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HANSARD

Thursday, March 17, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring Sitting

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

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Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
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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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 17, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Here for the Global Recycling Day tribute, I have a number of guests in the gallery. I would like to welcome: Erin Loxam, communications analyst at Environment; Bryna Cable, director of Environmental Protection and Assessment branch; Nahanni Sager, environmental protection analyst; and Christine Cleghorn, assistant deputy minister. From the City of Whitehorse, we are introducing: Faith Green Mykituk, who is the environment coordinator. As a late-breaking addition, we have Heather Ashthorn, who is the executive director of Raven Recycling.

Please welcome them all to the gallery.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Today, here for the tribute to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry — there are many retired members around the Yukon and we have a few of them here today: Paul Brais and his wife, Melanie Brais; and Mr. Morris Cratty.

Please welcome them.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like my colleagues to help welcome a number of guests who are here today for this important piece of legislation. Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate, and Bengie Clethero, the Deputy Child and Youth Advocate. We also have with us Kayla Brinda, Shadelle Chambers, Tanya MacKenzie, manager with Family Resources at the Department of Health and Social Services, and Economic Development McLean, supervisor of Family and Children's Services. We have Bobby Prematunga, who also works with Health and Social Services. Alisha McLean and Leeanne Kayseas — and I'm told also that Lee Rannells and Lee Hoffmeister have joined us. Thank so much for being here.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of World Recycling Day

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to World Recycling Day, which is tomorrow, Friday, March 18.

Recycling is a crucial part of the waste management system in the Yukon. It is part of the waste management system that many of us take for granted. Maybe you have it picked up

at your home. Maybe you truck a load over to the depot or transfer station every month. Once it's gone, you never think about that tin can or other garbage again.

I want to start by recognizing the work of the Raven Recycling Society, P&M Recycling, Conservation Klondike Society, Whitehorse Blue Bin Recycling, transfer stations and free store staff, and other people and companies that ensure that waste is diverted for reuse and recycling. Without their facilities and efforts, we would not be able to divert 25 percent of our waste from Yukon landfills, but we know that there are significant challenges with the recycling system.

We need to ensure that our recycling systems remain robust and sustainable to handle our territory's growing population, thus the growing need to increase waste-diversion levels. One way we have done this is through the single-use plastic bag ban. By encouraging Yukoners to bring reusable bags for shopping, we are diverting more waste by not creating it in the first place.

Another way is through extended producer responsibility, or EPR. EPR can provide a waste management approach that is fair and more sustainable. It means that the responsibility for end-of-life products and packaging waste moves from municipalities, governments, and taxpayers to producers and consumers.

This means that even if a package is cumbersome and costly to recycle, it is the producer's responsibility to pay for recycling. EPR is central to our effort to increase waste diversion to 40 percent by 2030 and develop a circular economy.

Over the last two months, staff have been meeting with our extended producer responsibility advisory committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of that committee from local governments, the business community, and the recycling industry. Your feedback and perspective are essential for us to create an extended producer responsibility framework that works for the Yukon. I had the privilege of attending one of their first organizational meetings by Zoom. Thanks to this committee, we will have a better sense of how to structure the new regulation and consider small business and municipal interests.

We are also learning how local businesses and organizations will be able to continue delivering recycling services to Yukoners under the new framework. We thank you for your commitment to ongoing collaboration on waste management issues in our territory. Tomorrow, for Global Recycling Day, we thank everyone who has contributed to creating and maintaining our system and those who will help make it even better.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize tomorrow, March 18, as Global Recycling Day.

While waste management is largely a local issue, Global Recycling Day allows jurisdictions worldwide to have conversations at multiple levels around the importance of implementing waste-diversion practices. The mission of Global

Recycling Day is this: to tell world leaders that recycling is simply too important not to be a global issue and that a common, joined approach to recycling is urgently needed and to ask people across the planet to think “resource”, not “waste”, when it comes to the goods around us. Until this happens, we simply won’t award recycled goods the true value and repurpose that they deserve.

We would like to thank and recognize the communities, organizations, and businesses across the territory that handle all that goes into recycling in the Yukon, from planning to pickup, to sorting and compacting. Thank you, as well, to all of the organizations that are dedicated to moving the territory toward zero waste.

In reality, every community and every individual produces waste and should be doing their part to reduce their waste output as much as possible. As municipalities and governments continue to hold conversations around how to deal with the bigger picture surrounding solid waste and recycling efforts, we must remember that recycling and waste diversion begins with each individual and household.

Buy with purpose to cut down on waste, recycle what you can, and try to reuse what you can’t recycle.

As for those higher level conversations around solid waste, we encourage the government to ensure that every community has the resources it needs to allow Yukoners to be diligent in their waste-diversion practices.

Applause

Ms. White: Today I have the pleasure of rising on behalf of the Yukon NDP in tribute of Global Recycling Day. This recycling initiative encourages us to look at trash in a new light. In the Yukon, we have an amazing recycling history. In 1989, a dedicated group of Yukoners came together to do something that had never been done before: bring recycling to the territory. Their vision blossomed into Raven Recycling, a not-for-profit service that saw 85 percent of Yukon’s recycling pass under its one roof.

Since then, we have seen other innovation across the territory, from recycling societies in rural Yukon to for-profit businesses in Whitehorse and incredible leadership in rural transfer facilities. We’ve seen repair cafes where goods are saved from the landfill or recycling depot.

Recycling is great, Mr. Speaker, but the honest truth is that we’re part of a much bigger problem, and that’s our ever-increasing need to accumulate stuff. Although we may love stuff, non-recyclable or not easy to recycle, poorly made products are bad for the planet; clothing that doesn’t hold up is bad for the planet; and single-use products are bad for the planet.

Assuming that we can buy whatever we want and just throw it into the recycling stream and be done with it is disingenuous. This waste, even if it’s recyclable, needs to go somewhere to be repurposed, and that has an immense cost to the planet. Our little territory is already full of amazing stories of innovation and entrepreneurship in helping Yukoners to reduce, reuse, and recycle. We’ve seen what Yukoners have been able to do since 1989 when it comes to recycling. Now it’s

time we put that same energy into working toward a truly sustainable future, one that focuses on reducing and reusing the items that we buy.

Applause

In recognition of Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry

Mr. Istchenko: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party caucus and the NDP caucus to pay tribute to the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, generally referred to as “the Patricias”, “the Pats”, “the Picklies”, “the Vicious Patricias”, or, as I know them, the “Dirty Patricias” — one of these three regular-force infantry regiments of the Canadian Army and the Canadian Armed Forces.

This decorated and famous regiment was formed in 1914, and today is actually their 108th regimental birthday. The unit was raised on the initiative of Captain Andrew Hamilton Gault in 1914. It is named for Princess Patricia of Connaught. She was the daughter of the then-Governor General of Canada.

The regiment is composed of three battalions, for a total of around 2,000 soldiers. The PPCLI is the main unit of the Canadian Forces Base in CFB Edmonton, Alberta and CFB Shilo in Manitoba. Attached to three Canadian divisions, as such, it serves as a local regular infantry regiment for much of western Canada. In its early conception, it became a fierce fighting unit. In World War I during the Battle of Passchendaele on October 30, 1917, Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie and Sergeant George Harry Mullin both won the Victoria Cross for gallantry.

When I was researching the unit, what struck me was the regimental vision. The Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry is a proud, confident regiment with outstanding leadership, strong discipline, and highly developed military skills that enable it to fight and win on the battlefield of today and tomorrow. They are a strong, regimental family focused on supporting and maintaining cohesion among serving and retired members and their families.

The PPCLI do not have an official motto; however, their unofficial motto is “First in the field”. They are usually first in every situation where Canada enters war. The unit has served in every Canadian war, operation, campaign, and peace-keeping mission. They serve at home and abroad. There were PPCLI members that helped with sand-bagging last summer. I think you will all remember that. Mr. Speaker, I have trained with the unit on many occasions as a Canadian Ranger.

Many Yukoners today who are here were members of the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry and served in the Balkans, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo in response to the civil war between the Croats, the Serbs, and the Bosnian Muslims. Major General Lewis MacKenzie, a Patricia officer, had overall command of Sector Sarajevo during the worst ethnic fighting over the summer of 1992. The Third Battalion was the first Patricia unit to serve and was in theatre during 1992-93, followed by 2 PPCLI in 1993 and 1 PPCLI in 1994.

The Commander-in-Chief Unit Commendation was awarded to the Second Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group, for courageous and professional

execution of duty during the Medak Pocket Operation in the former Yugoslavia in September 1993. Under conditions of extreme peril and hazard, facing enemy artillery, small arms, and heavy machine gun fire as well as anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, the members of the 2 PPCLI held their ground and drove the Croatian forces back.

I know that it's evident in the Yukon that these members will be supported today. The Ric-a-Dam-Doo always flies high with pride for the PPCLI.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regiment day.

