people are indigenous people, though they represent just five percent of our population. For this reason, we also recognize Indigenous AIDS Awareness Week here in Canada starting today, December 1. It happens each and every year. This national campaign is a collaborative effort by partners across the country in recognizing HIV and AIDS in indigenous populations, and it is continuing to focus on prevention and education programs.

I want to say that, as I prepared to give this tribute, I thought of a really good friend. One of my most cherished mentors has been living with HIV for at least two decades. I am grateful for the medical advancements that have allowed my good friend to continue her important journey and to continue to be one of my mentors.

This year, the World Health Organization is asking us to remember that division, disparity, and disregard for human rights are among the failures that allow HIV to become and remain a global health crisis. These inequalities are made worse

by the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to cause disruptions and delays to necessary health care. This makes it even more difficult for people living with HIV. Today, I call on all Yukoners to recognize and challenge these inequalities and urge everyone to show compassion for all people who have been affected by this disease.

In closing, I want to thank all of the front-line health care workers in the territory who continue to deliver HIV services to Yukoners. Thank you.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize December 1 as World AIDS Day. There has been much change throughout the world since the international day of recognition was initiated in 1988. An HIV diagnosis was much different for someone in 1988. The global outlook has changed along with treatments, and people can now expect to live full lives with the right services and supports in place.

In 2018, three decades after the beginning of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it was reported by the Public Health Agency of Canada that there were an estimated 62,050 people living with HIV in Canada. Much has been done to put an end to unnecessary AIDS-related deaths as well as to prevent new infections. Research, technology, and treatments have been life-changing. With continued education and awareness, we can advance further toward addressing this global health challenge.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge World AIDS Day today. We have come a long way. For a long time, people didn't speak about the people they lost to AIDS because the stigma was so high. There was a time when people dying of AIDS were cordoned off in hospitals, left to die alone in their homes, denied access to services, and treated without dignity because people didn't want to be near them.

We have come a long way. We are at a time where HIV no longer has to be a death sentence. The race to find a treatment for HIV is a remarkable story, and that race has largely been won, thanks to the hard, hard work of people around the world.

Now we face what is perhaps the bigger challenge: the structural inequalities that decide who has access to that treatment. Those structural inequalities decide who lives and dies. Because when we say that HIV no longer has to be a death sentence, that's only true if people can access the medicine and health care they need.

The story of AIDS has always been one of systemic inequality and of discrimination and stigma. Inequality always comes down to a choice. It's a choice that is made by leaders like us, and so we have a choice and the responsibility to change our systems so that everyone has equal access to health care, medicine, and dignity.

We lost nearly an entire generation of the LGBTQ2S+ community. We are still losing people today, now due to lack of access to medicine, due to poverty, and due to the country that they live in, because ultimately what we needed in the

1980s and 1990s is still what we need now. We need everyone to be able to access health care without judgment and without barriers. It's time to make this story right.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have, pursuant to section 50(1) of the *Environment Act*, the *Yukon state of the environment interim report 2021* for tabling.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling the crime prevention and victim services trust fund annual report for 2020-21, which is being tabled pursuant to section 9 of the *Crime Prevention and Victims Services Trust Act*.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a letter that I have written to the BC General Employees' Union.

I also have for tabling a legislative return responding to questions from the Third Party during the appearance of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board chair and president.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a letter from me, on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, to the Minister of Community Services outlining our commitment to Bill No. 3.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 8 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 8 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre on November 30, 2021.

The petition presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 8 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 8 shall be provided on or before the sixth sitting day of the 2022 Spring Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to provide a detailed report showing the impact across departments and government corporations of the vaccination mandate policy, including:

- (1) the number of employees in each area who chose not to get vaccinated;
- (2) the number of volunteers, including EMS and fire, who chose not to get vaccinated;
- (3) the operational impact on essential services including EMS, fire, and highway maintenance; and
- (4) the impact on services in rural Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to properly recognize the Yukon Hospital Corporation's financial needs by increasing their funding to at least \$98.2 million for the current fiscal year, with additional funding for COVID-related costs on top of that amount.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop and consult on a new law that would empower Yukoners to have the right to get information about potentially harmful or dangerous intimate partners, which in many jurisdictions is known as Clare's Law.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to direct Yukon's representative to the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance to expedite the negotiation with Novartis Canada to allow access to Luxturna through the Yukon Drug Formulary.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to honour their commitment to subsidize the cost of infertility treatment and travel.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Creative and cultural industries strategy

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to speak about a new first-of-its-kind strategy in the Yukon that I am very excited about, which is *Creative Potential: Advancing the Yukon's Creative and Cultural Industries*. This 10-year strategy has four themes and 22 actions focused on growing and developing the Yukon's creative and cultural sectors.

We know local creative and cultural industries are facing significant challenges and have been deeply impacted by the pandemic. Our goal is to ensure that they continue to have an opportunity to succeed now and into the future. By working

closely with industry partners, we have identified 10 priority phase 1 actions to implement in the next three years to do just that.

The creative and cultural sector includes those working and participating in the areas of writing and publishing, audiovisual interactive media, music and sound recording, visual and applied arts, live performance, heritage and libraries, as well as the labour force and the institutions required to support these sectors. This includes First Nation and municipal governments, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

Phase 1 actions will provide the greatest support for these sectors, as they rebound from COVID-19, by building digital capacity, helping reach new markets, and providing increased training opportunities. I encourage all Yukoners to read the 10 phase 1 actions on yukon.ca that will guide this work for the next three years. Our government has committed over \$1 million to implement these phase 1 actions, and this does not include the dollar amounts for the three new funding programs that we have announced, which will be developed and are planned to launch in 2023.

Implementing the strategy will establish a solid foundation from which creative and cultural activity in the territory can continue to contribute to the Yukon's broader economic recovery, health, and well-being as we emerge from the pandemic. The creative and cultural industries contributed over \$59 million to Yukon's GDP in 2018, which amounted to two percent of the total territorial economy.

One of the overarching goals in this strategy is to grow Yukon's creative and cultural GDP to 2.7 percent, which would translate into an additional \$21 million annually. I'm proud that our government has completed this mandate item. Yukon has one of the highest concentrations of creatives in the country. We deliver incredible creative products and productions, and we have impressive cultural venues and amazing events throughout the territory.

With tourism in the territory projected to return to its former strength, now is the opportune time for the government to implement a strategy for the Yukon to reach its collective creative potential.

Ms. Van Bibber: We certainly know culture plays a vital role in the territory. Culture adds to the fabric of our communities and the lives of Yukoners on so many levels. It is a way to express who we are, our traditions, and also to tell new stories. We have to look no further than the First Nation culture of our territory, which all Yukoners get to experience and enjoy.

Culture helps Yukoners with their mental health, and it promotes creativity. It is also an economic driver to help diversify our economy with new permanent jobs. With an increasing population, there will be more opportunities for this sector to evolve and grow. We welcome this creative cultural industry strategy.

Glancing at the strategy, it seems well rounded. It addresses everything from written and public works, museums and libraries, live performances, and even new media. The strategy also contains funding opportunities, and we look

forward to hearing more about the new funding programs in phase 1 over the next couple of years.

While COVID-19 has certainly put a damper on many cultural events, especially in-person ones, it seems that this strategy, creative and cultural industries, will be a good spot to come roaring back.

The minister said over \$1 million will be spent on phase 1 implementation. Can he tell us if this work has started? If not, when will the department begin work? We know there are so many creative minds that call Yukon home, and they likely can't wait to get started. We look forward to seeing how our cultural and creative sectors will flourish in the years to come.

Ms. Blake: I have looked over the creative potential and really appreciate that it talks about COVID-19 recovery support for the creative and cultural industries. We understand that this industry relies on community support, tourism, and visitors to the territory. It is evident that many, if not all, creative and cultural businesses have struggled throughout the pandemic. Another theme that stands out is the focus on collaboration and partnership between governments, industry, and NGOs. Both creative and cultural industries have been, and continue to be, active contributors to the territory. Through the sharing of culture and heritage, our communities are even more united, as the creative and cultural industry in Yukon fosters connection, relationship building, and understanding between our diverse populations in the Yukon.

I appreciate the plans focused on career development and helping creatives build, expand their businesses, and access new opportunities and markets. Empowering artists and cultural workers to engage full time in their work is critical. It can be tough to remain focused when you are working extra shifts to cover your bills. The focus on online and digital technologies will no doubt help local creatives in learning and building their businesses and finding new partnerships. It is amazing to see our young, emerging artists, such as Kaylyn Baker, Stormy Bradley, and Natasha Peter, utilize digital platforms to expand their businesses beyond our territory.

I do have a concern. The new programs and supports need funding to succeed. The minister has said in his statement that new funding programs will not be available until 2023. I know that these things can take time; however, I urge the minister to make needed recovery supports available immediately to help struggling creators, museums, and others to not only survive these challenging times, but to also thrive.

I am disappointed that this strategy, which was due in April 2021, is months late. Public engagement closed in February 2021, while Yukon's creators have struggled and anxiously awaited these new supports. I hope that these delays have not caused any further undue hardship to the industry or its workers.

I look forward to hearing feedback from creators and industry and to the further development and implementation of this important strategy.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Since 2019, the departments of Tourism and Culture, Economic Development, Education, and

the Women and Gender Equity Directorate have worked in partnership in a one-government approach to develop the strategy. We held three phases of public engagement with these sectors, and all actions brought forward are based on input from industry stakeholders.

These conversations and feedback that were received gave important insights, information, and ideas, and we could not have developed the strategy without them. We knew that working with those directly in these sectors was the only way to identify where we could support them best.

Again, I want to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy. Of course, we will be reaching out to many of our partners concerning the development in 2022 of our funding programs.

I would like, just in response, first to sincerely thank both opposition members for their supportive words. In response to their questions, we are looking at 2022 to continue consultation with our stakeholders and our partners but also define our programs. We have really taken direction from the sectors to build this entire strategy, and we want to ensure that we continue to do that.

As for the timing, I would say that the microloans — which are really loans that are \$5,000 or less — is work that we are going to move on very quickly, so some of the funding programs will be released more quickly than others. Then, of course, we will define what the program should look like for the other two.

I think it's important to add that, over the last year and a half, we have made sure we have had proper programs in place. We have been very responsive. The programs have been probably the most supportive in the country.

Just in response to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, we have been there with folks in a big way, right from the start. I think they have had good supports. I don't think we have put anybody in a position to lose their business or to be in a situation where they were hard-hit.

When it came to museums and cultural centres, it was the same thing. The previous minister, Minister McLean — who, I have to add, was the political driving force behind this strategy and deserves significant kudos. Also, while in that role, she made sure that our cultural centres and our cultural venues and museums were supported appropriately.

With that, I think that we are in great shape going forward. This is not unique, in a sense, to the Yukon. Globally, there is a movement at all levels of government to recognize the power of culture as a driver and an enabler of sustainable development, which can provide core economic and social benefits. This new strategy helps to identify and address the barriers of entering and participating in these industries and supports diversity and inclusivity to help strengthen these sectors and grow our local economy. Empowering and enabling a diverse range of voices and perspectives to reach wider audiences is one of the strategy's guiding principles. Mr. Speaker, that is because we know that diverse businesses are strong businesses and, by including more people, different voices and views, we create resilient sectors that contribute to the local economy and build strong communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Mr. Dixon: On October 19, the government told the Legislature that there were 5,435 government employees. Yesterday, we asked the minister how many of these employees would be placed on leave without pay today. He responded that he would know by noon today, so I would like to ask him what that number is.

Further, as a result of the last-minute regulation released last night after 10:00 p.m., this vaccine mandate will also apply to a number of private sector businesses and NGOs. So, I would like to ask whether the government will be tracking how many people are put on leave without pay in the private sector as a result of this regulation, and will they share that number as well?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will answer the first part of the question. As of this morning, the Public Service Commissioner reached out to me to inform me that we have 5,717 attestations. That is just over 94 percent of our workforce. We have 122 full-time employees who have not attested; that is two percent of our workforce. We also have 234 part-time or casual employees who have not attested, which is just under four percent.

I want to say that yesterday when I stood in the House, that number was at 91 percent. When I went up and was asked to speak to the media, it had gone up to 92 percent. Later on, when the Minister of Health and Social Services was speaking in Committee of the Whole, it was at 93 percent. Even today, we welcome any employee who wishes to get their vaccination and to attest — to fill out. So, between now and January 30, any employee who is currently on leave without pay and who wishes to come back — then they have the ability to do so. What I would like to do is thank all public servants for their service to the territory.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for that answer. It sounds like there are over 350 people, then, so that's 350 people on leave without pay from the Yukon government and a yet unknown number of people in the private sector. It's important to remember that these are people with families and bills, and this will create financial hardship for these people.

We have heard competing views about whether or not those folks are eligible for EI or other financial support. So, can the government confirm whether or not people placed on leave without pay are eligible to collect employment insurance, and if not, what other financial supports are available to them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The first part of the answer is that employees who are on leave without pay are not eligible for employment insurance. There's a range of ways in which we are supporting our employees. The main one that I want to reiterate, which I just stated, is that we welcome any of those employees who wish to return to work to get vaccinated and to fill out their attestation — we would welcome them back.

While the member opposite has given the aggregate number of the total number of employees who are on leave without pay, some of those are people who are here seasonally and they haven't been active right now. Some of them are casual employees or on call, so I think that the more critical number that we should look at is the full-time employees, which is two percent of our employees who have not attested.

What I can say is that we will continue to support those employees, as we are able, with the Public Service Commission. They remain our employees, and again I thank them for their service.

Mr. Dixon: Despite the minister's comments, I think that it's worth noting that these 350 people are still people.

Losing one's job is difficult at the best of times, but this will be significantly more difficult for these folks, given that it's the holiday season. This will cause a lot of anxiety, stress, and concern for the well-being of their families.

The result of this will likely be considerable mental health challenges. What mental health supports will be available for individuals affected by this policy? What enhancements has the government put in place to address what will likely be a significant increase in pressure on the mental health of these hundreds of Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I know that the Public Service Commission has many supports for employees and their families around mental wellness. Those supports are there for them. We understand that this has been a hard decision for them. We will continue to support them as much as possible. Again, I wish to thank them for their service.

For all public servants, I want to say thank you for all of everybody's efforts during COVID to try to help and to keep us safe. Of course, this move was as per the recommendation of the chief medical officer of health in order to try to keep us safe around the pandemic. I just heard yesterday, I think, that Nunavut has announced a similar move, so now it is every Canadian jurisdiction. I also know that there are other employers here in the territory who are moving forward with this. This is about trying to keep the territory safe.