As the Member for Kluane indicated, we have a special recent connection to this regiment here in Yukon — in fact, thanks to events that occurred here just last summer. Just this past August, we gathered at Camp Boyle to thank the soldiers with the First and Third Battalions of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. They were just about to return to Edmonton after a month spent fighting the worst flood provoked by climate change that we have ever had here in the territory. These members were part of the largest flood-relief effort in Yukon history. We could not have done it without their expertise, strength, dedication, and willingness to quickly rise to the challenge.

It is truly an honour to pay tribute to the current members as well as veterans of this regiment today. This regiment is named after Her Royal Highness Princess Patricia of Connaught, who was born on this day in 1886. Members are best known as the "Princess Pats" or the "Patricias". Formed in 1914, this distinguished order of troops has provided outstanding and valorous service for the past 108 years. During World War I and World War II and other conflicts, the Patricias fought courageously, winning deep respect. The Patricias distinguished themselves in the Medak Pocket in 1993 during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia and in other UN peacekeeping operations and other operations around the globe.

I would briefly like to share one tale of bravery about Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie from the second battle for Passchendaele, which is situated in modern day Belgium, on the western front that took place on October 30, 1917 in World War I. This was shared in a newspaper from the time: "Seeing that all the officers and most of the non-commissioned officers of an infantry company had become casualties, and that the men were hesitating before a nest of enemy machine guns, which were on commanding ground and causing them severe casualties, he handed over command of his guns to an N.C.O., rallied the infantry, organised an attack, and captured the strong point." Finding that the position was controlled by machine-gun fire from the enemy position, Lieutenant McKenzie made a reconnaissance and detailed flanking and frontal attacking parties, which captured the enemy position. He lost his life doing so. In these acts, he saved the lives of many men and enabled the objectives to be attained. For these acts, Lieutenant McKenzie received the Victoria Cross, the highest military decoration for valour awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

On behalf of all Yukoners, I wish to praise and thank the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry for its recent significant assistance in the Yukon with flood mitigation and for their years of outstanding service and sacrifice for us all.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a *Whitehorse Star* article showing the Yukon Party and its leader's support for rent controls.

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling an update from the chief coroner regarding opioid deaths released earlier today, March 17, 2022.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 303: *Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Tredger: I move that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Third Party House Leader that the act entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 303 agreed to.

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
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 Premier to live up to his promise to release the cost of deputy ministers' severance packages, including the cost of the deputy minister change announced yesterday.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase housing options for Yukoners by working with the City of Whitehorse to provide a better variety of lot types, including country residential or rural lots.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase housing options for Yukoners by making more land in all Yukon communities by working with municipalities and Yukon First Nations.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand the Yukon Housing Corporation owner-builder loan program eligibility to all Yukoners.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to allot a percentage of single-family residential lots to individuals and a percentage to developers in the current and ongoing land lotteries.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cross-border tourism

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In partnership with the Canada Border Services Agency, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, White Pass & Yukon Route, and the Borough of Skagway, the Yukon government formed the border working group, which has been working to identify ways to adjust border measures to better support our tourism industry. This includes the requirement for testing at international borders and the designations of airports that can accept international flights.

Over the past several weeks, the Government of Canada has eased restrictions at Canadian borders, and earlier today, they announced that they would no longer require pre-arrival testing for travellers entering the country as of April 1. This is good news for our neighbours in Alaska as well as those in the Lower 48 and further abroad who want to visit the Yukon.

Last month, Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport was once again permitted to receive international passengers. This is excellent news, as Condor has announced that it will be resuming direct international flights from Frankfurt, Germany to Whitehorse this summer.

Today, I am happy to announce that, as of May 2, the Dawson City Airport will be staffed with Canada Border Services Agency staff and ready to welcome international flights as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is big news as the Yukon prepares for a strong return of summer tourism and plans to welcome visitors from around the world to enjoy our territory. In 2022, Alaska is anticipating a return of cruise ships carrying about 1.5 million passengers over the upcoming summer. Cruise ship passengers will no doubt be looking forward to also visiting the Yukon.

Tourism is set to have a strong rebound this year, and our government looks forward to working with partners to help welcome more visitors to our territory throughout the spring and summer. Thank you to the Department of Tourism and Culture for their hard work over the past several years to support the tourism industry, which was hit the hardest by the pandemic.

I look forward to seeing more visitors in our communities, our tourism businesses thriving, and our economy continuing to grow.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you for the opportunity to reply to this ministerial statement today concerning one of the Yukon's most important industries — tourism.

We all know that tourism was hit hard during the pandemic with flight cancellations, border restrictions, capacity limitations, operating plans, extra PPE, and reduced hours. The numbers to keep tourism businesses functioning plummeted.

Like Yukoners themselves over the past two years, this industry has remained hopeful that there was a light at the end of the tunnel. We thank those business owners who have hung in there, and we are hopeful that those numbers boost their bottom line and that they come back roaring stronger than ever.

This industry relies on certainty. That is why, last fall, the Yukon Party first asked about COVID testing requirements to enter the country and asked the Yukon government to work with the federal government on a solution. Tourism businesses were rightfully concerned about how this might impact them, particularly for cruise ship excursion tours from Skagway. They need answers to make staffing decisions for the upcoming season. There has been silence on what progress or decisions would be made.

When the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon requested that we send a joint letter on their issues, I was happy to sign a letter with the minister asking the federal government to help provide certainty. The letter requested the removal of COVID testing for international air and land arrivals, for all custom ports in the territory to be fully staffed, and for international arrivals to be allowed at airports in Whitehorse and Dawson. It is good to hear that our bipartisan efforts have yielded results.

With spring around the corner, businesses will need to hire staff. I know a lot of tourism businesses ended up laying off staff or had staff snatched up by the public service during the pandemic. We are hearing that many operators in the hospitality sector are facing staffing shortages — so much so that it is impeding their hours of operation and their ability to open doors to customers.

Can the minister tell us how the government plans to support those who are facing a staffing shortage, particularly in the face of the current housing crisis?

I would also like to ask the minister if he can share what plans are in place to mitigate any impacts that the work at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport may have for tourists. How will the department ensure that the upgrade work doesn't hinder airlines from providing the best possible visitor experience? As well, is there a timeline for the restaurant to reopen so that visitors will have service options available this summer?

Finally, I want to reiterate that the government needs to do more to start addressing property crime in our community as, if left undealt with, it could negatively impact tourism.

We once again thank those tourism operators, the hospitality industry, and anyone who relies on visitors coming to our beautiful territory for navigating the challenges of the past two years. We certainly hope that brighter days are ahead.

Ms. Blake: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the ministerial statement.

The tourism season is upon us already. Tour groups have been coming to the Yukon through the winter, with hopefully many more to come as the weather warms up. We know how hard tourism-related businesses are working to offer safe, exciting adventures throughout the Yukon. We were pleased to see the requirements for COVID testing from our international visitors being removed by the federal government as of April 1. Even for Yukoners returning to the Yukon from spring break and winter holidays, the testing requirements were often complicated and costly.

This is also important for so many First Nation families that have not been able to connect with their extended families in Alaska throughout the pandemic. Historically, those borders didn't exist and allowed easier travelling and visiting.

Having federal regulations allowing international flights to return to the Erik Nielsen International Airport and the Dawson City Airport is welcome news. It certainly will provide many more options for all the guests arriving in our beautiful territory. More importantly, we hope that this is the upward swing for our many tourism businesses and operators who have been so drastically impacted by COVID restrictions over the last two years. Mahsi'.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just in response to the members of the opposition, I would like to first thank both opposition parties. Yukoners, I think that it is important to know that we did work together in a very collaborative manner to ensure that the federal government knew the importance of our season, and I thank both individuals who are in critic roles to the Tourism and Culture department for their work. I think that this is important for Yukoners to know because everybody in this House knows the importance of tourism and they also know how much our tourism operators have gone through over the last two years.

Just in response, I think that when it comes to labour market issues and staffing, this is going to be a challenge from coast to coast in Canada right now.

A lot of people have moved into different types of occupations, so what we're doing on our end right now is that we have made a move with labour market — and we will discuss that probably deeper when we get into budget debate — from Education over to Economic Development so that we can fast-track some of the work to pull people into the territory and, for people who are in the territory, get them skilled up and into tourism.

Also, the Immigration unit has done some great work in reducing some of what I would call the red tape, in order to get people into our hospitality workforce.

Again, I think I'll hold off on the airport work because our understanding is that there will be no disruption to the work this summer, and I think that it will be in a future conversation in year two and three of that project that we'll have to discuss it. We're looking to work with folks like Condor, right now, to come up with solutions to do that, but the opportunity that's

going to come with those upgrades for increased travel into the Yukon is extremely exciting.

I'll get back to you on the restaurant. I don't have the opening date for the restaurant at the airport, but I'll work with our friends at Highways and Public Works who have also done a fabulous job helping us throughout this time.

When it comes to crime, I'll just say this: I want to commend Mike Pemberton and the team at Crime Stoppers. They're doing an incredible job, along with working with the RCMP, and we'll continue to support organizations like that, which are really pulling our community together to take on this significant effort.