I want to thank all public service employees for their tremendous effort to keep us all safe as a territory. Thank you to those public servants.

Question re: School busing

Mr. Kent: So, a number of school bus routes in the Whitehorse area have been partially or fully cancelled with increased frequency over the past few weeks. In some cases, it has been done on short notice and has left parents scrambling to find transportation to school for their children. We understand that one of the contributing factors is a lack of qualified drivers. I'm curious what specific actions the Liberals are taking to assist the contractor in alleviating this driver shortage?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand and talk about this question that has been placed on the floor today. The Department of Education provides school busing, city transit passes, and transportation subsidies to families to support students travelling safely and effectively to and from school.

Definitely, our underlying goal is to ensure that children are supported and that families are supported.

I would like to start by saying that, like many other jurisdictions, Yukon is facing a driver shortage, and we're working with our contractor always, Standard Bus, to support them in their recruitment efforts. Combined with the pandemic, this is a very challenging time.

In some cases, unfortunately, the busing contractor has had to cancel routes for the day. We understand the impact and challenge that bus routes can have on families. We are working with Standard Bus to find solutions whenever possible. Sometimes they are able to combine routes or have a driver cover two routes. We appreciate that some families are able to drive students to school when a bus is cancelled. We definitely know that outlying areas have more challenges. I will continue building on my answer as the questions continue.

Mr. Kent: Many of the families that we're hearing from live in areas around Whitehorse that aren't serviced by Whitehorse Transit, so that's not an option for them. I am hoping that the minister can elaborate on the specific supports that they are working on with the contractor with respect to the recruitment of drivers.

Mr. Speaker, in some cases, existing drivers are caught in self-isolation due to COVID exposure notices for either themselves or their families. Of course, today is also the day that the Yukon vaccine mandate comes into effect. I am curious if the minister can tell us how many bus drivers are affected by the mandate and have been suspended or placed on leave without pay by the contractor. For those bus drivers who are in self-isolation and are double-vaccinated, are they eligible for rapid tests to allow them to be off work for a lesser amount of time?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue on with my answer around the busing issues that we have had this year.

Like most jurisdictions in Canada, there is a driver shortage. I know that there have been times when Standard Bus has brought in drivers from other jurisdictions. We certainly have alleviated a lot of the issues. We had the schedules out really early this year, so we have had less friction around that with families and continue to definitely support them.

Standard Bus is dealing with driver shortages as best as they can. We are working with them to develop contingency plans to help ensure that cancellations do not affect the same route for multiple days in a row. Standard Bus is responsible for notifying schools and families when the bus routes are cancelled. I listen to CBC every morning, and I know that this is something that CBC also covers and they remind folks to go to the bus app to ensure that they are getting up-to-date information. The Department of Education works with the school busing committee on matters affecting delivery and shared busing services.

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. Tredger: Right now, hundreds of Yukoners are living in dangerous, unsafe conditions. Families especially are being pushed out of the rental market, and home ownership is completely out of reach. These families do not have any safe,

warm place to call home. Instead, they are living precariously in hotels. In some cases, as many as six family members are living in a single, cramped hotel room with no kitchen, no space, and no security.

Being forced to live in a hotel is unacceptable. Can this government tell us how many Yukon families are living precariously in hotels right now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I think what's important is that — whether it be Health and Social Services — of course, they have clients who, in some cases, are living in hotels, or in the case of Yukon Housing Corporation, they continue to work with people on our wait-list or with the Anti-Poverty Coalition to identify, with a number of other groups, people who are completely underhoused at this point. We have identified those numbers. The member opposite discussed them in April. In our point-in-time count, we had 151 individuals. The latest numbers from last month showed that 63 children were underhoused.

At Yukon Housing Corporation, we have come back and looked at a number of units. We have 20 units that we would normally not put out. There is work needed on those units, but because we do think that we are in a critical situation, we now have opened up 11 of those units and we are looking to have all 20 opened up.

We think, right now — working with many partners — that we're in critical need of about 32 different homes and units for folks. Those are the people who are in desperate need now. I think that having the largest investment in affordable, social housing in Yukon history is the right thing to do. Many of the projects that we have built are now coming to fruition. Of course, that is going to take a lot of that pressure off.

I will look forward to the second question.

Ms. Tredger: The government can't build its way out of this crisis. Housing is getting more and more expensive, no matter how much the supply increases. We saw an entire neighbourhood pop out of the forest floor in Whistle Bend, and still, housing prices are higher than ever. Until this government treats housing like the human right that it is, we will be stuck in this crisis.

We have heard directly from hotel residents and front-line workers that living in hotels is dangerous and unhealthy. There have been reports of verbal assaults, abuse, and even human trafficking. No one should be forced to raise a family in a hotel room.

So, what is the minister doing to protect the families living in hotels and RVs right now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that I would debate the preamble. We brought housing experts together, and I know that in those discussions, the first thing — and almost one of the last things that was said — was that if you look at one underlying mission to deal with this, it is to build housing. So, that is what is being said at the national tables and that is what experts who are looking to give advice to the federal government, territorial government, and municipal government are saying.

I think that everybody in this Assembly understands that it is a necessity and a human right. That is why the investments that are being put into place are being put into place.

Again, this is not something that happens overnight. There are a number of factors. I am not standing here to play a blame-game. There are a number of things that are driving this, and we are in a very critical situation. What we are going to do is we are going to support the private sector. Again, we are seeing record building; I think that this is a good thing. We are going to continue to invest in social housing, in affordable housing, with partners across the Yukon; I think that this is the right thing to do. We are going to work with municipalities to ensure that zoning and OCPs are done in a way — and for anybody who watched the municipal elections, they would see that basically all candidates are committed to this.

I think that these are the right things to do and they will make a difference.

Ms. Tredger: We have heard directly from families who spent the summer living in RVs and in tents, but now that winter is here, they don't even have that option; they have nowhere left to turn. Rental prices are unaffordable. Home ownership is impossible. The Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list is so long that people give up before they even apply. For these families, buying a new build in Whistle Bend is not even on the table. These families can't wait.

What does the minister expect these families to do for the rest of the winter?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that the approach we have had is to ensure that we have the most up-to-date data on this, and the folks who are working with clients across the Yukon, and especially in Whitehorse, have a good sense — and those are organizations like the Anti-Poverty Coalition. It is ensuring that you understand what Safe at Home is seeing out there.

Again, I had discussions with the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation this week. We have tracked and have watched a number of individuals who were probably underhoused in the summer. We are seeing a bit over 30 right now — really critically — who we have to house. I never want to see a family in a one-room building with two or three children. Nobody wants to see that, but inevitably what we are going to do is to make sure that we make the best possible decision to keep folks safe with the infrastructure that we have. We are going to continue to build more infrastructure, and we are going to continue to make sure that there are more opportunities for the private sector. That's the work that we have to do.

We're also going to work with the 11 self-governing nations and three nations that fall under the *Indian Act* to work directly with them on the programs that they can get, either bilaterally through the federal government or working directly with us.

That's the work that we are going to continue to do. Progress is going to be made.

Question re: Political party fundraising

Mr. Cathers: The Liberals have brought in strict regulations limiting the size of gatherings and events for

Yukoners. Restaurants and bars can only have six people at a table, and you are not allowed to mingle between tables. Families can only have 10 fully vaccinated people in their own home. Meanwhile, it was revealed yesterday that the Liberals are holding a corporate party in Vancouver in a crowded hockey box while the new Omicron variant of COVID-19 starts to spread. It's not lost on Yukoners that this party that the Liberals are hosting would not be allowed here in the Yukon under the very laws that they brought in. The Premier's actions send a clear message to Yukoners: Do as I say, not as I do.

Why do the Liberals think that it is okay to tell Yukoners to act one way while travelling themselves and partying it up at large crowded events outside the territory?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm happy to answer questions here today in the Legislative Assembly about fundraising and travel. The members opposite can rest assured that we will travel respectfully. They can also rest assured that, in the jurisdiction that we will be travelling within, we will be adhering to all of the rules and regulations inside that jurisdiction.

Question re: Ross River School

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, the school in Ross River is literally sinking into the ground and needs to be replaced. According to the five-year capital concept, the Liberals are planning on spending \$11 million on stabilization over the next five years. It would make more sense, both for the community of Ross River and taxpayers, to simply begin replacement of the school so we can stop sinking millions of dollars into the stabilization of the school forever.

Will the government agree to begin replacement of the Ross River School?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The health and safety of students across the territory is a top priority for the Yukon government. The Ross River School continues to be inspected quarterly by a multidisciplinary team that includes an architect, a structural engineer, a geotechnical engineer, and a surveyor.

The latest building condition inspection report completed on August 12, 2021 confirmed that the school remains safe for occupancy. Work will continue on the existing school to keep it safe and to help prevent structural movement.

Ms. Van Bibber: The situation and condition of the Ross River School would not be tolerated in a Whitehorse school. How much money has the government spent on stabilization of the Ross River School since the engineering report highlighting instability of the school was released in 2017?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to the cumulative costs that the member opposite, the Member for Porter Creek North, is asking for, I will certainly commit to return with that information to the House. What I can advise, Mr. Speaker, is that the Ross River School has been undergoing quarterly inspections to monitor for any structural issues.

The building and permafrost conditions at the school have resulted in many structural assessments and repairs over the years.

I certainly recall the former Minister of Highways and Public Works providing those frequent updates to the House in the 34th Legislature.

I can advise the member opposite that, so far in the 2021-22 fiscal year, we have spent \$280,000 on installing water troughs directing water runoff away from the school foundation. We have also done design work for upcoming projects, and there are ongoing inspections and monitoring.

I can also advise that there has been a request for proposals that has been awarded for a consultant team to oversee a multi-year structural maintenance program at the school.

Question re: Weigh station exemption permits

Mr. Hassard: On September 21 of this year, Highways and Public Works issued a notice of changes to the new scale exemption requirement coming into effect on November 1 of this year. Now, these changes are causing serious concern for the firewood delivery companies, gravel haulers, and others.

Can the minister explain why these changes were made and which industries were actually consulted prior to the changes being made?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I can advise that care and compliance officers working at weigh scales, as well as on patrol, carry out vehicle checks to ensure compliance with the *Highways Act*, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, and national safety requirements. These officers carry out inspections related to vehicle weight and cargo securement. They also confirm that pre-trip inspections and log books are completed and ensure that vehicles are mechanically sound.

Monitoring commercial vehicles on Yukon highways is incredibly important for the safety of the travelling public and the integrity of Yukon's highway infrastructure. These duties protect the travelling public by ensuring that commercial vehicles and drivers operating on highways are safe, that their loads are secure, and that commercial vehicles are operating within road tolerances, which ensures that unnecessary road damage to infrastructure is minimized.

Highways and Public Works administers Yukon's carrier compliance program, which is responsible for ensuring that commercial vehicles are following Yukon's laws and standards and national standards.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. White: Earlier this week, the Yukon Coroner's Service reported that we have lost 21 lives to opioids since January 2021. Some of these deaths also involved alcohol. Alcohol has always been a problem in the Yukon. With the pandemic, depression and anxiety have worsened. More Yukoners are turning to alcohol to cope.

The mental health and addiction crisis in the Yukon is killing people, and alcohol addiction is a large part of this. The tools to help Yukoners are right in front of us. NGOs, lived experience groups, and other governments agree that the Yukon needs a managed alcohol program. The former CMOH and the RCMP are in favour of a managed alcohol program, and the

Yukon Medical Association just passed a resolution asking for this.

Does the minister recognize the critical need for a managed alcohol program in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I answered this question yesterday when we were debating the supplementary budget with respect to the Health and Social Services department. I indicated at that time that a managed alcohol program is a critical tool in the toolbox to help Yukoners and to help us deal with the impacts of alcohol addiction here in the territory. It is an issue across the territory.

I can indicate that I also spoke yesterday about the Kwanlin Dün First Nation's managed alcohol program and how we are watching closely the implementation that they have there and how we might be able to follow their lead. It is a critical part of service to protect and serve Yukoners with respect to addictions management and mental wellness.

I look forward to our continued work on this topic, on the implementation of a managed alcohol program. It is in its infancy. I spoke about that yesterday with respect to the department. Our priority has been keeping Yukoners safe with respect to COVID-19.

Ms. White: I appreciate the minister's response, including saying it is an important tool for Yukon's toolbox, so I guess the question is: When is Yukon going to get that tool?

The government knows that managed alcohol works. At the self-isolation facility in the High Country Inn, there was a pilot program of a managed alcohol program, which was an amazing tool for those residents. The experts recommended it; the pilot project proved that it works, and there was even more funding available at the time.

The federal government had a fund dedicated to addictions programs this summer. If the Government of Yukon had applied, the Yukon could already have a fully funded managed alcohol program here.

But, Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't apply, and now the deadline has passed. Why did the minister refuse to apply for a fully funded program that could save lives in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I didn't refuse to do anything, quite frankly. Serving Yukoners with respect to addictions — as I have noted, a managed alcohol program is one of the tools in the toolbox. The pilot project, as noted by the member opposite, was successful. It was part of the wrap-around services that this government and the Department of Health and Social Services provided for individuals who were in self-isolation and some who needed those additional supports. It was critical for us to provide those on a case-by-case basis so that individuals could self-isolate, if they had an addiction — to protect themselves, to protect their health, and to protect the health of Yukoners.

It would have been irresponsible otherwise, in my view, for us to require self-isolation for individuals who have an addiction and not help them by providing the medication that they might have needed, and/or the alcohol, if that was part of the situation. That pilot program, as I have noted, and as the member opposite has noted, was quite successful.

I also appreciate the way in which the member opposite makes comments with respect to these programs, as if they can

be done in a number of weeks. They simply can't, but we are working on it.

Ms. White: If there is a fully funded program available from the federal government and all we need to do is apply for it and a government chooses not to apply for it, is that not a refusal?

So, Mr. Speaker, because of the generational trauma and stigma, many Yukoners are suffering in silence. Even when people do reach out for help, they end up on long wait-lists and don't get the support that they need. The minister referenced what is happening at the Kwanlin Dün. Well, Chief Doris Bill said this week — and I quote: “We are crying out for more resources ... We need help.” And yet, the minister chose not to access federal resources for the exact problem when it was available.

So, now the Kwanlin Dün First Nation is hiring a nurse for its own 24/7 supported living residence with a managed alcohol program. And, once again, NGOs and Yukon First Nation governments are doing the heavy lifting when this government won't.

So, Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister open a managed alcohol program for Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that all Yukoners appreciate how fortunate we are, as citizens of this territory, to have the amazing non-governmental organizations and the work that they do to support Yukoners. The partnerships that we have — they are often known as “NGOs”. The partnerships that we have with NGOs, the funding arrangements that we have with those organizations, the partnerships that we have to provide services to Yukoners are second to none.

We have also an opportunity for me to mention the unbelievable volunteer ethic that we have here in the territory. Volunteers provide services to Yukoners across the board. NGOs are, and should be, supported to do much of the work that they are experts in. One example would be Blood Ties Four Directions. We know that they have expertise. We know that they have a working relationship with individuals who live on the street or individuals who have addictions or individuals who need support. They are the experts; we support them. We are in partnership with them, and that is the kind of work that NGOs do for all of us here in the territory, and that should be heralded.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this today.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice to call motion respecting committee report

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), that the motion for concurrence in the first report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, presented to the House on October 7, 2021, shall be called as government-designated business.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 3: *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 3, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is my privilege and honour to introduce Bill No. 3, of 2021, to amend the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and the *Municipal Act*.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about this piece of legislation. It allows municipalities to opt into a Yukon-wide home renovation program. It was first announced in our 2019 throne speech. It is also a key government action in *Our Clean Future*, the Yukon's nation-leading climate change action plan that has been endorsed by all three parties in this House.

Before I begin talking about the legislation in detail, I want to outline some of the work my colleague and I have conducted on this file since 2019.

This program was announced in 2019 in the throne speech. In December of 2019, the first correspondence began between the Association of Yukon Communities and my predecessor on this file. In January 2020, we informed the Association of Yukon Communities that *Municipal Act* amendments would be needed to levy, collect, and remit the tax. This is, in fact, the legislation that is before us today. In February 2020, Community Services met with Whitehorse and heard concerns about the administrative burden that this might place on municipalities. Also, in February 2020, my colleague met with Teslin and heard similar concerns.

In September, in the midst of the initial COVID pandemic, my predecessor discussed legislative amendments with the Association of Yukon Communities. Later that month, my colleague addressed several concerns, including voluntary participation and removing the need for municipal bylaws, made the municipality the lender of first priority, and promised to continue talks to address the administrative burden that had been identified and whether the municipality could keep the interest charged on overdue payments.

In October 2020, Community Services provided answers to those questions to the Association of Yukon Communities. A more detailed program outline and background was provided in an October 15 letter by my predecessor. In November of that year, my predecessor met with the City of Whitehorse to discuss the municipal administrative fee.

In early December 2020, department officials met with Whitehorse officials on the proposed program. Later that month, my predecessor met with the Association of Yukon

Communities on the program. Also in December 2020, Haines Junction sent a letter to my predecessor, committing to participate in the program. It bears noting that this community's questions were answered sufficiently for it to voluntarily opt into the proposal. That was a year ago.

About a week later, the Association of Yukon Communities wrote a letter to my predecessor expressing concerns about using the local improvement charges as a recovery mechanism and complaining again about the administrative burden. No solutions or data were provided at that time. There was no time to discuss these items due to COVID, the association said.

In February 2021, Community Services asked for and received the names for a working group. In March, the Association of Yukon Communities discussed the program again. Later that month, my predecessor approached AYC to continue to engage with municipal partners. A pledge was made to make the program available, while respecting the capacity of municipal governments. My predecessor announced that legislative amendments would be brought to the House in the fall, and they have been brought to the House this fall.

In July, the Premier issued mandate letters that affirmed our commitment to implement this type of program. From June to October, I met with all municipal councils and spoke to them about the home renovation program and that the legislation would be coming in the fall, followed by a working group to collaborate on the program details. From September to October, I spoke with municipal leaders in the run-up to the municipal elections. Earlier this month, I wrote letters to all mayors, answering outstanding questions and committing to work together to build a program and resolve lingering concerns.

On November 21, I attended an AYC meeting to answer questions and discuss the home renovation program with all mayors and councillors. Later that day, I committed to a meeting as early as December 3 and listed working group items, including terms of reference, regulation development, program details, opportunities to reduce the administrative burden, resource requirements, and to highlight the partnership through marketing and communications.

Throughout November, I held numerous meetings and one-on-one conversations with mayors and councillors across the Yukon. On November 24, I held a meeting at the invitation of the Town of Watson Lake. On November 25, I attended a meeting with the Carmacks mayor and council. Just a few days ago, Watson Lake expressed its support for the program but asked for it to be delayed. On November 27, I received a letter of support for the program from the Carmacks council. Even this week, I have been in touch with councillors and mayors across the territory about this program.

Because of the changing climate, something I witness or read about every day, this file is important to me. It is important to me because it is important to Yukoners. Yukoners want this program. There is not a single person I have spoken to who has opposed the program or its goals.

The financial terms are excellent. It makes their homes more affordable, and it takes tangible action on climate change. What's not to like, Mr. Speaker? That's what I ask this House

this afternoon. That very question lies at the crux of this debate this afternoon. We face a climate emergency. What is more important? What could certainly be more important than taking tangible action to deal with a climate emergency? I can think of nothing — nothing at all.

Action on climate is where I sit — period. Everything else is secondary and, I add, solvable. Every single issue that we face is solvable. We are the best problem-solvers on the planet if we put our minds to it. I don't think there is anything that we can't do.

I have pledged to address the municipalities' concerns over the coming months.

Fortunately, the Leader of the of Third Party and I have worked together to give that certainty and the time that we need this winter to better define the program terms with municipalities. This afternoon, we are going to discuss this and we will vote on it, and I have every confidence that this legislation will come back to the House next spring to be resolved in full while we work out the details with municipalities on how we are going to deliver this program to Yukoners collaboratively, together.

This legislation is seven pages long. It is just seven pages. As I have done for municipal leaders — and as my colleague has done before me — let's get into it a little deeper, shall we?

This tiny bill bestows a huge benefit to Yukoners. It enables low-interest money to improve your homes and to make them more energy efficient and less expensive to run. It creates more work throughout the Yukon and more capacity in our municipal governments, and most importantly of all, it is taking tangible action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. It is progress toward the goals laid out in *Our Clean Future*.

How do we do this in just seven pages? The amendments proposed in this bill enable the development of a new, low-barrier building energy retrofit program financed by the Yukon government at a low interest rate through local improvement taxes.

The amendments would allow the Yukon government to enter into agreements with municipalities, should they choose to participate, to levy and collect the local improvement tax alongside property taxes and remit it to the Yukon government.

Municipal governments will have a choice of whether to opt into the program. As I have committed to in writing, we look forward to working with them in the coming months to draft regulations and to understand and offset any administrative concerns. The legislative amendments before us in Bill No. 3 enable the creation of a program but in no way compel municipal governments to participate. Participation is wholly their choice. If they don't want to offer the program, Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't have to.

What is not a choice is that we are in a climate emergency. It is not enough to state the emergency and then sit on your hands. When you are in an emergency, you must lead. You must take tangible actions to address this crisis. To do otherwise would be shirking responsibility.

Addressing the climate emergency will not be easy. Addressing the climate emergency will take hard work. Addressing the climate emergency will take money, but it will

certainly take less money to address it on the front end than it does on the back end as we are seeing in the province of British Columbia, in the Maritimes, and, in fact, in our own territory after the floods that we saw this summer. Addressing the climate emergency takes innovation, a willingness to overcome red tape, and a commitment to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the Natural Resources Canada's 2019 *Canada's Changing Climate Report*, Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, and the north is warming faster than the south.

In 2019, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation declared a climate emergency. "Nature speaks to us," Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm recently told the *Washington Post*. "Just not in English." Two years later, the community has displaced 227,000 litres of diesel every year through a solar array in their community. For the first time in half a century, the sound of diesel generators was replaced by silence. The Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation took action, he got a project in place, and we were happy to support that project because that's what you do when you are a leader in an emergency.

We are seeing unprecedented floods and fires. We are seeing what are now being called "rivers in the clouds". It is having a catastrophic effect in other provinces.

The Earth is speaking to us and we must listen. I ask, though: Are we listening? It's an important question as we debate this enabling legislation this afternoon.

Terry Teegee, Regional Chief of BC's Assembly of First Nations, is, like many others, tired of the intransigence and the delay, especially in the face of the flooding and the mudslides that the province is enduring. He said that it is time to change our behaviour and commit to real solutions. It won't be easy, but at this point, we have no choice.

It won't be easy, Mr. Speaker. We have no choice. We have no choice.

The territory saw a 2.3-degree Celsius increase — three times the global average — between 1948 and 2016. Canada will continue to warm over the century. The only question is: By how much? Some estimate between two and six degrees unless we do our part to slow the change. Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions is imperative. We have just eight years to do it.

Climate change brings more frequent and intense wildfires, later freeze-ups — as we saw up in Dawson — earlier breakups and snow melts and with it floods, like we saw in the Southern Lakes and the Laberge region this summer.

We are losing permafrost, which we discussed today. We are seeing it in Ross River. The school is sinking into the muck. It impacts buildings, roads, and highways. The cumulative effect of ecological, economic, and social and environmental effects is catastrophic. We, as Yukoners, have committed to action.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, in May 2019, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in Old Crow declared that climate change constitutes a state of emergency. It was one of the first First Nations to do so. In June 2019, the House of Commons passed

a motion to declare a national climate emergency in Canada. In September 2019, the City of Whitehorse municipal council declared a climate change emergency. In October 2019 in the Legislative Assembly, Yukon's MLAs voted unanimously in favour of a motion to declare a climate emergency in the territory. Following that, in February 2020, Yukon First Nations signed a declaration that climate change is an emergency and that it requires immediate action.

The Vuntut Gwitchin, Ottawa, Whitehorse, and the Yukon First Nations all have declared states of emergency and all have demanded immediate action. We have heard from folks at COP 26 that they, too, are tired of delays; they want action. We have seen youth in front of the City of Whitehorse demanding action. We have seen youth in front of this very building demanding action. We hear again and again and again that we must act.

Well, this seven-page piece of legislation is what action looks like. Bill No. 3 enables real action. It sets in motion the ability to take real action on climate change to make our houses more affordable, to make our municipalities more administratively sound, to help our economy, and to really reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a tangible way, because fixing our homes and making them more efficient is the best way to actually reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the load on our grid — the amount of energy that we use. Investing in energy efficiency costs half as much as investing in new power plants, Mr. Speaker. If your home is more efficient, it uses less power, which reduces, as I have said, the load on the grid. If we are using less fuel, we are emitting fewer greenhouse gases. It is simple.

We don't have any more time to waste, implementing the initiatives. We need to cut our greenhouse gas emissions. The land is speaking to us and we must listen. It is time to change our behaviour and commit to real solutions. Now, this won't be easy, as I have said, but at this point, we have no choice. The bill before us includes an amendment to the *Assessment and Taxation Act*. It is a really boring title, but it will help us commit to and deliver on energy-efficient retrofits in the definition of "local improvements". It provides the authority for the minister to construct and fund local improvements outside of municipalities and provides the necessary regulation-making powers for the creation and regulation of the retrofit program, which we have committed that we will work with municipalities on in the coming months.

For local improvements inside a municipality, the Government of Yukon is not the tax authority; therefore, we could only offer this program in that city or town in partnership with local municipal government officials. The proposed amendment to the *Municipal Act* enables municipal participation and outlines how it can opt in to levy the tax.

Why are we on this path? Well, putting the climate crisis at the centre of our decisions is the only way to guarantee a safe future for the next generation of Yukoners. The Yukon's approach to addressing climate change needs to be comprehensive and forward thinking. Increasing the energy efficiency of the Yukon's buildings is identified under *Our Clean Future* as having a significant opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As stated in that plan, many

Yukoners spend a lot of time inside, whether at home, at work, or at school. How we design, use, and heat these buildings affects our comfort, safety, productivity, health, and finances. Many buildings use more energy than they need. Heating buildings accounts for 21 percent of Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions.

Taking steps to improve efficiency and use less energy saves money, stimulates the economy, and supports green jobs in construction. Improving energy efficiency is a key step toward reducing significant greenhouse gas emissions. *Our Clean Future* recognizes that funding rebates and low-interest financing for retrofits are necessary to meet the target of 2,000 residential, commercial, and institutional energy-efficiency retrofits by 2030. As I have said, that is just eight years away, at this point.

The amendments before us enable the implementation of action H3 under *Our Clean Future*, which is our commitment to provide low-interest financing to support energy-efficiency retrofits to homes and buildings. The details of the program will come, but the intention is to focus on improvements to residential and commercial thermal enclosures, the installation of heat pumps, switching to biomass fuel for commercial buildings, ventilation, and other similar upgrades — types of retrofits that will demonstrate at least 20 percent and up to 45 percent or better energy reduction. This ensures a good return on investment, while also reducing greenhouse gases.

By offering low-interest financing tied to the property rather than the individual, we reduce barriers to accessing the program and increased participation. In examining low-interest options to support Yukoners in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we looked at programs throughout North America, as well as Yukon initiatives. We looked at other options, like a traditional loan through the Yukon Housing Corporation, but it is less likely that a household will borrow for retrofits without low-barrier, easy-to-access funding at low interest rates.

Property-assessed clean energy programs, partnership with utilities, loans, and mortgages, and third-party financing are all ways to help property owners undertake energy-efficiency improvements.

Our government already administers programs tied to property taxation. Let me remind my colleagues that the domestic water well program and the rural electrification and telecommunications program provide funding in an amount not exceeding 25 percent of the eligible property's assessed value. Unlike a loan or mortgage program that relies on an assessment of personal finances, the assessment of property value and property taxes in good standing makes this type of program accessible to more people.

The cost of the improvement is recovered by the government through an annual local improvement tax on the property over a period of up to 15 years at the Bank of Canada interest rate, which is currently about 0.25 percent — a quarter of a percent, Mr. Speaker. It's the lowest rate of interest in the country, and it makes it possible for property owners to undertake projects that might otherwise be cost-prohibitive.

Further, if a buyer agrees, the local improvement debt can be transferred with the sale of the property. This means that the cost of improvement can be shared by the owners who benefit from it. By using the same low-cost, low-barrier approach to finance energy-efficiency retrofits, we can help citizens to improve the comfort and efficiency of their homes or businesses while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, local improvement taxes for property-assessed clean energy programs are becoming more commonplace in municipalities across Canada. We're not inventing the wheel here, Mr. Speaker. The delivery of this type of program is a shared responsibility between all levels of government, especially in a climate emergency.

We have seen examples — for example, the green energy program in the municipality of Berwick, Nova Scotia and the switch program aimed to help people upgrade to more efficient heating systems offered in Wolfville, Charlottetown and Stratford on the east coast. There are similar programs in Halifax and Toronto. There are more examples from Newmarket, Ontario to Edmonton, Alberta and Saanich, British Columbia. In Ottawa, its better homes loan program is pending launch with funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Vancity credit union.