Yes, I also appreciate the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin touching on our winter tourism. Some operators have had an extremely strong winter. I know I have gone out to try to book and, in many cases, some of the operators were completely booked and filled. I think people have seen international travellers coming here for a while, but this is really about making sure the cruise ship traffic comes back.

In closing, I just want to thank Neil and Blake at TIAY. They have been tireless. They speak the facts; they make sure they keep me on my toes; and I think TIAY, the entire group in the industry, has come together, along with the chambers, the people at CBSA, and the government at the federal and territorial levels. I think we're looking at a very good season in front of us. Great words from the member opposite — we need to think about those people who have not had an easy two years and probably got hit the hardest.

Locally, get out and spend your dollars on our local tourism operators. Spend local.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Dixon: On March 11, 2019, the former Minister of Education said — and I quote: "... schools do not necessarily need a unique design in each and every case and that a core design with the ability to scale it for certain circumstances would be a valuable tool..."

The former minister also told the Legislature that the Department of Education would spend between \$2 million and \$3 million on that generic, scalable design, but that it would save about \$7 million overall. Yesterday, the current minister was unable to tell us what had happened to that generic design, but we're hoping that she has had a chance to get briefed.

Can the Minister of Education tell us what happened to the scalable, generic school design that the former minister committed to?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start by just talking about the work that we do in the department with our school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. We are pleased that work is underway on new schools, such as Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. We are very happy to have a five-year capital plan before us.

Yesterday, I had a chance to go over some of those proposed projects that are underway — proposed for the next

five years — such as the Whistle Bend school. We are also planning a replacement of an aging Whitehorse school. We have a number of other smaller projects, like modular classrooms, that are underway. Of course, there is the Burwash Landing school, which is an exciting project for us. We are continuing to work on the Ross River School stabilization.

In terms of the specific question, we completed a generic design — or what we now call a “functional plan”. I will continue to build on my answer around this as we move forward.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the tail end of the minister’s answer there because it sounded like she was getting to the actual issue that I asked about. Her preamble, of course, had very little to do with what I had asked.

The promise made by the former minister was a lofty one. She told the Legislature that they were spending \$2 million to \$3 million on this generic design — at that time, it was called that — but that it would save \$7 million. The current minister was unable to tell us if that generic design has been used at all so far.

Can the minister tell us how much money was actually spent on the creation of that generic, scalable design for Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we completed a generic design, which we now refer to as a “functional plan”, that can be used in terms of scaling projects for multiple types of schools.

This is now referred to as a “Yukon schools functional program”, and the plan outlines consistent standards for school design and construction that are scalable based on school population, grades, and urban or rural contexts. This plan was used as the basis of the design and planning for Whistle Bend and for the Burwash Landing schools — two very different school settings, and so there is a uniqueness to these two schools.

With each school design, we expect a certain amount of customization to ensure that the school meets the needs of the community. We make capital planning decisions based on current information. I am really happy to have these types of tools that we have developed as a government.

Again, yes, we are working toward meeting the needs of all of our learners throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: I would remind the minister that the question I had asked was how much was spent on developing that, which she didn’t answer.

As well, yesterday the minister told us that she only makes evidence-based decisions when it comes to school replacement, so I am sure that, when it came to this generic, scalable school design, she has asked the department for the evidence to support the former minister’s claim that this would save \$7 million.

Can the minister provide us with any evidence that the former minister’s investment has saved anywhere close to the \$7 million that she promised?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, yesterday I had some opportunity to talk about the great work that we are doing as the Yukon Liberal government. We came into government in

2016 and found that a lot of decisions — especially around capital and infrastructure builds — were really not based on evidence-based decision making, but rather were more political. So, we have really taken the time to ensure that we are doing our due diligence and that we are making good, informed decisions on behalf of Yukoners.

I am happy that the Yukon Party is now interested in actual schools being built, because they actually didn’t build any schools during their whole term — 14 years. They proved to not be very reliable, really, in terms of the information that they are bringing to this House. We are happy about the planning that we have done and the investments that we’re making. We have \$200,000 in our capital budget for a new Whitehorse replacement planning process, and we will continue to make good, informed decisions.

Question re: Capital plan for schools

Mr. Kent: The Yukon government has done a seismic evaluation for a number of our schools. Some of the older buildings were identified as requiring mitigation based on that evaluation, and we know from a document that we acquired through access to information that École Whitehorse Elementary, Christ the King Elementary, Takhini Elementary, and the Wood Street Centre are all rated high for seismic risk.

So, how much money is in the 2022-23 budget to reduce the seismic risk in these schools?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have received some of the preliminary data with respect to those schools. All of the Yukon schools currently are safe, but the member opposite is correct that schools such as Whitehorse Elementary, Takhini Elementary, Selkirk Elementary, and the Wood Street Centre are certainly — with respect to the facility management index and review of which schools ought to be replaced in sequence or prioritized purely from a building perspective — schools that have to be considered.

I know that, even from my time on Whitehorse Elementary School Council, we were always very concerned about the safety of Whitehorse Elementary School, and we reviewed facility management reports going back 10 to 15 years, and in Highways and Public Works’ view, the school is safe, but it is certainly one of the schools — in addition to the other three schools that I have mentioned — prioritized for consideration for replacement in the future.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response. To be clear, we are not suggesting that those schools aren’t safe. What we are saying is that the evidence provided in this document suggests that they are all rated high for seismic risk. In that same document, we understand that the seismic mitigation will be addressed through the longer term renovation or replacement plan for the schools. However, we can’t find any mention of this in the five-year documents tabled with the budget.

So, what are the long-term plans to deal with seismic mitigations in these schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I’m happy to talk about the safety and well-being of our schools. This is absolutely one of our top priorities. Seismic standards for buildings have changed over time. Some older school buildings need work to bring them up

to current seismic standards. They continue to be safe for students, as the minister has just talked about, and for staff to occupy.

Since our 2013 seismic assessment, school emergency plans and non-structural mitigations have been completed. Examples of this include securing furniture, shelving, filing cabinets, HVAC systems, pipes, retrofits, et cetera. There are a number of other examples of this. The structural work related to seismic mitigation will be addressed through longer term renovation and replacement plans for our schools, as I had an opportunity to talk about over yesterday and today — that this is certainly one of the areas that we take into consideration when we are making decisions about these types of investments in our schools.

I'll continue to build on this answer as we go forward.

Mr. Kent: So, again yesterday during Question Period, the Minister of Education mentioned that one of the criteria for new school builds is seismic mitigation considerations. That document that we received through ATIPP identifies those four Whitehorse-area schools that are at high seismic risk.

Can the minister tell us when those four high-risk schools will appear in the budget documents for replacement and what the seismic mitigation plan is for them in the meantime?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, I am happy to stand and talk about our school infrastructure. It is a high priority for me, as a Minister of Education. As I have stated, there are a number of considerations when we're looking at small renovations, medium renovations, or even the replacement of schools. The priority for renovating or replacing schools is based on criteria such as the building age, seismic mitigation considerations, and programming needs.

Some of our Whitehorse schools are nearing capacity due to consistent enrolment growth. We expect this to partially be resolved with the opening of the Whistle Bend elementary school. We do have, in our capital budget this year, \$200,000 that has been identified in the main estimates for preliminary consultation and initial design of an existing, aging Whitehorse replacement school.

As I stated yesterday, I certainly will be continuing to work with our school communities. I have met with almost all of the school councils across the territory since starting this position. I will continue to have those conversations and work with our partners.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. Blake: Today, the Yukon's chief coroner released an update on opioid-related deaths in the territory. From January to mid-February, we lost 10 Yukoners to opioids. These deaths were entirely preventable. One way to prevent drug-poisoning death is to make safe supply widely available, but we have heard from both front-line workers and individuals in Whitehorse that they have no idea where or how to access a safe supply of opioids.

Will the minister explain why a safe supply of opioids is not automatically offered to people who need it at the Referred Care Clinic in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yukon is facing an unprecedented rate of drug-toxicity deaths. We now know from the report issued by the coroner today that we have lost nine Yukoners — possibly 10 — in the year 2022. This comes on the heels of 2021 when Yukon saw a record number of deaths.

We recognize that drug poisoning in the Yukon is growing in scope and devastation. The illicit drug supply is increasingly toxic, contaminated, and unpredictable. If I have any message that I can send today through this Legislative Assembly to all Yukoners, it is that the drug supply is increasingly toxic, contaminated, and unpredictable.

We are making evidence-based decisions to address the drug-poisoning crisis. I hope to be able to speak about our substance use health emergency and its declaration, but I can assure the member opposite and all Yukoners that we think that a cornerstone of that work is a safer supply of drugs for individuals who choose to use or are addicted to using. The street drug supply must be sidetracked by a safer supply.

Ms. Blake: Ten people might not seem like a lot, but if this rate of death happened in the City of Toronto, it would mean 700 people dying from preventable drug poisoning in just over a month.