Here in the Yukon, our commitment goes beyond what we see in other municipalities in Canada. Rather than expecting municipalities to deliver the entire program themselves — funding and more — we are proposing to deliver the program through the Energy branch to provide the financing and hope to work with the municipality to collect the charge with property taxes.

Bill No. 3 is enabling, once again, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities can decide not to opt into the Yukon government program. Municipalities can also design, finance, and offer their own property-assessed clean energy programs, if they wish. They don't have to rely on the Yukon government. If they have the initiative and the desire, they can design their own programming and administer it themselves through the legislation we have before us today.

Mr. Speaker, we will work closely with the Association of Yukon Communities and municipal governments on the program details and agreements that enable this benefit to all Yukon citizens. We will work to address as many of their concerns about the administrative burden as we possibly can. This could include funds to offset the administrative task.

We will convene a working group with municipal officials to work through the details and potential agreement on how to launch the program in their taxing jurisdictions.

I thank the officials from the Department of Community Services and the Department of Justice for their incredible work in preparing this bill under trying conditions over the last two years. I commend Energy, Mines and Resources for their work to consider needs through a meaningful retrofit program. I also thank the many members of the Association of Yukon Communities and municipal governments for stating their general agreement with the overall intent of the program, and I look forward to working with them to address and offset the

associated administrative concerns to deliver this program to Yukoners.

Finally, I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party and her caucus for their support of the program. Yukoners have asked us to work together, and today, we have demonstrated that we can do that for the benefit of all Yukoners.

I now move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be read a second time.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this legislation today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we are where we are today with the legislation before us. This is legislation that has a noble concept and goal behind it. Assisting with the provision of energy retrofits to reduce our greenhouse gases is a cause that we support. However, despite the noble concept and the goals of this legislation, the Minister of Community Services has dropped the ball on actually consulting with the communities on this bill. As a result, the bill before us today is incomplete and flawed.

Now, the minister is trying to hang his hat on the fact that he will consult with communities after the fact, but the problem for him is that, to date, his actions indicate that he will not consult with communities afterward. For example, there is currently a legal requirement for the minister to consult with communities prior to proposing amendments to the *Municipal Act*, and just to quote from section 11 of the *Municipal Act* — and I quote: “The Government of Yukon must consult with the Association of Yukon Communities on any direct amendments that a Minister proposes to this Act.”

Despite this legal requirement to consult communities, AYC has confirmed that this did not occur with this piece of legislation. As the old saying goes, Mr. Speaker, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, and the past behaviour of this Minister of Community Services has been to not actually consult with communities. In fact, it was not until about two weeks ago, when he realized that his lack of communication and working with communities might result in the failure of this legislation, that he began to frantically call and apply pressure to our municipal representatives.

This “go it alone” approach has resulted in several letters from various municipalities indicating to the government that, while they support the concept of the program, they want the government to actually consult with them on the design of the program before it gets rammed through. We have seen the Association of Yukon Communities, Teslin, Watson Lake, and Mayo all send letters raising a number of concerns and asking for this to be deferred. We have also seen a strongly worded letter from the previous Mayor of Whitehorse — who, as a happenstance, also ran for the Liberals in the last spring election — outlining the City of Whitehorse’s concerns with the legislation and the lack of consultation that occurred. More recently, the large majority of the new Whitehorse City Council has also indicated concern with the government’s lack of consultation and the number of outstanding questions about how the program will work.

These are important concerns to reflect on, as the delivery of the program proposed within this legislation is largely reliant on the municipalities to deliver. They are essential partners, and the success of the program depends on them being comfortable and having their concerns addressed. A strong partnership does not start with one level of government refusing to consult until the eleventh hour. A strong partnership will not work when the Minister of Community Services made disparaging remarks about the concerns of municipalities in this Legislative Assembly just a few short weeks ago, in October, which he was later forced to apologize for.

It is entirely the approach of this minister that has led this legislation, which should otherwise have been a slam dunk, teetering on the brink of failure today. The only thing saving this bill is the commitment that I believe I heard the minister make to hold off on bringing this forward and that this bill won’t be passed this fall, which I am sure must be very disappointing to his colleagues and to the Liberal Party.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is a marquee and defining piece of the Liberal government’s agenda, and its failure to pass this fall would represent a stunning indictment of this minister’s combative and vindictive approach. The most unfortunate part of this is, as I have stated, that all municipalities and all the opposition parties agree with the concept of the better buildings program. If the minister had done the proper consultation over the last several months to address the outstanding concerns of the municipalities, then he would have gotten them all onside.

He would have had the mayors in the gallery this afternoon clapping and cheering as this bill received unanimous support, because everyone wants this to go ahead. The mayors and councils are strongly insisting that the government hit the pause button and address these outstanding concerns before passing the legislation.

We are glad to hear the minister admit his approach was flawed and that he is willing to hit the pause button and bring this bill back in the spring — that is, once he has had a chance to do his homework, Mr. Speaker.

This is what municipalities, including my own, have asked for, because they have concerns. These are legitimate concerns and should not be so easily dismissed by the Minister of Community Services — the minister responsible for fostering good relationships with the communities. This should have been an easy win for the minister and the government. Instead, through his own actions, the minister has caused this delay while straining relationships with our municipalities.

We will be voting against this bill until such time as the minister does his job and actually listens to communities. We hope that he and his colleagues will rethink their approach to this and go back to the table with the communities and actually work with them.

Ms. Tredger: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to address this. I believe my colleagues will have further statements on this bill, but in the meantime, I would like to address a couple of the comments I have heard so far on the floor here.

The Minister of Community Services asked: “What is not to like?” about this program. If we are talking about home retrofits, that would be an easy thing to answer. There is nothing not to like about home retrofits. There is nothing not to like about climate action, but we are not talking about that; we are talking about a very specific piece of legislation that is going to have consequences for communities across the Yukon — administrative consequences.

One of the most compelling things I heard, as we talked about this bill, is: What happens if people default on these loans? Are we going to put the burden on tiny municipalities to seize the homes of their constituents, to seize the homes of their friends, families, and neighbours? This is just one example of the sort of consequences that this bill could have, if it goes forward. There are solutions to these; we can work together to find solutions, but that hasn’t been the approach thus far. As my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, said, past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.

I think that is a fair thing to say, and I think that it is fair to have concerns when you haven’t been consulted. To hear that: “Well, it’s okay, because it will be different in the future” — I think that we need evidence for that to be true.

So, I think that municipalities have every right to be concerned about agreeing to a program that they haven’t seen the details of yet.

Another thing that I would like to follow up on is the idea that there will be no obligation for communities to opt in, and I think that is a bit disingenuous. I think that it is important for communities — to put communities in the position of denying their constituents the ability to participate in a program like this is, again, a very, very unfortunate position to put municipalities in, because everyone wants this program to work. Everyone wants to have the opportunity to participate in it, but it needs to be done right; it needs to be done with the consent of all the parties involved. It needs to be done with leadership; it needs to be done with collaboration.

You know, Yukoners are pretty cool people. There are a lot of great things to say about Yukoners. I think that one thing that Yukoners really hate is having things forced on them. I think that Yukoners really hate being told that this is how it has to be. This is an example of the government’s approach. This is not the first time they have taken that approach of forcing things on communities that are unprepared for it, but I do hope that it will be the last. I am an eternal optimist.

I think that we are in a kind of complicated situation where we have this bill — everyone agrees with the intent, but there are real concerns that the municipalities have, and we need time for them to be addressed, and we need time for them to be carefully considered and to find solutions that work for everybody. Something that I really believe is that people know what they need, people know what is best for them, and people know what they need to make something like this work, and that applies to municipalities. They know what they need in order to deliver this program successfully. We need to listen to them; we need to listen to them without pressure; we need to listen to them openly; we need to listen to them without legislation already enacted that can no longer be changed.

I think it was really telling when the minister said that the details will come. How can we vote on a program when we don’t know the details? How can we be expected to support something if the details are coming?

I am really pleased to hear that it is going to come back in the spring. I think that this is a really excellent solution, because that will give municipalities time to have their concerns addressed, to work collaboratively — truly collaboratively, not collaboratively with a stick coming behind, but real collaboration. We very much look forward to supporting this, going forward, as it comes forward in the spring.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the comments of my colleagues so far and the comments from the Minister of Community Services. I would say that there would be some similarity of my content, but certainly, there will be a different approach perhaps.

Yukoners know that there is a climate crisis. Mr. Speaker, they know it because they are feeling the impacts of climate change first-hand. Whether it be the unprecedented flooding Yukoners saw this past summer or the continued natural disasters our neighbours in BC are dealing with, we cannot hide from this reality. The Yukon and the north are warming significantly faster when compared to provinces in the south. Precipitation is projected to increase and become more variable. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was clear: Climate change is happening now and it is caused by human activity. Every jurisdiction, regardless of how small, has a role to play in reducing emissions and combatting the climate crisis.

Reducing emissions is essential to ensure a safe, resilient, and prosperous future for Yukoners now and for generations to come. One of the most important ways that Yukoners can reduce their emissions is through smarter, more efficient heating sources and through retrofitting our existing building stock. Yukoners, of course, are no strangers to cold weather. We have proven ourselves to be innovative in finding heating solutions.

Many Yukoners rely on a variety of heating sources, from electric heat, wood stoves, biomass, and now electric thermal storage systems, to heat their homes and businesses.

As you have heard so far, Madam Deputy Speaker, Bill No. 3 represents an opportunity to provide Yukoners with the tools they need to transition to more efficient heating sources and to retrofit both housing and our general building infrastructure. This will save Yukoners money in the long run and will reduce their individual carbon footprints.

Improving heat retention and energy efficiency is vital for lowering emissions in the territory. *Our Clean Future* commits to 29 actions that support emissions reductions in existing buildings and in the construction of new buildings, with the focus on improving heat retention and energy efficiency.

Not only do these investments help us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but they also help our communities become more climate resilient. Bill No. 3 allows municipalities to opt in, should they choose, and allows Yukoners to access funding at the lowest interest rate in Canada to support energy-

efficient retrofits to their homes or businesses. Bill No. 3 is a key step in supporting *Our Clean Future* actions to lower emissions in our homes and buildings.

As everyone in this House and all Yukoners well know, Yukon experienced record-level floods this year, and we are witnessing the extreme weather events that our neighbours in British Columbia have dealt with and are currently dealing with — suffering the effects of devastating wildfires and historical floods, all within six months of the same year. Seeing the news this morning, we're advised that a lot of the Lower Mainland has received more than double the usual precipitation in November. The areas to the eastern end of the Lower Mainland — Hope and to points east — received approximately 600 millimetres of precipitation in November. The situation in southern British Columbia this week demonstrates the destructive impact that climate change is having and will continue to have on people, homes, businesses, critical infrastructure, and the environment.

As we have heard this afternoon and in the news, a few short weeks ago, countries came together in Glasgow for COP 26. Coastal and island nations shared testimonials of communities being inundated with rising sea levels. Countries closer to the poles provided imagery of dramatic permafrost thaw and receding glaciers. Others shared news of huge wildfires, desertification, and biodiversity loss.

A collective global approach is required. Commitments such as the recently agreed upon Glasgow climate pact are critical in reducing global emissions and keeping average global warming below 1.5 degrees by 2030.

It may, in fact, be too late already, a lot of climate scientists advise. However, Canada and its jurisdictions play a key role in meeting these ambitious targets. Our country played a pivotal role in negotiating this new pact, which includes phasing down fossil fuel subsidies as well as a requirement to phase down coal power.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that very significant coal-fired power plants are still being put on line in India, in China, and in Russia as well. There certainly are huge challenges there. Let's not fool ourselves. We know that, in fact, many countries advocated for wording that included a "phase out" of both fossil-fuel subsidies and coal power, but not unpredictably, nearly 200 signatory countries could not agree on that stronger language.

There were also new commitments to the allocation of resources for loss and damages experienced by countries experiencing climate change right now.

Although small on a global perspective, the Yukon is a piece of this puzzle. Implementing the actions in *Our Clean Future* and the recently announced Yukon Climate Leadership Council clearly demonstrates the Yukon's leadership in tackling climate change. We need to prioritize climate change in our decision-making and in our role in reducing emissions.

To quote probably the world's most prominent youth climate activist, Greta Thunberg: "And the question we must now ask ourselves is: 'What is it that we are fighting for?'"

"Are we fighting to save ourselves and our living planet? Or are we fighting to maintain business as usual?"

"Our leaders say we can have both, but the harsh truth is that that is not possible in practice. The people in power can continue to live in their bubble, filled with fantasies like eternal growth on a finite planet, and technological solutions that will suddenly appear, seemingly out of nowhere, and will erase all of these crises, just like that. All this, while the world is literally burning, on fire. And while the people living on the front lines are still bearing the brunt of the climate crisis.

"They can continue to ignore the consequences of their inaction, but history will judge them poorly and we will not accept it.

"We don't need any more distant non-binding pledges. We don't need any more empty promises. We don't need any more commitments that are full of loopholes and incomplete statistics that ignore historical emissions and climate justice.

"Yet, that is all we are getting. And no, that is not radical to say. Just look at their track record. They have had 26 COPs, they have had decades of blah, blah, blah. And where has that led us?"

"Over 50% of all our CO₂ emissions have occurred since 1990 and about a third since 2005. All this while the media is reporting on what people in power say they are going to do, rather than what they actually do."

Mr. Speaker, it is time for decision makers to do what we say we are going to do. The administrative burden of this new program is not a compelling reason to oppose this legislation. I have heard the concerns raised, certainly. I am listening, but this is an opt-in program where municipalities can choose to participate or not.

Importantly, as well, I understand that this program would also be administered by our government — by the Yukon government — to Yukoners living in unincorporated Yukon communities like Grizzly Valley, Shallow Bay, Ibex Valley, Destruction Bay, Mendenhall, Tagish, Braeburn, and Marsh Lake.

We have also heard from my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, that all efforts will be made by the Yukon government to assist all Yukon municipalities in order to facilitate the successful implementation of this program.

Action H3 of the *Our Clean Future* road map directs our government to provide low-interest financing to support energy-efficiency retrofits to homes and buildings beginning in 2021. I certainly heard where this bill is likely to go.

I certainly encourage those further discussions to occur and for the ongoing consultation and support to occur with all Yukon communities, but the time is now. This is exactly what this bill proposes that we do, and if we don't move reasonably quickly on *Our Clean Future* action item H3, we are at risk of falling behind our stated goals to reach our 2030 objectives.