Communities have also lost friends and family members to the opioid crisis, and they don't have equal access to treatment or supports. One way to close this gap is to follow the BC model and allow registered nurses to prescribe safe supply in communities.

When will the minister allow registered nurses to prescribe safe supply in Yukon communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I must speak to Yukoners about the intensity and the seriousness with which our government — and I would say every member of this Legislative Assembly, but I'm not speaking for them — is taking the number of the deaths in the territory — the absolute devastation. I would say that absolutely everyone in our small community here in the territory is likely affected by an individual or a family or a tragedy that has occurred in relation to these activities.

As a result, in January 2022, our government declared a substance use health emergency. We have money in our budget to address that. I am happy to speak about it more, but it must be recognized as a health issue. It must be recognized that there are a number of harm-reduction avenues that we can go down for the purposes of achieving success or progress in this area. One of those is safer supply, as mentioned by the member opposite. One is additional mental health and substance use supports.

I look forward to continuing to speak about this important topic.

Ms. Blake: The people who died by overdose could have been protected, and their deaths could have been prevented. In January 2022, multiple individuals died while at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. This is a government-run facility, which means the government is responsible for what happens in the shelter. The minister has the power to trigger a coroner's inquest into these two deaths.

Will the minister request a coroner's inquest into the two deaths by drug poisoning that occurred at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I need to defer, in relation to that question, to the coroner and her advice about what should or should not happen as a result of any particular matter in which she is involved as primary investigator.

Our government recognizes that the substance use health emergency has a devastating effect, as I've said earlier, on our families. We have noted that, in relation to the substance use health emergency and the declaration that I've noted, there have been really amazing responses to that. I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the First Nation governments and communities that have come forward indicating their own responses to their community and to their citizens — the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Little Salmon Carmacks yesterday noted that some signs with photos of elders will warn against substance use and promote community safety. These are critical. In our budget this year, we have \$5.5 million to address the immediate response to the substance use health emergency here in the territory.

Question re: Capital project development progress

Ms. Clarke: In the last election, the Liberals committed to a number of new housing projects. One that stood out was the commitment to relocate the Marwell grader station and convert the site into housing lots. This was notable because the site is a former oil refinery and will likely have contamination.

Can the minister responsible for housing provide an update on the progress to convert the Marwell grader station into housing?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The grader station located in the Marwell area of Whitehorse is in poor condition and is no longer meeting the needs of the department. The current grader station sits on riverfront land that may be more suitable for other types of development or usage.

In 2021, Highways and Public Works completed initial planning for a replacement grader station that will now be considered for inclusion in the five-year capital plan. There are several possible sites for the new grader station. A final decision on the location will be part of the next phase of planning. Under the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Final Agreement*, Kwanlin Dün First Nation has the first right of refusal for the existing site.

I can advise that the Yukon government will work closely with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation as this project moves forward.

Ms. Clarke: Another commitment made by the Liberals in the last election was related to 5th and Rogers. Last year when I asked the minister about this, he suggested that a deal to sell the lot was close to completion. Now we hear that there has been a delay. Can the minister update us on efforts to sell 5th and Rogers and why there was a delay associated with the sale?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, we are extremely excited about the opportunities with 5th and Rogers. In September 2020, there was an expression of interest that was put out to the public,

overseen by Community Services. In response, there were a number of local companies that had replied to that expression of interest.

We then requested further information over the winter of 2021. In January 2022, we dug into those applications and felt that we needed further detail. What we're really trying to ensure here is that we have substantial density in market housing, but more market rentals because of the lack of rental options here in the territory.

We will be making an announcement very soon and will be going out for a more detailed process. This one will be in the form of an RFP versus an expression of interest, but we want to also ensure that local companies have the ability to join together. This is the potential for hundreds of millions of dollars of development on that lot. We think that we have a strong process with multiple government departments, and we look forward to sharing that with the House later this spring.

Ms. Clarke: Yesterday, the minister provided an update on the Macaulay Lodge lots, which the government intends to convert to housing. In his ministerial statement rebuttal yesterday, he noted that the government believes that there is hydrocarbon contamination on the site.

Does the minister have a plan in place to assess the site? What plans are in place to conduct the necessary remediation?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, there was an extensive building condition report that has been completed and that the member opposite can certainly review. It does talk about various substances that may be found in the process of demolition.

So, when demolishing this building, it may contain asbestos, and contractors are required to have an approved work plan in place and to dispose of asbestos safely and properly. Such processes will be in place for other substances as well. Macaulay Lodge will have a qualified hazardous build-material abatement contractor removing and disposing of the hazardous building materials in accordance with the local authority having jurisdiction. The work plan to remove asbestos and other materials includes containment, disposal, and safety measures for the project. The work plan also calls for the contractor to conduct air monitoring tests.

I can also advise that the perimeter of a potential work site is fenced with steel construction. The building quality report talked also about the potential for hydrocarbons and that will have to be investigated after the demolition.

Question re: Immunization program

Mr. Cathers: While we applaud the efforts of health professionals and officials in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccination campaign for adults, and more recent efforts in providing vaccinations for children aged five and up, we do have concerns about the impact that this has had on the delivery of other vaccinations.

For instance, we know that during the Omicron outbreak, there was a gap in delivery of infant-series vaccines that are offered to two-, four-, and six-month-old children. These immunizations include things like diphtheria, tetanus, and polio. This means that children who were scheduled for vaccination had their appointments bumped.

Can the minister confirm whether all of those children who were bumped have been rescheduled and what steps or additional resources the minister is providing to ensure that the infant immunization schedule gets back on track?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. Our government continues, of course, to respond to COVID-19. We know that the COVID-19 vaccine is the most effective way to slow the spread of this virus, and I am very pleased that the member opposite is asking about other vaccines because they are also critical to the health and safety of Yukoners.

We are following the advice and the guidance of the office of the chief medical officer of health on the prioritization of vaccines, including non-COVID-19 vaccines. The infant-series primary vaccinations are a very high priority, and we have been able, at the Whitehorse Health Centre when resources permit, to continue those vaccinations. There was some interruption of that service, but we continue to work with the chief medical officer of health, although there have been some delays with the delivery of publicly funded, non-COVID-19 vaccinations through the pandemic. The Community Nursing branch has continued to deliver routine, publicly funded vaccines for children under five.

By way of an example, in December 2021, which was one of the biggest pressure months for vaccines, our teams were delivering both adult boosters and first doses for children aged five to 11 at the Whitehorse Health Centre, and they maintained an average vaccination rate of 95 percent for children aged three to 18 months.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the minister seems either unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge the fact that other vaccination delivery for children and adults was indeed impacted by the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. We do appreciate that staff in public health were overwhelmed and focused on working hard to administer COVID vaccinations, but we think that the government — and the minister in particular — missed the opportunity to lean on non-governmental providers for help.

In particular, we think that they could have better utilized pharmacists in private pharmacies to administer vaccines and boosters normally available through public health. Immunizations, such as tetanus and Pneumovax, could be made available through pharmacies, which would take pressure off the public health clinics that were and remain focused on COVID-19 vaccinations. There are also a range of routine boosters that could be offered by pharmacies.

Will the minister consider working with pharmacies to make sure that immunizations normally offered through public health are made available through pharmacies?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pretty sure that, in my first answer, I recognized what the member opposite was noting. I am certainly not unaware of any of this. I noted that, as an example, in December of 2021, which was one of the biggest pressure months for vaccines, our teams were able to deliver both adult boosters and first doses for children aged five to 11. In addition, the Whitehorse Health Centre maintained an average vaccination rate of 95 percent for children ages three to 11 months, which were their routine vaccinations, not COVID vaccinations. This is a testament to the dedication and

hard work of the Whitehorse Health Centre team to infant care here in the territory.

Regular childhood vaccinations for children under the age of five require more specialized training and expertise, and not all health care staff can administer those childhood vaccinations. Public health nurses conduct additional health assessments at the time of vaccination for children under the age of five. This is a very important public health service to our families here in the territory.

The Department of Health and Social Services has worked with pharmacies to implement the delivery of publicly funded vaccines, and I look forward to continuing to provide that information to Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, the minister seems to be minimizing and glossing over the impacts on other vaccination campaigns. While it is important, of course, to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination campaign — and we appreciate the work of staff in that area — the impact to other vaccination campaigns is concerning.

Another aspect of vaccination that has faced challenges since COVID put so much pressure on public health is the rollout of the HPV vaccine that is normally offered to grade 6 boys and girls. We have heard from some parents that there are delays and concerns about the HPV vaccination program that normally rolls out through the schools.

Can the minister confirm that the HPV vaccination will go ahead for the grade 6 cohort in schools? If not, will the minister consider working with pharmacies in this area to offer this time-sensitive immunization?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: If I am not conveying this in some way, I certainly wish to convey not only the importance of vaccines generally — we have spoken about this endlessly during COVID-19 — but the primary opportunity for Health and Social Services to respond to the needs of our Yukon families — absolutely.

The Department of Health and Social Services has worked with Yukon pharmacies to implement the delivery of publicly funded influenza vaccines for individuals over the age of five, Shingrix, and the HPV vaccines. We appreciate our relationship with Yukon pharmacies. We appreciate the relationship and the very hard-working individuals who have been delivering vaccines in this territory — almost endlessly, daily — for more than two years — and for the purposes of the Whitehorse Health Centre and their prioritization of childhood vaccines all at a very extremely difficult time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 11, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to present these amendments, which respond directly to our mandate to work in cooperation and partnership with Yukon First Nations to realize the challenges and the changes that stem from the *Child and Family Services Act* review, with the goal of enhancing opportunities and outcomes for all children, youth, and families.

This work also aligns with our commitment to reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action to address the over-representation of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children involved in the child welfare system.

I want to acknowledge the historical context and complex circumstances of Canada's child welfare practices that have had detrimental effects on all indigenous families and communities across Canada, including Yukon First Nations. Over the past five years, we have been working hard to reduce the number of children in the care of the director of Family and Children's Services here in the territory. In December 2021, there were 84 children in out-of-home care here in the territory, and 72 percent of those children were Yukon First Nation children.

A key component of this work is a philosophical shift at the Department of Health and Social Services — a shift that has been a long time coming, a shift that I am truly proud of, and a shift toward working together with families and communities to find extended family members able to care for children instead of bringing children into the care and custody of the director. This act will incorporate into law the pathway as to how this will be done.

Getting to this day has been an unprecedented process that deserves to be explained here. In 2018, the *Child and Family Services Act* advisory committee was established by the then-Minister of Health and Social Services. This committee was independent and determined the mechanisms for gathering information for its own review, according to the *Child and Family Services Act* legislative requirements.

Mr. Speaker, committee members completed 18 months of public engagement, travelled to all Yukon communities, and held meetings and interviews with Yukon First Nations, citizens, communities, community organizations, and individuals, as requested.

Information was gathered through focus groups, community-specific meetings, individual meetings, and written submissions by individuals, community organizations, experts, and key stakeholders, including the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate. This extensive consultation resulted in the final report entitled *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, which was tabled in October 2019. The first recommendation put forward in that report was as follows: "To implement the changes that are needed, Yukon Government

must work in partnership with Yukoners and individual First Nation Governments when drafting and implementing necessary changes to the Act, and its policy and regulations."

Given this recommendation as well as the overrepresentation of indigenous children and families in the Yukon's child welfare system, we considered it essential to engage with Yukon First Nations using a government-to-government approach to discuss and come to an understanding of the actions needed to address all of the recommendations. We took all of the recommendations very seriously. We have worked together with all Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations on the *Child and Family Services Act* legislative changes, responding to the report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*.

There were hundreds of hours of collaboration that resulted in the bill here before us. Let's be clear: These amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* will serve all Yukon children and families who need services and supports, but these amendments are primarily designed to fundamentally change how the child welfare system works in relation to indigenous children by embedding in law respect for the children and their cultural background. This reconciliatory process shows this government's commitment to working with Yukon First Nations to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children in care.

In July 2020, the *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee was established with representation from 12 Yukon First Nations. It was co-chaired by the Council of Yukon First Nations' executive director, Shadelle Chambers, who I note has now joined us, and the director of Family and Children's Services, Geraldine MacDonald. The steering committee provided direction and advice on proposed amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, this Bill No. 11.

The legislative work will make a real difference in the lives of children, youth, and families. These efforts are focused on supporting children involved in the Yukon's child welfare system to remain with, and connected to, their families and communities, whenever possible. There has been an incredible declaration by Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to this legislative work. This collaborative work does not go unnoticed. I believe, and our government believes, that such a process is the way forward to develop legislation that impacts our First Nation citizens and communities.

I want to thank the steering committee members for their significant efforts in working together on amending this bill. These legislative amendments will carve a path forward that will work to reduce the number of indigenous children in care and improve outcomes for all children and families who are involved in the child welfare system. *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* called on the government to amend legislation to fully support the child welfare reform that is taking place in the Yukon.

The amending bill clarifies the Yukon government's commitment to reconciliation, to working government to government, to family preservation and reunification, and to honouring cultural and community connections. It also

acknowledges the historical trauma caused by the child welfare system.

The amended *Child and Family Services Act*, or Bill No. 11, here before you has a clear purpose: to protect the safety and well-being of children and families and to support continued connection to family, community, and culture. This act works to support family preservation and reunification and honours cultural and community connection.

I would like to turn, for a moment, to the preamble that is proposed to be included in the *Child and Family Services Act*. The preamble suggested in Bill No. 11 includes the following ideas: that every child is entitled to personal safety, health, and well-being; that children are dependent on their families for their safety and guidance, and as a result, the well-being of children is promoted by supporting the integrity of families; that every child's family is unique and has value, integrity, and dignity; and that members of society and communities share a responsibility to promote the healthy development and well-being of their children.

It also notes that Canada has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It also notes that there is an act respecting First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families in Canada that sets out the principles that are applicable on a national level to the provision of child and family services, particularly in relation to indigenous children.

The preamble notes that the Government of Yukon will continue to work with Yukon First Nations to fulfill commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The preamble notes that the Government of Yukon is committed to implementing recommendations outlined in *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*.

The Government of Yukon is committed to reconciliation and honouring the spirit and intent of the final and self-government agreements. The Government of Yukon acknowledges the legacy of the Indian residential school system and the ongoing systemic barriers of racism and the ongoing intergenerational trauma and harm to indigenous peoples and individuals and that it must be considered in dealing with child welfare policies and practices.

It recognizes that the Government of Yukon affirms the need to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children involved in the child welfare system. It recognizes that the Government of Yukon acknowledges the importance of a child's connection to their cultural, racial, and linguistic heritage and is committed to supporting and strengthening those connections.

Lastly, it recognizes that the act has been developed through the combined efforts of representatives of the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, as well as groups and organizations with interest in child welfare.

Mr. Speaker, I defy you to find another piece of legislation, maybe anywhere, that recognizes these rights in this way. This preamble and the other proposed amendments integrate Yukon

First Nation perspectives and values and require that they be considered and taken into account when determining what is in the best interest of the child. There are preventive services that will look to support children and their families to address their child protection concerns and to keep families together whenever it's possible.

The act further clarifies that at-risk families can self-refer and request services and supports to de-escalate their risks and to preserve their family units. This is an incredible shift, Mr. Speaker. These amendments will significantly enhance cultural and community connections.

The *Child and Family Services Act* outlines the obligation to support children in out-of-home care to maintain their connections to family, to community, and to culture to the greatest extent possible. Extended family care options are being expanded here in this bill to include children under the care of the director, and this will support more placement options, particularly in rural communities, to allow for children to remain closer to family, community, and culture.

The legislative amendments here in Bill No. 11 will further support successful transition into independent living by youth when they reach 19 years of age and will continue to support them to reach their transitional goals until the age of 26. Youth who are receiving care in the custody of the director of Family and Children's Services, as well as those who are living with extended family, in their formative teen years will receive the support, which includes assistance with living expenses or housing supports, educational training supports and opportunities, and tuition expenses.

Culturally appropriate processes have been integrated into the act. Peacemaking circles, family circles, and clan meetings are included as options to be explored with families and Yukon First Nations, where appropriate, to support collaborative planning for children in care and dispute resolution processes.

There are amendments to include Yukon First Nations in decision-making processes, including providing consent to any adoption of a Yukon First Nation child. There are, in Bill No. 11, amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* to work to support family needs and giving more opportunity for reunification during the court processes and throughout the involvement of the Department of Health and Social Services.

This act is the work of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon coming together to discuss complex issues relating to the most important aspect of our community — our children and our families. This collaborative work with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations will continue as we move toward implementation of the act.

Across Canada, child welfare reform is underway, and it is taking many forms. Mr. Speaker, our government is leading the way and will continue to work together with Yukon First Nations on child welfare reform at every turn. The presentation of this bill and the amendments that it brings to the *Child and Family Services Act* are a significant step along that path to reconciliation.

I spent many years, in my prior career, working with the *Child and Family Services Act*, the act before this one, and families involved in the child welfare system. It is truly my

honour to bring this bill to this floor. It will change the lives of these children.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise and speak to this. I would like to thank the committee that was involved in reviewing and making suggested changes to the act, as well as all the government staff who were involved in that. I also want to acknowledge and thank the people who were involved in the drafting of the original *Child and Family Services Act*, which replaced the *Children's Act*. I had the pleasure of tabling that, as Minister of Health and Social Services, back in 2008.

I just want to thank everyone who worked both on the original bill as well as coming up with changes to it, because there was a substantial amount of work put into it. While we do look forward to discussing the changes here and think some of them do, indeed, appear to be improvements to the legislation, I also want to give credit to all those involved in the original process for the substantial work that went into this over a five-year period, which included jointly working with First Nations, jointly consulting the public, and jointly developing policy and informing the legal drafting. It included public consultation with meetings in every Yukon community. More information about that can be found on page 2416 of Hansard from April 10, 2008. I won't go through the entire list of the topics that were consulted on at that point, or the information about the stakeholder meetings, but people who wish to reference it can find it there.