Mr. Speaker, we can make significant headway by reducing emissions where we can, and we can do that today. We have heard often in this House that, in Yukon, it is estimated that approximately 75 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions come from heating and transportation. In my view, this retrofit program is candidly relatively low-hanging fruit as there is most certainly heavier lifting ahead.

The question then becomes: Are we committed to substantially reducing emissions? The confidence and supply agreement unequivocally says yes, and we know now that both the Yukon Party and the Yukon NDP support all elements of this agreement. Our government and the Third Party have agreed on the urgency to address the climate crisis. Together with the Third Party, we have ambitious goals to reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. I look forward to continuing to work with the Third Party, and specifically with the Member for Whitehorse Centre, to work to achieve these necessary goals in our work with the Yukon Climate Leadership Council. We will almost certainly fail in achieving these goals if we continue to play politics on enabling legislation that will meaningfully reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Will we still be playing the blame game by 2030? I hope, for the sake of all Yukoners, that the answer to that is an unequivocal no.

Mr. Speaker, we are out of time.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it is sometimes a fascinating route how we get to places, and today I can tell you that I am really pleased to say that I am in a different spot than I would have been had there not been a willingness of my Liberal colleagues to work together to see a different outcome.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it is one of those things — when you have conversations with municipal leaders and they all say that they understand the importance and believe in the importance of retrofits, but it is also important to hear when they say that they had concerns. They had concerns. Ministers can list out consultation meetings, they can list out conversations, and they can list out actions, but really, things like this are relationships. I am relieved to know that today — I hope that what is happening right now between the Minister of Community Services and his department and municipalities is the beginning of a new relationship — it will be different and that there is a willingness to work together.

I spent a good portion of yesterday calling the mayors — municipal leaders. There are seven in the territory, and I spoke to each of them because I wanted to get an idea of where they were at. I am relieved to say that today, with the agreement that has been struck, we are going to debate this in second reading and that the Minister of Community Services is committing to going out and working with municipalities to develop the regulations for this program and then to bring this bill back for Committee of the Whole and third reading in the spring.

To me, this is an incredible success. It means that municipalities who understand the importance of retrofits and how critical they are — we had the Minister of Highways and Public Works talking about the importance. No one disputes the importance of retrofits. I have stood in this House for 10 years, and I have talked about all of the programs that I have accessed. It started with the Yukon Housing Corporation. I borrowed \$35,000 and put six inches of insulation on my house. I talked about how \$35,000 wasn't enough. Just prior to the 2016 election, that program expanded up to \$50,000, and so I paid some off and I accessed that full amount. Guess what I put in my house? An air-source heat pump — because you need

people at the beginning of these things to make sure that they work and to make sure that the technology makes sense here. I was so committed to it that I have a relationship with the Energy Solutions Centre because they monitor my heat pump. I signed up to the Yukon Energy Corporation's hot-water tank program, but unfortunately, because of COVID, the company that they had signed up with went under. So, no one disputes the importance of retrofits, especially me.

At this point in time, I sit here having paid just about \$75,000 to make my house more energy efficient. My house was built in 1958 by the army. Let me tell you that, in 1958, they didn't really care about insulation and the army was paying the fuel bill. I can tell you that when I bought the house in 2012, I cared about insulation and I cared about the fuel bill.

I feel like what has happened is that there has been a compromise. I did not want to see this bill die today. I did not want to see the potential of this program die today. I did everything in my power to make sure that wouldn't happen, so I am grateful that my pleas were heard and that what I was offering was accepted. I tabled a letter today highlighting the Yukon NDP's commitment to Bill No. 3, with our expectation that the Liberal government work with communities to develop those regulations together.

There is a long laundry list of things that I could highlight as the problems that I had, but we're not having that debate right now because a compromise has been reached. I want to talk about the potentials, and I want to talk about the future. I know that municipal councils believe in the importance of climate change and climate action. Not a single person I spoke to yesterday didn't recognize the importance of building retrofits, but they all had questions. I am very proud to say that there is this opportunity now for the Yukon government to work with the Association of Yukon Communities and officials to develop a program that works for everybody, and I think that this is a success. It is an example of how we can work together in this House. It is an example of how one level of government can work with other levels of government, and I think that this is important.

Today I tabled the letter saying that we would be supporting the second reading of this bill today, and we will, but we have expectations. We have expectations that the Yukon government will be working with municipal governments. We have expectations that those conversations — although they won't be easy — will continue. They are important. We look forward to seeing the regulations come in the spring. We look forward to understanding what a better building program is as opposed to just a title that has been used in advertising. I want to see the meat on those bones. I want to understand what the program is. Today there is a real opportunity for that.

I want to remind my colleagues in this House that we all have a responsibility of supporting the municipalities around us. If we believe in government-to-government relationships, we need to make sure that we do it in a respectful way, that it is not downloaded, and that it's done together. I think that there is an opportunity for that now.

I thank my colleagues for that opportunity to work together. I am looking forward to this coming back in the spring. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have just a few comments that I would like to put on the record as we debate this bill. First of all, I want to commend those folks who have done the early work on this at Community Services with the support of Energy, Mines and Resources. Upon the 2016 election, one of the major commitments was to look at the tens of millions of dollars that could be invested into retrofits, understanding that this was something that we felt would make some of the biggest impacts. Again, it would reduce our energy use. Having spent some time working with Yukon Energy Corporation and now working alongside the minister who is responsible for that, we know just how fragile things are when it comes to energy. It is important for us to make sure that we have the best use of the energy that we have. We have had a growing economy and a growing population, so that brings challenges.

As my colleague touched on, we want to ensure that we are using money to the best of our ability when it comes to climate change. So, as stated earlier, doing a retrofit on a home and a building is much more feasible than building more infrastructure to produce energy.

There were a couple of comments made, and I just want to get on the record with this. In 2019, I spent time on the road with the previous Minister of Community Services, now the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, going out to rural Yukon. Normally, how we would handle those meetings is that there would be a number of items that would be priorities for Community Services and then there would be a number of items that would be talked about from Energy, Mines and Resources. I think that it is important to say that I sat during the exchange and this dialogue. I am not saying that everybody walked away with every question answered, but I was party to those discussions and to the exchanges that happened with municipal officials and discussions about what a program like this would look like.

I think that the current minister was coming into a situation where there was a lot of dialogue that had taken place. I don't know if it was with every municipality. I can say that I sat in on a number of meetings and I did see good dialogue around this topic.

I think that the other thing that is important to say is that, although it is a new program that focuses on retrofits, we have similar programs that exist, and so I urge members of the Third Party, as we get ready to go into the spring — and there were a number of questions posed about what is going to happen, if municipalities are going to take on this risk that is connected to the retrofit, and how we are going to handle this — to get their research done.

I would direct them in two ways. First of all, our well-drilling program is a good one, because I can remember the Member for Lake Laberge, about a decade ago, coming in to meet with members of the City of Whitehorse and having discussions about that, saying, “I have constituents who are just before the Takhini bridge, inside the City of Whitehorse, inside

the municipality, and we need to figure out how we can support those folks.”

As I understand it, in 2015, I think, there was work done by the previous government and I believe that Mayor Brodie at the time had spoken publicly about that and it was really about trying to get a number of municipalities to work with the Yukon government on that item. I know that it took a number of years — originally starting with the Member for Lake Laberge representing his constituents and then, I think, probably more broadly. Others could speak to this better. So, I do think that this exists — and a mechanism like that.

The other one, I would say, is the rural electrification. As I understand it, individuals work with the Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Development Corporation, and Community Services, I believe. In that program, I think that folks can leverage up to 25 percent of the value of their home, and then they can use that and invest that into the infrastructure that they need to electrify their homes, and I think that they can use that, as well, for telecommunications, if I remember correctly.

These programs exist, and I think that they have worked well, from what I understand. I am certainly open to be corrected, but that's my recollection. Spending some time with officials back in 2019 and spending time with my colleague and going through different iterations of how to make sure that we can make the best impact around retrofits — these are some of the things that were contemplated — these previous programs — and he could probably speak to it much better than I can.

I also believe that we have to take into consideration what this not only does for our energy use, but what it does for our economy. As municipalities feel comfortable and they come on board with this — the same with other rural LACs — what we're going to see is just a real spreading out of economic opportunity in areas — whether it's construction for capital projects, maybe shared infrastructure, municipal infrastructure, First Nation infrastructure, homes — and maybe there is mining activity and maybe there is tourism activity, depending on that community. But I think that this can be a very significant impact to communities. Homes are healthier, they are using less energy, they are lasting longer, and all the while it's creating very localized job opportunities. We know — we discuss it all the time; we debate it here — that there's a need for housing, so I think that, when you take into consideration some of the key skill sets, you are really providing more opportunities for contractors, carpenters, and subtrades to continue to flourish in those communities and to have more opportunities. So, it's not just maybe one or two big capital projects, but now they are doing retrofits, and they are still, of course, having opportunities to build out other contracts for the private sector or for governments or having the opportunity to just increase the scope of work that they can do in their community. I think that this is a very positive thing.

The minister touched on the fact that folks can opt in — and I think there was some rebuttal around that. My interpretation of that is that it's not about a municipality being put in position to feel uncomfortable because other municipalities — I'm trying to be very sensitive on the words

that I'm using. Every municipality is going to be in a different place on priorities; they are going to be in a different place on capacity. There are things they might be working on now, and that is what's driving how they are identifying their priorities.

I will give you a great example: the work that is being done by municipalities now on incentivizing affordable housing. Look at the municipal grants that are provided. That was something, from my recollection, that was started in Whitehorse and, through the discussions — whether it be at the Association of Yukon Communities' table or just through discussions with colleagues — we saw municipality by municipality take that on when they were ready. We all know that affordable housing was an absolutely significant and extremely important issue. It wasn't that municipalities felt that, by not adopting that right away, they were going to be frowned upon, because, of course, every community needs affordable housing.

I think that their constituents and Yukoners were understanding that, when municipalities were ready, they could take that on. My sense, from what the minister said, was that some municipalities will be better prepared. They might have a bigger staff; they might have bigger teams of public servants. I think that all those things are factors that we have to take into consideration when municipalities take this on.

My colleague, who did this as an academic, looked at different ways to adapt around climate change. I think that most municipalities — not every one — have adaptation plans. I think that there is a wide range of items. All of that drives priorities within organizations — and even more now, after seeing what we have experienced in the Yukon this past year and what our neighbours are experiencing yesterday, today, in previous weeks, and during the summer in British Columbia.

I think that we are going in the right direction. I think that the collaboration, as was touched upon by members of the opposition, is a good thing. I think that it is always a challenge when there are a number of new municipal elected officials and they are getting their feet under them — and, of course, this gives an opportunity for greater dialogue on the topic. My sense has always been that we want to get to a place where the regulations, of course — this piece of legislation is only a few pages, but the greater detail of the relationship and the bilateral agreement is really anchored in the regulations.

There will be some good work done over the winter. We all get that coming together to work on things in a collaborative, parallel effort, with some common ground, is always where folks want to go. I don't think that this is a unique situation. I think that it is work that everyone tries to do every day. It is not always possible, but I think that it is what everyone hopefully strives to do every day.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for letting me put a couple of comments on the record. I am glad that we are going to see this legislation and have a greater discussion about it in the spring of 2022. I think that it is extremely important that we have this in place. I think that there are a lot of Yukoners who are going to be very excited with this opportunity to use a program with such cheap money — “cheap money” is an economic term — and then, of course, rolling that into an

opportunity for a significant return on investment based on money that they put into their assets.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is a really important piece of legislation. I have heard several members here today talk about the importance of this legislation. I want to thank everyone who has talked about its importance. I also want to thank municipalities that have said that this is important.

When you look at us as a territory and where we are using energy, especially fossil fuels, and creating greenhouse gas emissions, the number one sector is transportation. Number two is heat. I think about one-fifth of our emissions are from that sector alone. Of course, going forward nowadays as we build new homes, we know to build them better insulated and more energy efficient. Let's do that so that we don't need as much energy. I remember when, about 15 years ago, the community of Old Crow reached out to me in my engineering climate capacity and asked me about the heating of homes and what the best solution was, so whether it should be bringing in the high-efficiency, Toyo-stove style of heat or to harvest willow nearby and to use wood. My answer to them was to insulate. If we insulate, then we don't need the energy. This is what's so beautiful about these types of solutions.

Yesterday, I tabled Efficiency Canada's report for the Yukon. Mostly, it's about the provinces. If you follow the link in the one sheet that I tabled, you will see all of this information about the provinces. One of the big conversations that they have is around buildings and how to make them more efficient.

It's easy to understand that when you build a new building, we now know to put a little more money in it and it will cost a lot less over time, but we weren't doing that so much. I think that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King talked about the old army construction and that insulation was really not big on the list.

When I was elected into this Chamber — I think we were sworn in five years ago — this building here was being energy retrofitted. We looked at, first of all, government buildings, institutional buildings, and how we could make them more efficient. We also worked with municipalities and First Nation governments on how to get them funding to make their buildings more energy efficient, and I began to work on this issue because our building stock isn't just these big buildings; it is each of our homes and it is our businesses. So, how do we help them to get these improvements as well?

There is a reason for this. You can get good payback on this. Once you have made that investment — yes, it costs some dollars up front, but it pays back over time. The longer that you have the building, the more it pays back.

We built on the work of the Energy Solutions Centre to try to look at residential and commercial homes. They have programs where they incentivize Yukoners to access some funds to improve the efficiency of their homes. They are a terrific shop, and that's a good place to start.

As the Member for Porter Creek South just said, in 2019 — in the time that I was Minister of Community Services, I tried to make it to every municipality and community twice a year. I started having these conversations about working

together to bring in a program that would help to get to citizens' homes and businesses.

In the 2019 throne speech in the fall, two years ago, there was just a reference. It wasn't about which program we would run; it was about this is good to get to — to move from our institutional buildings to homes and businesses. Then I went back and began my conversation in earnest with the Association of Yukon Communities. The thing that I talked to them about was a program called the "property assessed clean energy program". It has an acronym and I am going to use it today. It is called the "PACE program" — property assessed clean energy. This is used across Canada. I will, just for a second, list off some of the places where I know that it is being used, and in these places, it is run entirely by the municipalities: Toronto, Saanich, Rocky Mountain House, Devon, Saskatoon, Halton Hills, Vaughan, Guelph, Ottawa, Stratford, Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Wolfville, Bridgewater, Amherst, Digby, Lunenburg, Barrington, Yarmouth, New Glasgow, Cumberland County, Inverness County — in fact, there is a PACE Maritimes program that is set up. It is used across the provinces and across North America. It is a great program.