It also included, at the time, one theme I will talk about. The *Child and Family Services Act* recognized the importance of "Interventions to start with the least intrusive approach, based on an assessment of the situation." I want to note, as well, that while I am not taking away from the fact that the people who have been involved in suggesting changes to the act have likely come up with some good elements contained in here, the minister is overstating a little bit how new some of these concepts she was talking about are. Some of them were referenced in the original bill, and I talked about them in introducing the original legislation.

So, while some of these changes may indeed be improvements on the language that was included in there, it would be disingenuous for the minister to suggest that they are new concepts, such as providing support beyond the age of 19 for those who need it. They are not new. The change that is new in this is, instead of providing support up to the age of 24, it has been changed to 26, which seems fine enough, but it should be noted for the minister that she was implying that it was a new provision to go beyond the age of 19, when that is not, in fact, the case.

For the ease of Hansard, I'm just going to note that I am going to briefly refer to the speech I made at second reading on April 1, 2008, which can be found starting on page 2250. Included among the provisions in here — and I quote: "The bill recognizes the importance of culture and community in the lives of children and families and ensures the involvement of First Nations in planning and decision making for First Nation children involved.

"Perhaps the most significant change in the legislation is the focus on preventive measures and strengthening families through supportive and voluntary services.

"These changes, coupled with the emphasis on cooperative planning and involvement of families in decisions that affect their children, bring the legislation in line with current best practices."

I also went on to note at that time: "It is important that we are able to meet the unique needs of children and families in ways that best keep them safe and support them as a family unit. We want to strengthen families and believe we can best do that by supporting them and involving them in the planning, either for the child or for the support services that the family receives."

As I also noted in my speech at the time: "Another new feature of the bill is the mandate to provide voluntary services to youth ages 16 through 19 years, and transition services to youth up to the age of 24, who have been in the continuous care of the director until their 19th birthday."

I also want to mention a couple of key provisions that were in that legislation. One of them includes the provision for a five-year review. In introducing the legislation, I acknowledged the fact that there would be adjustments necessary, based on the experience of bringing this act in. I noted at the time: "The citizens of the Yukon want children who are receiving services through the child welfare system to receive quality services. They also want the services to be accountable to the public; hence the inclusion of a five-year review."

Another key provision that was in the original act was, of course, the provision for the creation of the Child and Youth Advocate, which I believe has served the Yukon well. I would like to thank the current advocate for the work that she has done in her time in that role.

I also would be remiss — in addition to thanking CYFN and the team who was involved in the drafting of the original legislation, as I mentioned, the process involved jointly doing public consultation on the *Children's Act* to jointly develop the policy around changes to the act and jointly inform the legal drafting. That process took years in the making, with a considerable amount of work by a considerable number of people. In addition to thanking those staff, officials, and drafters, I also want to thank the former Minister of Health and Social Services, the late Peter Jenkins, for his role in that. He was the minister when that process was embarked on, and it would not have happened without his work in doing so.

Again, we will be supporting this legislation at second reading. I look forward to hearing some of the rationale behind some of the suggested changes in here. I note that a substantial amount of the bill does include, as well, changing the many, many sections where the word "shall" was used and replacing it with "must". My understanding from officials is that is the change that was requested by the committee to make it more plain language, but that it doesn't actually have any legal effect, since the terms, from a legal perspective, are identical in terms of their effect.

Yes, I thought I had one other thing to mention, but perhaps I will mention that at a later stage. I do, again, just want to thank

the many people, both now and during the previous iteration, who led to the drafting of this legislation. There are many people from across the Yukon who have been involved in suggesting improvements to the legislative structure then and in now suggesting further changes to that. It is a very important area of law, and when the act is being used, it has a significant effect on children.

Oh, the one other thing that I did want to touch on, that I missed mentioning earlier on, is that another notable change that was very important that we included in the original legislation — which, of course, is the law today — included: "... the mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. This change further emphasizes the importance of community involvement in the safety and well-being of children." That is again a quote from page 2250 of Hansard from April 1, 2008.

I would remind the government that we have recently seen a serious situation where the government, including the Deputy Premier, failed in performing their obligation to inform parents regarding a situation involving sexual abuse in a Yukon school, and it is important that they keep that in mind and that they recognize their own obligations to the public.

Ms. Blake: I want to start today by thanking and celebrating all of the hard work that was done to make this bill what it is. I was personally able to see the process that it took to get here and the collaboration between all Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the department to ensure that these amendments have children and First Nations' best interests in mind.

For so many generations, child and family services have been focused on apprehension. Anytime a family might have been struggling or in need of support, they felt fear. Instead of feeling comfortable enough to reach out for help, these families had to worry about whether their child would be taken away and placed under the care of the director.

Our First Nation children have been overrepresented in child and family services for so long but have almost never been heard when they have voiced their concerns. This bill shows that things can be different. These changes are a long time coming. The consensus-based approach in developing these changes with the steering committee, which had representation from each First Nation, was so important. This is how all bills should be reviewed and amended, moving forward. By having input from leaders, not just in government, but those who know what the daily struggles and needs are for families, child and family services will be better able to help children and their caregivers. First Nations were heard.

This act is shifting focus from apprehension to prevention-based supports. From prenatal support to family reunification, I sincerely hope that these amendments will mean that more families can get the help they need to stay together, whether it's financial, cultural, or other forms of support that are available to them.

I also want to take this time to highlight concerns that were raised by other organizations. I spent a lot of time reading the *Child Rights Impact Assessment* from the Child and Youth Advocate office. It was interesting to see a child rights lens

applied to a bill that directly impacts children the most. I was glad to see the letter of support from the Council of Yukon First Nations, which discussed the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate and the necessity to move forward in making this important bill happen sooner rather than later.

I look forward to discussing the advocate's recommendations in more detail when we get into Committee of the Whole. The Information and Privacy Commissioner also highlighted some concerns, and I look forward to the minister sharing with us how they will also be addressed.

A final thing that I wanted to touch on before I wrap up is how this act is going to be operationalized. This act is a huge cultural shift in the role of child and family services. It will take a lot of work and a complete change in philosophy for this act to be implemented in the way it is intended.

The department will need a lot of support in taking on these new and very important responsibilities in prevention and support. How is the minister planning to support child and family services workers to make this shift? What resources — financial, training, and others — is she planning to provide to the department to make this act a success?

I look forward to discussing this act during Committee of the Whole and hearing the minister's response to the questions I have asked.

Again, congratulations to the authors of this bill, to the people at the department who listened, researched, and collaborated for a year, and to the steering committee. Because of your work, you have changed the landscape of child welfare in the Yukon and the supports available to our families across the territory.

This act has the potential to be a positive change for Yukon families and children's lives for decades to come. It sets a precedent for how legislation should be done here and across Canada.

Mahsi'.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am so honoured to be here today to be part of a monumental shift in how child protection is delivered in our territory and to speak to Bill No. 11. I want to thank the Health and Social Services minister today, but I also want to acknowledge the former Health and Social Services minister, Pauline Frost, for establishing the committee to do the review and for bringing us to where we are today. I think that there has always been a collaborative approach among our colleagues. I really want to hold my hands up to all those who have been involved in this, because it is truly a remarkable day when we can all come together in this way for the betterment of our children and our territory.

I will speak mostly as the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I have had the privilege and responsibility to also serve as a co-chair for the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+. Addressing the injustice of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people has been among the most important work that I have done in this role.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, released on June 3, 2019, acknowledges the contribution. We acknowledge the contribution of the commissioners of the national inquiry for really bearing witness to the truth of a part of our historical relationship between indigenous people and Canada and our critical role in hearing from families and calling for justice.

The final report acknowledges genocide and identifies four pathways that continue to enforce the historic and contemporary manifestations of colonization that led to additional violence against women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people. These pathways that they identified were historical, multi-generational and intergenerational trauma, maintaining the status quo, institutional lack of will, social and economic marginalization, and ignoring the agency and expertise of indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S+ people.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, which was released in 2019, included 231 calls for justice; 15 are related to the calls for social workers and those implicated in child welfare. I want to just read one of those. Again, you can find all of this. There's actually a portion within the report that goes into a deeper dive into this whole area of child welfare, and it can be found on pages 339 to 354 of the report, but I'll focus on one particular area.

It's in 12.2: "We call upon on all governments, including Indigenous governments, to transform current child welfare systems fundamentally so that Indigenous communities have control over the design and delivery of services for their families and children. These services must be adequately funded and resourced to ensure better support for families and communities to keep children in their family homes."

I focus particularly on that one because I think that it really — I'll get into where we embedded this in our strategy, but there was a major focus. I witnessed the inquiry from start to finish, and there wasn't a story that was told by a family, or someone impacted by the murder of an indigenous woman in this country, that didn't include child welfare.

I know that it is certainly one of the foundational issues that have brought us to where we are today. These are huge strides that we are making in our territory.

Yukon's strategy addresses all four of the pathways — which I mentioned — to violence, and it maps four corresponding paths to dignity and justice. There are 31 specific actions in the Yukon strategy designed to address the paths. They are: strengthening connection and support, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability. Many of the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* before us today directly support actions and changing the story to upholding dignity and justice — Yukon's strategy on MMIWG2S+ — but the ones that are mostly connected, I think, for today's discussion are under the pathway of strengthening connections and support.

So, in 1.3 — "Strengthen First Nation Identity and Connections: Acknowledge and increase actions that

strengthen connections to the land, language, culture, spirituality and traditional livelihoods" — and in 1.6 — "Indigenous Children and Families: Improve and expand culturally appropriate supports to Indigenous families so that Indigenous children are raised in their own safe and loving families and communities" — and in 1.7 — "Improvements in Health and Social Programs and Services: Work with partners to appropriately implement 'Putting People First', the April 30, 2020 final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services."

These amendments also support the principles in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* around child welfare.

"We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by:

"i. Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations.

"ii. Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.

"iii. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools.

"iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.

"v. Requiring that all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers."

Further, the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples clearly speaks directly to child welfare and family preservation.

Ensuring that children and families are supported and have access to their culture through collaborative care between Family and Children's Services and First Nations is one way to prevent violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus individuals. Intervention and resources that support the entire family and reflect cultural values help to decrease trauma and recognize the systemic issues at play. The history of the forced removal of children reminds us that it is critical to think of the entire family unit and the community when children need support and, to extend that, that families should be supported to stay together and connected to their culture.

The *Child and Family Services Act* advisory committee — I really want to speak to this a bit. They provided a great report with a review of the *Child and Family Services Act*. That is the first review that has been conducted since the act was brought into force, which I believe was 2010. The report, entitled *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, which included 149 recommended actions — this review should have taken place in 2015. I want to make note of that. I am really proud that our Liberal government is living up to the laws of Yukon to review important legislation, such as the *Child and Family Services Act*.

I want to point to part of this report. It's the preamble found on page 10 of the report. I want to quote it:

“Embracing the children of yesterday, today and tomorrow”

“We recognize that ‘yesterday’ Yukoners were not invited to be part of the solution. Solutions have been imposed rather than created in partnership. This has created division and distrust.

“In the Yukon, the introduction of western society brought many things that affected the well-being of First Nation people. First Nations were forced to assimilate and change their names. They could no longer practice their traditional ways; they were told where to live, their language was taken away and their children were placed in residential schools.

“We are seeing the effects of assimilation today in the loss of parenting skills, familial connection and heritage resulting in violence and addictions as a way of coping with these losses.

“We recognize that First Nations have been resilient; many have kept their language, culture and identity and are helping others to regain their culture and traditions.

“This report outlines what Yukoners are experiencing ‘today’. This is their reality. Some change is happening — for example, there are several Yukon and national initiatives currently underway; this report will touch on many of them. In addition to the changes brought forward in these initiatives, there must be a shift in the prevalent underlying attitudes, and an openness to work together for change.

“We have noted throughout this Report, building capacity is the most important step in achieving true partnership. Individual First Nation Governments and communities cannot participate as meaningful partners unless and until they have capacity.

“This shift is something that must happen for Yukon to succeed ‘tomorrow’. We must repair the past damage and eliminate the current divisions and distrust; we must walk a different path — a path that is created in partnership.

“‘Nothing about us, without us’, Yukoner.”

I listened carefully to the comments made, particularly by the Member for Lake Laberge, today, and I want to reflect a little bit about that. I will go back, as he did, in history, quoting himself from debate that happened in 2008. I do want to say that the shift to a new act was an important shift for the Yukon, and I don't want to take anything away from that, but I also want to point to the fact that, at that time, there were a number of issues happening and unfolding. I remember the day that this act was enacted.

There was actually a protest at the Legislative Assembly, because there was a haste to bring this into effect without all of the insights and amendments that First Nations were asking for at that time. I just want to remind the member opposite, and particularly those from the Yukon Party, about the historical piece of this. We have gone back and worked closely with Yukon First Nations and our partners to truly work through each and every one of the issues in the legislation and address them. Again, this is something that our government has taken on. This review should have happened in 2015, as it is written in the act to have a review every five years.

I am very proud that our government has taken those steps. I think that we are on a good path here, in terms of making the necessary shifts.

The enactment amends the *Child and Family Services Act* to address the recommendations put forward by this independent *Child and Family Services Act* advisory committee in their report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, to address the response to those recommendations given by the *Child and Family Services Act* steering committee so that Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government can take a government-to-government approach to amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* to fill legislative gaps in the current legislation, so that it does conform to the requirements under the federal act, an act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families, and to make other amendments.

I worked for a number of years within the Yukon Kwanlin Dün First Nation. I worked very closely, front line, directly on child welfare matters. I can really point to the changes that are being proposed in this act that stand out for me.

I'm really happy that we are modernizing and clarifying terminology. That is very important in all of our legislation. We are adding provisions requiring that, in the case of an indigenous child who is in need of protection or intervention, a director notifies the child and their parents, their parent's Yukon First Nation, if any, and the indigenous governing bodies that represent the indigenous groups, communities, or peoples to whom they belong, providing those First Nations and bodies with the right to be involved in collaborative case planning. This is really important. Words matter and actions matter. Shifting to talking about and expecting collaborative case planning is a very big shift, whether the Member for Lake Laberge thinks that way or not. I think that part of breathing life into legislation is having the right political will and the right leadership at the helm. I think that's what you have here. We see the changes that are necessary, and we are providing the leadership that's necessary as well to enable our public servants to do the work that's necessary to really build true partnerships.

I think the other part that stands out for me is expending the provision for supports for youth transitioning to independent living. This is an area that I found incredibly challenging in my work that I did with youth who were transitioning. It was incredibly difficult to help children transition into independent life, without all of the collaborative work, the true collaboration that was required to help them have a life plan. So, extending to age 26 is a huge step, and there are so many others. I could go on all day, and I know that I don't have all of that time to do that, but I am really honoured to have been able to be here in government for this review and to be here to speak about it in this way today. I think that the work that has been accomplished in a government-to-government way, enabling the right types of services, supports, and collaboration with our partners, is really evident. Again, you have a team of leaders who are breathing life into the legislation in the way that it should be.

Again, thank you very much for all of the work that has been done and to all of those folks who are doing this work on our behalf each and every day.

Mr. Dixon: It is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill today. I will be fairly brief in my comments, but I did want to make a few notes.

I would like to begin by thanking the minister for bringing this bill forward and thanking the staff who have put so much work and effort into creating this bill and bringing it forward to the Legislature today.

I know very well how much work goes into the development of a bill like this and how much work has gone on throughout the different branches and levels of government to arrive at this product that is before us today. I would like to thank all those involved.

The *Child and Family Services Act*, of course, affects the most vulnerable in our society, and therefore, it certainly elicits strong emotions in all those who deal with it. I think we have seen that evidenced today, and I appreciate that and respect that very much.

As this bill is before us now, it falls to us as legislators to discuss it, to debate it, and to ask questions about it. From our perspective, of course, those questions necessarily include what is in the bill, what is not in the bill, and what should be in the bill. Of course, this particular bill has been subject to a great deal of work, not just from those in government, but from other levels of government as well as members of the public who have submitted their interests and input into this process.

I think that, for many, this process began with the creation of the original *Child and Family Services Act* Review Advisory Committee. The creation of their report, which is entitled *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, was a tremendous amount of work, and I would like to name and thank those members of that committee. First of all, Mo Caley-Verdonk was the chair of the committee; Ray Sydney was the vice-chair; and Doris Anderson, Lori Duncan, Debbie Hoffman and Rosemary Rowlands all sat on the committee and provided an excellent analysis of the bill in its previous or current form and a very large number of recommendations for government to consider.

I said the word “recommendations”, Mr. Speaker, but that is actually not right. The committee made a very clear point that they didn’t feel that these should be considered recommendations. They made the explicit comment on page 4 of their report, which I would like to quote: “We were asked to look at the Act and its implementation together with the way supports and services are delivered under the Act. We were asked to produce recommendations following our review. However, ‘recommendations’ do not capture the type of change that is needed, and we have therefore outlined the ‘Required Actions’ that must be taken to show Yukoners they have been heard.”

Now, I know, from speaking to members of the committee, that this was a very profound and important aspect of this report. The committee felt that what we refer to as “recommendations” should not just be considered simply

“recommendations”, but rather that they should be considered “required actions”. So, given the fact that there are so many of those required actions and so much thoughtful consideration put in by the committee, we obviously will be looking forward to discussion and debate in Committee of the Whole and look forward to the minister’s explanation of how those required actions have been addressed and which ones, perhaps, were either not addressed or were different from what the committee discussed in their report. That is certainly one aspect that we will look forward to discussing in Committee of the Whole.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, obviously the other big piece of this was the *Child Rights Impact Assessment*, which was completed by the Child and Youth Advocate’s office. I would certainly like to thank the Child and Youth Advocate and the Child and Youth Advocate’s office for the excellent assessment that provides very strong comments and contextualization of this bill. Included in those recommendations, of course, are a number of suggestions for us as legislators to consider.