I have a quote here from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' president, Garth Frizzell — or at least he was at the time — and I quote: "Canadians want new ways to make their homes energy efficient and affordable. Through this expanded funding offer, the FCM's Green Municipal Fund is enabling more local action that can help achieve Canada's climate change goals. GMF has the frontline expertise to empower municipalities, big and small, to get results on the ground. Today's announcement with our federal partners helps communities of all sizes build better lives for Canadians with more energy-efficient homes."

So, we have this program, which is being used across the country, and we have the Energy Solutions Centre here, and I went and had a conversation with the Association of Yukon Communities. In February 2020, I sat down — I typically met with the association president in one-on-one meetings four times a year, and I met with the full association four additional times a year. I met with then-president Tara Wheeler.

I talked about how this program is used across the country and how the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which the Association of Yukon Communities is a part of, said, "Here is a great program." What I heard back that day was: "How about the Yukon Housing Corporation?" I said, "Okay" and pressed pause. I came out of that meeting and went back and formed a working group with the Yukon Housing Corporation, with Energy, Mines and Resources — because they have the Energy Solutions Centre — and with Community Services, and I asked us to do some due diligence around this and to look at the Yukon Housing Corporation, because the Association of Yukon Communities asked us to. We went off and did that work.

We took a look at it and came back and said that the PACE program, through local improvement charges, is better than trying to use Yukon Housing Corporation. There were basically three reasons. The first one was that, if you go with Yukon

Housing Corporation, we could get to homes, but if we went with the PACE program and local improvement charges, we could get to people's homes and commercial business properties, so that was a big difference. Then we looked at how the loans would be affixed. If we went through Yukon Housing Corporation, the loans are to a person — an individual — but if you use the PACE program, they are affixed to the property so that when you sell the property, the improvement and any outstanding debt is sold with it. There are far fewer defaults on those types of loans.

The third reason was kind of the kicker. The Department of Community Services explained to me that the interest rates we could get for the PACE program were much, much better than the rates through the Yukon Housing Corporation. The current Minister of Community Services recently gave me those numbers again. It's 0.25 percent interest if you use something like the local improvement charges and the PACE program — what we are proposing here today in this bill — or it's 2.5 percent if you go through the Yukon Housing Corporation. It's a huge difference. Those are really big reasons. You would get more security through the PACE program, more flexibility, and more breadth. They were just really big reasons.

I went back to the Association of Yukon Communities and explained that this is a better program. Then I said to them that we want to do this with them. They said that they were worried — which we have talked about now — about this download. I am going to try to talk about it a little bit.

The program here would not be the same as it is run in the rest of the country. Here, it is the Energy Solutions Centre, Energy, Mines and Resources, which would do the interaction with the folks, would go out and do the testing, and would see whether there is an advantage to retrofitting or not, how much advantage, and then would come back, and we would loan the money, and then the last step is the repayment of the loan as per the terms that would be signed, and that needs to be the taxing authority. We, the Yukon government, are the taxing authority in many communities that are unincorporated — in all the communities that are unincorporated. So, we think this is good for Yukoners, but we didn't want to burden the municipalities, so we're working with them to deal with that.

We talked about what kind of solutions we could have. I know that there were — each time I had a new meeting with the Association of Yukon Communities, some would come back and say, "Hey, how about Yukon Housing Corporation?" I would go back, and I would say, "Yes, we looked at it, and it's not as good. It's not as good."

We want to come forward in all of unincorporated Yukon; we want to make it available for you in municipalities. We think it's a good program, but we will not force you to do it.

Let me talk about this act for a second and just quote from it. Here it says under — well, it's talking about amendments to the *Municipal Act*, and we would change it to add in: "A municipality and the Government may agree in writing to make the retrofitting buildings program available in the municipality."

Then, just a couple paragraphs later: “The Government may construct a local improvement under the retrofiting buildings program in any municipality that is a party to a retrofiting buildings program agreement...”

So, no one is required to do this. This is enabling legislation. It’s about creating the possibility, but it would allow us, in unincorporated areas, to start. And voting against it, of course, will not allow that.

Okay, after that, I went on a fall tour. I went to every community. There are eight municipalities. I spoke to every one of them, and all of them said, “This is a good program; we need to have this conversation with our officials.” I said, “Okay, they’re probably going to say to you that there is this download on the collection side, so let’s talk that out.”

What hasn’t come out is a couple points, because I’ve heard some folks — I heard the Member for Watson Lake saying that there was a refusal to consult. I hope I’m getting it across that, in every meeting I’ve had over the past two years with municipalities, we have talked about this. In fact, I had a weekly meeting with the president, Mayor Gord Curran. I have a lot of respect for the AYC and the work they do and the presidents that I have worked with, including councillor Wheeler and Mayor Curran, and in our weekly calls, there were always two subjects that we talked about: One was COVID, and one was better buildings.

Coming up to this spring, as part of our commitment under *Our Clean Future*, we said, “Let’s get to this program; it’s a really important program; let’s get it in.” We put it in *Our Clean Future* as a commitment to get done this year, and the president of AYC approached me and asked me to please not bring in this legislation in the spring. And the president asked me to hold off for a bit now, that we need to have more dialogue. And I said okay, and we pushed it to this fall. Today, we are going to do the same thing, because we really want municipalities to be on board.

I do want to note for everybody here that we have met extensively and talked often and deeply about this issue. That doesn’t mean that we always agree or that there are not hard conversations to have — there are — but we are working together, have worked together, and everybody agrees that this is the right thing to do. So, what we’ve said all along is that we should find a way to make this a win-win for municipalities, to make it more than fair for municipalities.

I also need to note for us that, as we push this, we lose something, too. We lose that ability — voting against this today is basically saying, “Sorry, no” to Lake Laberge, no to Haines Junction — who said that they would like to go — no to Beaver Creek, no to Marsh Lake, no to Mount Lorne, no to Carcross, no Tagish, and no to Pelly. It’s going to be unfortunate for me, if I hear a “no” vote, because what I also heard from the Official Opposition is that they believe in this program and they believe it is important to engage, which I think I have given ample evidence of. It doesn’t mean that we always agree, but it does mean that we have, for a couple of years now, been working to find this solution, and when we have new elections, I listen to Whitehorse City Council. I would love to sit down with the councillors. I would love to talk them through why this is a

good program, why it is a good program for the City of Whitehorse, and how we have engaged on it and what we want to do to try to find solutions.

The Member for Porter Creek South was talking about the rural well program. I can tell you that municipalities have said to me that they are worried about the support around the rural well program. I said, “Perfect; now is the time when we can try to sort that out. As we deal with this new solution, we can try to fix that one, too.”

What I said to them at all times is that we want a solution that is more than fair. Voting “no” today says this is not urgent. It says that we don’t care about these other communities, these unincorporated communities. Voting “yes” today doesn’t say you have to do it; it says, “Let’s work together to do it.”

The part that I think is missing in all this conversation is the public. When I talk to the public, they would like to retrofit.

By the way, I heard the Member for Whitehorse Centre talk about the risks of this stuff. When you do these retrofits — if you get the right buildings — you actually can have more energy savings than the dollars that you would be paying back for that loan, where we’re just missing that loan, those dollars, so there could actually be an advantage. Certainly, after the five, 10, or 15 years they choose to pay back the loan, after then, it is all gravy, right? Because you are still getting that energy savings every year after that. That’s why this is so important.

All of that work would happen through the Energy Solutions Centre, which is different from how it’s done in other provinces.

I am a huge supporter of this. I have always been a huge supporter of municipalities. I will continue to be a huge supporter of our communities. I have worked tirelessly with them and will continue to do so, because I see them as partners. I believe that there is a solution for them. I am eager to work with the Minister of Community Services, working with those municipalities to find a good solution for them. I think there is one out there. Today, in our compromise — as per the letter that was tabled — after second reading, we will leave the bill on the Order Paper so that it is not passed, and we will wait for the spring. Gosh, this is an important program. It’s going to be good for Yukoners. I look forward to finding those solutions with municipalities.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to my colleagues for their comments today. I hadn’t originally planned to speak to this, but through the course of today’s debate, I feel somewhat compelled to respond.

I want to start by speaking to the comments that the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has made. I think that he may be surprised to find that I agree with much of what he just said. I think that this program as conceptualized is a good one. I agree that retrofits are a good approach to reduce our energy needs and address our climate change actions. I think that working with municipalities is a good idea. I actually agree with the minister that he conducted some fairly sound consultation. I have talked to a number of municipal leaders, both mayors and councillors, who felt that the former Minister of Community Services — the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — engaged with them meaningfully,

listened to them, and when they proposed something, he took it seriously, went back, and thought about it. He ably outlined some of that.

What I have heard is that where things have gone wrong is with the new minister, because with the new minister, that approach has not been here. What we have seen from the current minister has been an aggressive and adversarial approach, one that sees the minister calling mayors and councillors frantically over the last few weeks telling them that, if they don't support this legislation, they don't take climate change seriously, and also that, if they don't get on board with this, this whole project will die and we will never see action on this for years to come. All of these things simply were not only inappropriate, but they were not true. That's why I disagree with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' point that a "no" vote on this is a vote against action, because, as we know, the Liberal government has admitted their faults here and reached this compromised agreement that I think was fairly benevolent of the Third Party to offer to them.

We are not going to see this action into the spring anyway, so when we say that we are not supporting this, it's not that we don't support the program idea. It's not that we don't support the notion of retrofits. It's not that we don't support what the former minister has done. We do not support and cannot countenance the approach taken by the current minister to bully his way in and try to table this legislation without talking to folks and waiting until the last minute to make calls to impress upon recently elected councillors that their input isn't taken seriously and, quite frankly, to provide information that I believe was inaccurate.

I also took note of the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation's comments about the rural well program, which I thought was a good point, because when we did the rural well program, it was something very similar to this bill that we have before us today. The notable difference, though, was that when we made changes to these very same acts to accommodate the changes to the rural well program, we actually worked with municipalities meaningfully. In fact, every municipality, after that was passed, supported this. I would note that, at the time, every political party supported that bill to make changes to the municipal and assessment and taxation acts, similar to what we see here today.

I think that if we look back, we can learn an instructive lesson about how this could have been better. When changes were made to make changes to the rural well program, the Yukon government put forward a number of options to municipalities, to the AYC, and said, "Which of these models do you want to move forward on?" The AYC provided feedback, and Yukon government then made legislative changes based on the feedback received from AYC. The result, Mr. Speaker, was that there was unanimous support. All municipalities got on board; all political parties got on board. It was a coup for the Yukon government; it was a coup for the Yukon citizens who got to access this program. I think that it was somewhat unheralded because of its success. It was something that has just become a normal course of business.

In this particular case, we see a unique circumstance where, because of the minister's approach — because of his adversarial approach — we have seen municipalities pushed with their back against the wall and they have to write letters to us, copying the leader of the Third Party and me, to explain their concerns and ask insistently for a pause and time to reflect. That's what we have always wanted to provide to them.

I told the AYC just a few weeks ago that I support the program; I just don't support the approach taken by the minister. I think that there needs to be more thorough consultation.

As I'm reminded by my colleagues, not only did the current minister offend several municipalities with his comments to them directly, but also it was no secret — and they all listened to the audio transcripts of the House where the current minister mocked municipalities for their concerns. Of course, my colleague put forward a motion urging him to apologize for those insulting comments that he made on the floor of the Legislature earlier this Sitting.

Whether or not the minister apologized is something that I will leave to him to explain, but I hope that he did because his comments were taken with quite a great deal of offence by a lot of municipalities.

There is a model before us. The rural well program is an example of one that could have been emulated. This is a project that has broad political support from the various political parties. The previous minister did a pretty good job of connecting with municipalities and engaging with them, seeking their input, responding to their input. When they asked for a pause and some time to reflect, he granted that. That has not been the approach that we have seen since the current minister came to the helm of this department. That's why we find ourselves in this situation.

I am pleased that the government has admitted that they are wrong and has agreed to back down, to leave this bill on the Order Paper until the spring. They have agreed to take the municipalities seriously and engage with them through working groups and other ways. I do look forward to the changes that the government will make in its approach.

If I can leave the government with a bit of advice, what I would suggest is that, rather than have the Minister of Community Services leading this work, I would recommend that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources lead this work in engaging with municipalities. I think that he will have a lot more success in building support among municipalities for what the government wants to do and building support for what should be a program broadly supported by many Yukoners and by all political parties.

We will be voting against this bill. We know that it is a symbolic vote more than anything because of the agreement reached between the Liberals and the NDP to postpone this bill until the spring. We are glad to see it coming back in the spring. Even if we had voted it down, the government could still have brought it back in the spring.

Of course, all that it would require would be unanimous support under our Standing Orders to bring forward a bill that has been voted down. Based on the comments from the NDP

and the Yukon Party, I think that there would have been no problem at all in achieving unanimous consent if the government is able to address the significant concerns of municipalities.

This notion that the minister has told to some municipalities — I noted in the letter that was tabled from the Mayor of Carmacks that the Mayor of Carmacks was led to believe that, if this didn't pass this fall, no action could ever be taken again and that this program would die. Of course, that was incorrect. We will leave it to the minister to explain why he provided that inaccurate information to the Mayor of Carmacks.

In the meantime, I encourage the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to take a leadership role in this work. I encourage him to work with the municipalities and build on the successful consultation that he had led over the last few years. I encourage the current minister to steer clear, because his approach to this has soured the water, has soured relationships with a number of municipal leaders, and I think that he has a done a great disservice to his government in his adversarial and vitriolic approach to this.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we will be voting against this bill. I do look forward to seeing it come back in the spring. I'm sure that if the government lives up to the commitments that they have made to the NDP, we will be supporting the bill in the spring. Again, all of this is contingent on the government getting this work done, doing the hard work that it takes to build support among municipal leaders for whom this is a very important issue — and to not be so dismissive of the concerns that the municipalities have raised. With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to bringing this back in the spring and seeing that program developed in 2022.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, today marks a victory for Yukoners. As legislators, some of us are working together to address climate change and reduce the cost of operating our homes and businesses. Today the Leader of the Third Party committed in writing to support this legislation at second reading this afternoon, and today the Leader of the Third Party committed in writing to support the passage of this through Committee of the Whole and third reading in the Legislature in the spring. I thank her for that unambiguous commitment.

Today we are taking real action on climate change for Yukoners. This is what Yukoners have asked us to do — to work together to solve the biggest issues facing society.

I appreciate the compliments that the Leader of the Official Opposition has for my colleague. I agree with him wholeheartedly. He is indeed a wonderful MLA and minister, and I count my blessings every day for the opportunity that I have had to work with him and indeed all of my colleagues on this side of the House.

Once again, though, I am having a hard time following the line of reasoning from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

He supports the program; he's voting against it now, but he will vote for it in the spring. Once again, in this House, the Yukon Party is going it alone. Today, they are still working against Yukoners.

The Yukon Party, of course, denied climate change was happening. It opposed a carbon tax. It refused to respect or work with First Nation governments. The Yukon Party supported fracking for gas in the Peel watershed in the north Yukon, so today the Yukon Party is still demonstrating its contempt for the environment and for taking action on climate change.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Today, it will vote against a program that brings tangible benefits for Yukoners on climate change. It lowers the cost of heating their homes and businesses, and it improves the economy. It builds capacity in rural Yukon communities. We now know that the Yukon Party still does not support this climate change legislation and would like us to push it off indefinitely; however, I have to believe that the Member for Lake Laberge and the Member for Kluane have some support for these changes, since the better buildings program would be available to the majority of their constituents in Grizzly Valley, Ibex Valley, Braeburn, Mendenhall, Haines Junction, and Destruction Bay. If they vote against these legislative changes and essentially their constituents, I can only assume that the leader has asked them, as a collective, to vote against this and against their respective ridings.

When these changes pass in the Spring Sitting, we hope to have the better buildings loan program ready for the summer construction season, which, as I have said, will be an opt-in program. Let me say that again — it will be an opt-in program for municipalities. No municipality will be forced to do anything as a result of the changes we are proposing here today. What it will do, however, is allow us to deliver this program to unincorporated areas of Yukon, such as Marsh Lake, Ibex Valley, Tagish, Grizzly Valley, Destruction Bay, Mendenhall, Keno, and others. It will also allow us to work out an agreement with Haines Junction and Carmacks, which have already expressed their support for the program, so that they can partner with us to deliver these low-interest, energy-efficient loans to their residents.

For the remaining communities, we hope that some will come on board — maybe all of them — after we spend the next few months ironing out the details of the program and how best to address their lingering concerns. If we can't reach that agreement with all municipalities over the coming months, we will still continue to work with them to find a way to get them to opt into the program of their own volition.

I just want to acknowledge that action on climate change will never be easy, and it will never be free, and it will never be without some work. It will also never be without opposition, but we can't allow this to stop us from moving forward. We need to be strong and to push forward for what we know is right. We owe it to the generations coming up behind us. We should never have to explain to them that we could not act because it was too controversial or that it was too much of a burden.

I just want to, once again, thank the Leader of the Third Party and her caucus office for supporting these changes in the program that will be created. In my eyes, and I am sure in the eyes of most Yukoners, you have shown fortitude and given a firm “no” to inaction.

So, this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, we have heard the thoughts of Yukon politicians and the concerns of municipalities, but do you know whom we have not heard from this afternoon? The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Yukon Federation of Labour, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce and its members, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and all of its members, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and its members, the Yukon Conservation Society, residents of Carmacks, Haines Junction, Grizzly Valley, Marsh Lake, Tagish, Carcross, Destruction Bay, and all of unincorporated Yukon, all of Yukon’s First Nations — all of whom have been not only in support of this program, but also in support of dramatic action on climate change. This afternoon, we have actually taken a step. Our colleagues in the New Democrat caucus and us are taking action on climate change.

We also haven’t heard from George, Ryan, Gurdev, Sascha, Brenda, Christine, and Wayne — everyday Yukoners who are looking for a way to fix up their homes and lower their heating costs, who are asking for action on climate change. We haven’t heard from Lawson, Kalen, Mabel, and a host of other children. You can simply insert their names here, because there are literally hundreds of them who are going to inherit a world more dynamic and challenging than the stable, calm one that I rode my bike and skateboard and other various contraptions around the streets in five decades ago. Frankly, they are why we are here today. They are why we are talking about this today.

You have heard the extent of the conversations over this better building proposal over the last two years or so, both from my colleague and from my comments, my consultation, and my colleagues. And yet, the positions haven’t substantially changed. We heard from the outset that there is an administrative burden, and I understand that. I have immense respect for the Association of Yukon Communities — indeed, all communities — and the work that they do on behalf of Yukon citizens. I have heard the concerns, particularly the concern of the administrative burden, and I have committed to the association and to municipalities that we will deal with that problem.

I said it in every conversation I have had since I took this office. I said it to them in person and in their communities. I said it in writing to the association and to them, both former councillors and mayors and the current councillors and mayors. I said, without any qualification, that we want to deal with this problem and make sure that our municipalities are whole. That hasn’t changed in the six months that I have been in this role. It hasn’t changed in the two years that my colleague had this job. It hasn’t changed one iota.

I have never, ever considered the administrative burden a barrier, because I know that there are solutions to these problems. It will take talking together and coming up —

assessing what the real problem is. What is the burden? How do we deal with it? How much money? How many staff will it take to alleviate this problem for municipalities? That’s all it comes down to. We’re willing to work with them to do that. I have been absolutely crystal clear from the beginning about that, as has my colleague.

I don’t accept that this barrier is insurmountable in the least. It is something that we have to sit down, define, and deal with. I’m happy to do that over the coming months. I’m very glad we’re at this position, Mr. Speaker, where we can actually sit down, roll up our sleeves, and start working out these problems, actually defining what they are and work them through so that this program can be rolled out to Yukoners and we can start to tackle our greenhouse gas emissions and make our home and housing stock better for all.

As I’ve said, in an emergency, we have to assess the problems, solve them, and then deliver the programs to resolve them. All problems have solutions. We have to define them, and we have to find those solutions. In this case, we will find them, absolutely. I have no doubt.

We need to solve these problems, Mr. Speaker, and actually get on with the task of starting to drop our greenhouse gas emissions, because we have to prevent another Marsh Lake; we have to prevent more Lyttons; we have to do more to prevent more Chilliwacks.

Most important of all, we have to do it for Lawson, Kalen, Mabel, for their future.

Our government is committed to tackling climate change. With their clear and unfettered support for this bill, the NDP have shown a commitment to climate change. All Yukoners — indeed, all Canadians — are impacted by the climate emergency, and we need to work in partnership to meet the targets in this strategy, *Our Clean Future*.

To do that, we have to work together. We have to work together in this Legislative Assembly. We have to work together in our communities. We have to work together in this entire territory and across the country. Working together is what Yukoners asked us to do in the last election. That’s what some of us have pledged to do this afternoon. That’s a win for the climate; it’s a win for Yukoners and municipalities alike.

I look forward to working with municipalities and continuing the good work we are doing in partnership over the coming months — the good work and partnerships I have committed to and fostered since taking on this role earlier this year.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and wish everybody a great afternoon.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.
Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.
Mr. Dixon: Disagree.
Mr. Kent: Disagree.
Ms. Clarke: Disagree.
Mr. Cathers: Disagree.
Ms. McLeod: Disagree.
Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.
Mr. Hassard: Disagree.
Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.
Ms. White: Agree.
Ms. Blake: Agree.
Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 3 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. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, 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 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Education — *continued*

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I would like to welcome back to the Legislative Assembly our officials for the

Department of Education, Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan and Andrea McIntyre, director of Finance. Thank you so much for being here again today for continuing debate on Vote 3 under Bill No. 202.

I have a number of legislative returns prepared that I will submit tomorrow, but I wanted to go over some of them today since I have a few minutes at the beginning of the debate today. Again, I will be submitting the ones that I am going over today, but also others that I likely will not get to, but may get to during the debate. I do understand that the Official Opposition is wanting to focus on early learning and childcare today. The answers that I am bringing forward today are with regard to debate that we have already had on Vote 3.

I am going to start with the Yukon First Nation school board trustee eligibility. There was a question that we have prepared a return for regarding voting eligibility for First Nation school board trustees. In June 2021, Government of Yukon announced and signed an agreement respecting education and the establishment of the First Nation school board in Yukon.

Again, as I speak about the First Nation school board, I really believe that 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 such a key area in our efforts toward reconciliation, so this is such an important piece of work that we're doing in the Department of Education. I just wanted to reiterate that.

Under the framework agreement, there are two clauses that I am going to go through. First, the residents of the board's education area will be those residents of the Yukon whose ancestral language is a First Nation language. In addition — this is another clause within the framework — to residents of the board's education area, any Yukon student in a community that is served only by a school operated by the board will have the right to be enrolled in the school, and the parents of such a school will be eligible to participate in board elections and be nominated to become a trustee in accordance with the act.

The Department of Education has interpreted the previous sections to mean that, for the initial First Nation school board trustee elections, only those residents of the Yukon whose ancestral language is a First Nation language will have the right to vote and run as trustees.

For the next and subsequent elections, with some restrictions, parents of students attending a school operated by the First Nation school board would have the right to vote and run for trustee. It is our understanding that the Chiefs Committee on Education shares our interpretation.

Yukon's Chief Electoral Officer has asked for greater clarity for the purpose of preparing for the election of trustees for the Yukon First Nation school board. We are currently working with the First Nation Education Directorate legal counsel and the Department of Justice to confirm whether our interpretation is correct. I wanted to bring that back, and this will also be returned tomorrow in a written form.

I want to move on to talk about a couple of other things that, of course, are very important and vital to where we are at

today with our preparation for the November 30 mandatory vaccination. This will be provided tomorrow, as well, in a legislative return, but I will just go over where we landed as of yesterday and probably a little bit today. Maybe some of these numbers are changing in real time.

This was a question around the staffing attestation numbers. Vaccination, of course, is the most effective way to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in Yukon schools. We can see right now the positive impacts of vaccination in our secondary schools, which have significantly less exposure notices.

I want to again thank Dr. Kancir and the entire team from the office of the chief medical officer of health and their work that they have done with us to set out the guidelines. I really appreciate the extra measures that we brought into place during the circuit breaker and that it has been effective. We are right now in a situation where we do not have any outbreaks in our schools. We certainly are reducing the number of notifications that are going out to various schools and classrooms.

As of November 30, 2021, 96 percent of employees of the Department of Education have completed their attestations. Most schools have experienced minimal impacts to operations from the implementation of the mandatory vaccination requirement. A small number of schools were able to minimize impacts by adjusting student learning groups or deploying teachers on call.

The Department of Education continues to closely monitor any potential impacts to operations due to unvaccinated employees. We are prepared to make operational adjustments as needed to ensure a minimal impact to schools. We, of course, continue to encourage employees on leave without pay to verify their vaccination status with us, attesting at least one dose. The requirement for mandatory vaccinations for all public servants is, of course, based on the recommendation of the acting chief medical officer of health and aligns with the measures being taken elsewhere around the country.

To increase vaccination rates and combat what we have right now, which is the Delta variant wave — and we know that there is another variant of concern in Canada — it is vitally important that we are taking all the steps that we can to ensure that our children are safe. I know that we are now preparing for the vaccination for five- to 11-year-olds that will start on December 6. Again, thank you to all of the health care workers who are working hard to fill all those spots to get our children vaccinated. As I have stated, Dr. Kancir and the other members of the office of the chief medical officer of health have certainly — when they were here as witnesses for the Legislative Assembly — talked about the effectiveness of vaccinations in our schools, and that is one of the key tools that we have to protect our children. We are really encouraging folks to work toward making that decision as the best decision for your family.

Going back to the schools in terms of our impacts, I wanted to just talk about some of the planning that took place and will continue to take place around mitigating the issues within the school as a result of the vaccine mandate. As I have stated, we have had minimal impacts. We have had many schools with

100-percent attestation. In terms of contingency plans, we will rely on and will consider a variety of options to ensure the continuation of learning in schools. Options may include, and have included, temporary adjustments to staff teaching assignments, adjustments to student learning groups, use of teachers on call to fill short-term needs, and temporary use of remote learning until staff can be recruited.

I want to thank all of our public servants for the work that they do in our schools each and every day. For those who have chosen to go on leave without pay, I absolutely thank all the folks who have committed their time to learning in the Yukon. I want to say thank you to all of those folks for everything that they have done for our students.

I encourage folks, if they choose to take that first dose, to do the attestation. That's still available to them.

There was another question around staffing in Old Crow. I will put this in writing tomorrow, but there are two teaching postings: an EA posting in Old Crow and one anticipated teacher posting. The principal role has been filled, which created a vacancy in the learning assistant and counselling position. That is sometimes what happens when we fill a position with an existing government employee teaching role. It creates a vacancy in another spot, so we are working to ensure that these positions are filled. The temporary teaching position will be posted in the coming week. There are two current postings: one for high school math and science and one for grades 4, 5 and 6, both of which have been posted on an ongoing basis until filled.

There are regular intakes and applicants sent for recruitment review of these postings. There is an EA posting also posted on an ongoing basis until filled, which has recently had an intake for review of applications, which is underway now. That's great news. The school has effectively been able to ensure that learning meets the needs of the students through mechanisms within the school — teacher assignments, grouping of students, and through the use of teachers on call.

Another area that was a question that we are returning to again tomorrow with a legislative return is the EA request. This was a question that came up. In the spring of 2021, schools requested a total of 410 FTEs of educational assistants for the 2021-22 school year. This number represents the schools' assessments of their educational assistant needs.

Student Support Services staff then review all school requests for EA allocations using the needs-based process established in 2015 and 2016 by the educational assistant allocation advisory committee, which includes student enrolment and student intensive needs, either shared support to small student groups or individual support one to one. The allocation for the 2021 school year, as of November 19, 2021, was 248.4 FTEs. Through the review of inclusive and special education, we will be examining how we allocate EAs and other resources to best support students. I'm really excited about that work.

Again, I have a number of other legislative returns. If those questions come up, we will address them throughout the debate today. I'm looking forward to questions around early learning and childcare.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that information. I look forward to seeing the legislative returns tomorrow, but as she alluded to, I would like to ask a few questions in the field of early learning and childcare.

To start, I will remind my colleagues that earlier this year, in the Spring Sitting, we debated the motion related to the *Child Care Act*.

The minister, I am sure, is aware that the Yukon Child Care Board has, over the last number of years, recommended through their annual report that the *Child Care Act* be reviewed comprehensively. So, when we debated the motion in the spring, the reason why we were told that the government and the Third Party would vote the motion down was in part because the government was reviewing the act as it stands.

Can the minister give us an update as to what activity has happened with regard to the comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act* and what actions have been taken so far?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to talk about the commitments that we have made around the review of the *Child Care Act*. We certainly recognize the importance of early learning and childcare for Yukon families and the need to continue to improve children's learning opportunities and outcomes. We continue to work, of course, and engage with Yukon First Nations and stakeholders, as we continue with the implementation of the universal early learning and childcare program, including with the Yukon Child Care Board. We have absolutely committed to begin the work to review Yukon's *Child Care Act*, which is reflected in my mandate letter.

We definitely confirmed with our stakeholders that there is a desire to move forward together in the modernization of this act. There are a lot of things to consider and such a huge focus area for us, as a government, but also us throughout the territory. There are a lot of key partners and stakeholders who will be working with us through this process. I know that early discussions have confirmed that desire to work together and move toward modernization of the act.

Mr. Dixon: I may have missed some of that, but can the minister explain — has there been any actual work done to review the act? Will they create a working group to do this? Will they task the Child Care Board to do it? What is the process by which they will do a comprehensive review of this act?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I can assure the member opposite that steps are being taken to move toward a modernization of the *Child Care Act*. It is a commitment that we have made. It is an item within my mandate letter. One of the key pieces — I am not sure if the member opposite is probably aware — is that we have recently had resignations from the Child Care Board for various reasons. We are in the process right now of filling those vacancies. We certainly hope to fill them before Christmas. That board is a very important stakeholder partner on the work that we are going to do together.

During the consultation and work around developing universal childcare, there were a number of interactions and information that came to us. It became very apparent that we needed to look at the modernization and opening up of this act. Right now, officials are in the process of compiling a document

that will inform what we heard during that process and will help shape the next steps in how we will go about doing this work. We continue to work with our partners and with stakeholders to ensure that we are moving forward together. The Yukon Child Care Board is certainly a big part of that and we hope to have the position filled before Christmas, as I've already stated.

Mr. Dixon: The minister said that steps were being taken to start the review, and then she said that a document will be compiled of "what we heard". I am wondering — the "what we heard" document they are compiling sounds like it is based on just the input they have received so far with regard to the implementation of the new program, but have they launched any actual consultation on this yet, or is the "what we heard" document just going to be anecdotal information?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are just wrapping up the mid-year engagement, which is all of the operators, partners, those directly impacted by the act and who work in the field, and so, along with the information that we have gathered as we were developing the universal childcare, those are informing our next steps. We are committed to a review and modernization of this act. What we're working toward is working with those directly impacted to map out those next steps. My work will be to work with my colleagues in Cabinet to have next steps on how we will work toward this review and further engagement and review of this act.

We have a committee called a Cabinet Committee on Legislation, and that will be my work to bring that into that committee process and to then have it slated into the agenda, as we move through the process.

I think the big thing here is the commitment that our government has made to opening up this act and doing — these are not small tasks when you take on the review and move toward a modernization of an act that, again, will align with where we are in the Yukon right now.

We have certainly made early learning and childcare a high priority for our government. We know that it's incredibly important to the well-being of families, and we are committed to working with those directly impacted and our partners and stakeholders to map out those next steps and what the review will look like and how we'll get to those steps of modern legislation.

Mr. Dixon: So, can the minister commit that there will be some sort of open consultation about this? Can she indicate when that consultation will begin?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I certainly can commit that there will be open consultation. I have led reviews of pretty significant pieces of legislation for our territory in my last five years as a Cabinet minister in other portfolios, and I'm well aware of the process and the importance of good engagement and that consultation with folks. I'm well aware.

I am well aware that I cannot commit to an exact timeline today, but I will endeavour to bring that information back to members when it is available.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's commitment to doing consultation. I recognize the amount of work it takes, but I just wanted to note that the Child Care Board noted in their annual report in 2016-18 that the act should be reviewed. In the

2018-20 annual report, they indicated that it should be reviewed. Each time, the government said that they would. I think that it is only fair that the minister, who has indicated her support for this, should give Yukoners some sense of when that might happen. I appreciate that it's not in the legislative agenda yet, it sounds like, but I will let the minister confirm that. She said that she is working to get it on the legislative agenda.

Is the *Child Care Act* not currently on the legislative agenda? If it is on the legislative agenda, when is it slated to come forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I absolutely value the work of the Yukon Child Care Board. I want to acknowledge that they did provide us with significant feedback on the act. Our commitment is to work closely with them and get the membership back up to full capacity in the coming weeks, I hope.

In terms of whether the *Child Care Act* is on the legislative agenda, it's on our radar; it's in my mandate letter. So, absolutely, it will make its way into that process. I want to also just highlight where a lot of our focus has been — establishing universal childcare — these are significant moves that we have made in our territory to enhance the early learning and childcare wholly in terms of helping families with affordability, but also creating new childcare opportunities and more spots for children to go into.

One of the things that we have worked toward is shifting all of this whole area from Health and Social Services to the Department of Education. The shift that we have seen in the last year or so is significant. We brought in universal childcare on April 1, even ahead of the federal program, because we felt that it was absolutely an essential part of the work that we needed to do to help around affordability for families, but also that whole continuum of learning for our youngest Yukoners and to have them best prepared to go into the school system.

We have certainly put a lot of effort, and we have an incredible team of folks working hard over at the Department of Education to bring the new focus of early learning and childcare — universal childcare — into reality. This is a big part of the next steps to do the review on the act and to make sure that we have the best, most modern legislation to help guide us through the next short term, mid term, and long term. What is the vision going to be? I think that we are starting to get a sense of that in terms of our work with all of those who are part of the — who are most impacted and who are our partners. There is a lot of excitement. I have certainly had some great discussions with our partners at different tables and particularly with the federal minister. She has taken on a new role — Minister Gould, who is excited to work with Yukon — and really acknowledges us getting out of the gate early, even before we had an agreement with Canada. Modernization of legislation is really important to this whole process.

So, thank you for the questions. I think they are really important questions, and my commitment is to see this through and to do it in the best possible way and to include as many voices as we can and to get it right. That is my commitment to Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer that she is not able to give us a time at this point. I appreciate that, and I will move on.

The department conducted a review of the supported childcare worker program back in 2020. It had been a long-standing recommendation of the Child Care Board to do so. At the time, folks were told that the review was conducted internally. So, obviously, in the 2020 annual report, the Child Care Board requested that internal review to be shared. I'm wondering if that review was shared. What is the status of the review of the supported childcare worker program, and can the minister provide us an update on that? If she is willing or able, can she share that internal review that was conducted of that program?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question on the supported childcare worker program. I will endeavour to bring back some information on this through a legislative return.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's commitment there, and I appreciate that answer.

Another question is in relation to the framework curriculum for early learning. Before the branch moved from Health and Social Services to Education, the previous Health Services branch of early learning was leading the work on a framework curriculum on early learning. Last I heard, that had been submitted to Education for consultation internally.

Then the branch moved from Health and Social Services to Education, as the minister has referenced. Now it's all in one department of Education. So, I was just wondering if we could get an update on the framework curriculum for early learning.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will certainly confirm that there is an alignment with the previous approach. I know that there has been a lot of transition as we have moved from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education. We have three early learning specialists who support the continuity and quality of early learning childcare. I think that one of the key messages here is that we are moving away from daycare to early learning. We are definitely following the BC curriculum. I think that this new unit within the Department of Education is working hard and working closely with operators to ensure that we have that continuity as children go from early learning into kindergarten and early kindergarten as well. It's that whole continuum of learning.

I am so excited about the work that they are doing in this unit, led by a great director, Betty Burns, who has been working hard to establish this unit and has a great vision for it.

Mr. Dixon: What is the timeline for rolling out the curriculum framework, and when would it apply to all early learning institutes?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is already actually in action. It is considered a tool that is based on the BC curriculum. What was great about this is that BC's curriculum was already ready to go. It's a curriculum that is similar, in a lot of ways, to the K to 12 curriculum in terms of its ability to be molded — to Yukonize it — and to ensure that we have our Yukon culture including, of course, First Nation cultural ways of knowing, doing, and being. It is based on birth to age eight.

I certainly can bring this tool back in a legislative return. I would be happy to do that and to also confirm that this is the same curriculum that Yukon University uses for early learning childcare courses. It is very aligned and is a consistent approach, and it is definitely something that we can bring back in a legislative return. I'm happy to have more conversation about it after that.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answers. The fact that it has already been rolled out to early learning facilities is news to me. I am aware of the BC early learning framework; I have seen that. It is easily available online and lays out its connections between the early learning system and primary care, but I hadn't seen a Yukon early learning framework before, so I do look forward to seeing that.

If it is already in use, can the minister confirm that all childcare facilities are employing the framework curriculum right now?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this is a tool, as I have described already today. We have three early learning specialists who are working with our early learning childcare environments. What is a really key distinction is that, when daycares came over to the Department of Education, we were moving into the direction of early learning and childcare — so, moving into this new way of doing things. This tool has guided the specialists who work with those centres to move toward these early learning environments and move away from simply a daycare setting and into that continuum of learning.

We certainly can bring forward the tool that is being used — again, it is based on the BC curriculum and is flexible, shaping the way that we are working with our early learning environments into a Yukonized and unique approach. I am really excited about the work that's happening. It's always a work in progress, and the tools that we have been able to work with through BC have been very valuable. Again, there's a new unit that has been formed to bring us into this new and different way of looking at childcare, shaping them into early learning environments and better preparing our children for when they come into kindergarten or pre-kindergarten and to be more successful in our school system overall.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for the commitment to provide that to us. I look forward to seeing the tool. Like I said, I'm very familiar with BC's. I have reviewed it thoroughly. I watched as they reviewed their 2008 early learning framework and updated it more recently. The cumulation of that work is obviously available to anyone online to review. I hadn't seen Yukon's yet, so I do look forward to seeing that.

I will move on. I have a few questions about the new universal early learning childcare funding program. The first one relates to how it works with childcare facilities that are owned and run by First Nations. I know that there are two streams to the system: One is a parent-facing one to reduce the costs for parents, and the other is an operational stream that supports the operators. In the case of the parent-facing stream, it is an amount of \$700 that a parent had paid and is reduced by that much. I understand how that works with private childcare facilities that are regulated by the department, but I'm not clear how those work with First Nation-owned and First Nation-run

childcare facilities. For instance, each First Nation is a little bit different in how they run their childcare.

In some cases, parents pay a fee, and in some cases, parents pay a subsidized fee, and in some cases, I believe there are some where parents pay almost nothing previous to the universal childcare system.

I am wondering how the \$700 flows in the case of parents whose kids go to a First Nation-owned and -run childcare facility.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. This is a huge commitment that our government made. We brought it into effect on April 1. We are certainly continuing to work with Yukon First Nations and other partners to enhance early learning and childcare programming in Yukon, as we move toward a vision in which all children have access to affordable, high-quality early learning and childcare opportunities.

The big difference, in terms of how we work with Yukon First Nations, is that our agreement is government-to-government. All other aspects of our universal early learning and childcare are consistent with others and have the same enhancements. In terms of the new universal early learning and childcare model — the new funding model came into effect on April 1, 2021, and government budgeted at that time \$25,202,000 for 2021-22 to support the new program.

The Government of Yukon is now — as a result of our agreement that we signed over the summer for a further \$54.3 million in the next five years to further enhance the universal early learning and childcare funding model, all licensed operators had the choice to opt into the new program within two years by signing a transfer payment agreement. Again, the big difference here in terms of — is that we have a government-to-government agreement. The reduction of parent fees is the same whether you are First Nation — again, this was universal for all children in Yukon.

So, government provides licensed operators who have opted into the new program with \$700 per month for each child in full-time childcare, which must be fully and immediately applied to reduce the monthly payment made by parents. This is also pro-rated for children in part-time childcare. The new program also includes fee-increase limits to ensure that fees charged to parents remain both sustainable and affordable and in line with the rates charged by other providers delivering the same type of childcare.

In terms of reduction in operational and administration expenses for operators, the government provides additional funding to operators to reduce their operational and administrative expenses and to support program needs. Government provides funding to operators to support them in developing high-quality early learning environments, as we have talked about already today, and funding to increase wages for early learning educators.

Government provides funding to operators to be applied directly to increase the wage paid by operators for early childcare educators. Wages for most early learning childcare educators employed by operators who opt into the new program increase effectively on April 1, 2021. Funding includes an additional payment of 12 percent of wage costs to operators for

mandatory employment-related costs, like CPP, EI, and WCB contributions.

Wages for all early childcare educators employed by operators who opt into the universal childcare received an additional increase effective August 1, 2021, with a \$1.35 increase to the minimum wage.

Again, just to be clear, we are working with all of our operators in a similar way, so I hope that has answered the questions of the member opposite in terms of the application. There are other annexes and more opportunities that we have recently made available to folks in the Yukon around cultural opportunities, and we can get into more of those, but I want to give the member a chance to ask another question.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's willingness to let me clarify. So, I just want to confirm that, when a private operator wants to tap into the new program, they enter into an agreement with the government, they sign an agreement, and the operator is provided — depending on the age of the kids and stuff like that — all things being equal — \$700 per kid per month. Then there is a subsequent reduction in the rates that parents pay. If I paid \$850 a month previously, under the new program, I pay \$150 a month.

My question was if that worked the same for parents of kids who attend a First Nation-owned childcare facility, and the reason I ask that is because, as the minister suggested, the relationship between the government and the First Nation-owned childcare facility is somewhat different. She mentioned that it happens at the government-to-government level, and so rather than it being a TPA with a private business, the relationship is at the government-to-government level. So, presumably then, the Government of Yukon provides an amount of money to the First Nation on a government-to-government level. I am just wondering how that flows down to the individual parents who are supposed to receive the benefit in the amount that they pay on a monthly basis.

Perhaps, before she moves progress, the minister can just quickly address that, and if not, we can follow up on another day or perhaps by letter.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am not sure that I am following the line of questioning from the member opposite, but I just want to be clear that the Yukon government's program is open to all licensed programs, including Yukon First Nations', and we are the licensing body. We work with all of our licensed facilities, and so it is applied the same. I'm not sure if there is something that the member is suggesting there in terms of whether the First Nations are applying the money to something else. I'm not exactly sure there. I think it would be great if the member opposite would put the question in writing, and we will bring it back in that form because I want to be clear about this in terms of ensuring that we are getting the right answers here.

All of our programs are applied equally. We have eight of these agreements with Yukon First Nations across the territory. That's another part of that. I would like to be clear about that, so we will follow up. Perhaps the member can put that in writing and we will write back.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled December 1, 2021:

35-1-32

Yukon state of the environment interim report 2021 — A report on environmental indicators (Clarke, N.)

35-1-33

Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund Annual report 2020-21 (McPhee)

The following legislative return was tabled December 1, 2021:

35-1-18

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Workers'

Compensation Health and Safety Board before Committee of the Whole on November 25, 2021 (Mostyn)

The following documents were filed December 1, 2021:

35-1-36

Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, letter re (dated December 1, 2021) from Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, to Stephanie Smith, BCGEU (Mostyn)

35-1-37

Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, letter re (dated December 1, 2021) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White)