I would like to quote from the executive summary of the *Child Rights Impact Assessment*: “The amendments to the CFSA as proposed are strong, and taken as a whole would create a significant positive impact on the rights and well-being of children in need of services under the CFSA. But there are also a few changes that require a second thought, and still other areas where no changes were proposed but may represent a missed opportunity to meaningfully impact children’s lives. If the enclosed recommendations are considered carefully, this CRIA would represent an opportunity for the government to implement exemplary and transformational legislation, providing the benchmark for jurisdictions across the country.”

Obviously, those are strong words and recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate’s office, and I think that they are something that we will want to consider. So, as indicated, I believe that Committee of the Whole will be an opportune time to go through those recommendations and discuss them with the minister. I look forward to hearing the minister’s explanation and outline of how the recommendations in the CRIA have been met or addressed.

Finally, the Leader of the Third Party, the minister, and I, as the Leader of the Official Opposition, were all addressed a letter from the privacy commissioner who also raised concerns about the bill and had questions and suggestions for changes. I would be interested in hearing the minister’s response to those suggestions and whether or not the amendments that are proposed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner are necessary and required or if they should be set aside and dealt with at a different date or what the government’s response to their recommendations are in general.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will indicate now that the Yukon Party will certainly be voting in favour of the bill at second reading. We do look forward to getting into Committee of the Whole debate so that we can discuss in detail the various provisions of the act in the context of not only the initial advisory committee’s report but the *Child Rights Impact Assessment*, the input from the IPC, and the input from a range of others as we consider this bill.

In closing, as I said, this is an important bill. We are pleased to see it come forward. We do have questions. We believe we have an important role to play now as legislators in debating and thoroughly assessing and considering this bill, and we will certainly take that role very seriously. I want to note for those who have worked on the bill, or who have had input on the bill, that our asking questions is not meant to be critical; it is simply us fulfilling our role as Official Opposition, ensuring that the best possible legislation comes forward and that we meet our obligations as outlined in other areas.

With that, I look forward to voting in favour of this bill at second reading. I look forward to digging into the details of the bill in Committee, as is our job as legislators.

Ms. White: Before I continue on today, I want to thank my colleagues for their words. It is a really powerful day. It is especially powerful to have the people who are behind it and did all the work. I do really appreciate that the Leader of the Yukon Party did list out the folks who were behind *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. That group of people listened to hard stories. It is interesting because the *Putting People First* document came to government in April 2020, and then we had them in as witnesses. I know that, in having conversations with the chair of *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* when they tabled that document, they felt like it didn't go anywhere because they weren't able to come in and talk about it. They were so worried because they made a commitment to people when they listened to those stories. They made a commitment that it would go somewhere and that they weren't just taking in that information to leave it.

We have people in the gallery who honoured those stories with these changes. I just want to make sure that we acknowledge the committee behind the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* for the incredible work of listening and honouring those stories because, when I had conversations with them, it was hard. It was hard. As the Leader of the Yukon Party said, it wasn't recommendations that they made; they said that they had to be changes. A big thank you to the people in the gallery who made those changes happen, because this is an opportunity.

I thank my colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin because she is a person who has a lot of experience in this, and those experiences have been hard, so if we have an opportunity to change the path for children in the Yukon for the future, then that is not only our obligation, but it is our privilege. We look forward to the conversation, but more than that, we look forward to having this act have life. We want to make sure that children at 18 know that they have the support until they are 26. We want to know that families have that support. We want to see how that happens.

It is important that we change the legislation, but what's more important is that we give that legislation life. That will be the responsibility of everyone in this Chamber, no matter the stripe of government, because it is our responsibility as people in this Chamber to make sure that this legislation has the life it deserves, that it supports the family and the children that it is

supposed to. That will be something we will need the support of the people in the gallery to hold us accountable to. Because when we make this shift, we can't just make it words; we need to make it in actions. I look forward to seeing what these actions are.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would just like to take the opportunity to thank those who spoke today to Bill No. 11. I certainly appreciate their comments. I too look forward to discussing all of those issues, including the 2010 legislation and how that came about. I note that there is much evidence that it came about without the support of Yukon First Nations. If the member opposite wants to discuss that more in detail, I certainly will be pleased to do so.

I too have met with the committee that produced *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. I too have talked to them about their concerns about how this went forward and I too have made note to them that this is happening today and that their work has culminated here.

I appreciate the information that has been brought forward by the Child and Youth Advocate and by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and I truly look forward to speaking about those and having discussions with the members opposite about those issues. But, Mr. Speaker, that is not for today. Today is to bring Bill No. 11 to the floor of this Legislative Assembly and to celebrate the work that has been done to date and to celebrate the people who have done that work and enabled us to bring a truly groundbreaking piece of legislation.

Amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* will change the lives of Yukon children and families — should change the lives of Yukon children and families — and must be implemented with our partners, with our First Nation governments, on a government-to-government basis. The implementation of these changes that I hope eventually will pass this Legislative Assembly is absolutely critical and must be done with our partners. It must be done with the teams of people and the dedication from Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations in the way that brought us to bring Bill No. 11 here today. I thank you for the opportunity to address this. I have heard from my colleagues opposite that they will be supporting this at second reading. I thank them for that support and I look forward to the bill passing this Legislative Assembly.

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: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

Bill No. 13: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022) — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 13, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I mentioned in second reading and during Committee of the Whole, this amendment will require that a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* — what is often known as the acronym “SCAN” — be completed. To be clear, our government sees the amendment before us today as a necessary step that will allow us to ensure that the SCAN act represents the needs of Yukoners and assists them in making their communities safer. We believe that providing for the review through this amendment serves the best interests of Yukoners while also providing the Department of Justice with the authority and responsibility to complete a thorough review.

In conclusion, I recommend that the Members of the Legislative Assembly support the passing of the *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2022)* as a means to ensure that this legislation continues to represent Yukoners’ interests and well-being. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it today.

Mr. Cathers: It really is unfortunate that earlier, at the Committee stage, the government rejected our suggestion of making a review of the *Safer Communities and*

Neighbourhoods Act a priority. Putting in a legislated timeline of five years takes it well beyond the life of this government. In fact, with the government not expected to stay in power beyond next year, under their current support arrangement, this will very likely be a matter dealt with by not just the next Minister of Justice, but whoever is Minister of Justice after the second territorial election following today. So, it is putting in a commitment for someone else to do a review.

In fact, because of the implications of this act and the serious concerns that have been heard both in court and in public about whether the use of it has, in some cases, caused people to be without a home in a way that questions the balance in the act, we believe that there are serious matters that actually should be made a priority for review and that, rather than pushing off the start of that review until next year, the government should actually act on it now and should have the review completed before 2027, which is, in fact, what this legislation proposes — and is in the current wording of the bill since our constructive amendment at the Committee stage to make that review mandatory and that required it to be tabled within two years of passage. The government, by changing it to five years, has pushed the review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* off to the point where the legislation itself would not have to be subject to a review and have the review tabled in the Assembly until 21 years after the original act was passed.

So, again, I do want to note that we do believe that the act itself has value. We certainly don’t object to there being a mandatory review clause in the legislation. It should have said “two years”, we believe, instead of the five-year provision that the minister has proposed.

I also want to note that this provision that the minister is proposing is a one-time shot. It doesn’t provide for ongoing reviews at all. It simply suggests that, by 21 years after the original act was passed, a review should be done and tabled in the Assembly. So, we will be supporting it at this stage because we don’t have a problem with the mandatory review, but putting it into the five-year mark is pushing out serious concerns of Yukoners to some day in the future, probably after not one but two territorial general elections.

Ms. White: I hadn’t planned on saying anything, but revisionist history is fascinating in this Assembly. Between 2011 and 2016, the Yukon NDP was working toward trying to get this reviewed under a Yukon Party government. I am relieved to know that it will be reviewed. It’s long overdue. I think that, as we go forward, understanding the ramifications that this act has had and its intentions, it will be strengthened with the feedback from those who have been most affected by it. I do look forward to this review, and I look forward to changes to this legislation.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I won't be long, but I do have to make some reference to some of the comments made. I am certainly seeking support for this amendment to pass here today at third reading.

I am going to note that the Member for Lake Laberge clearly misunderstands, I think, the purpose and the function of clauses like this one. This is the second time that the member has mentioned here in the Legislative Assembly something about the future of laws. I will take the opportunity to remind everyone — but really that member, based on the comments — that all laws bind future governments. They lay out the responsibilities of government going forward, and they must be honoured.

We just spent some time speaking about the 2008 — again at the initiation of the member opposite — *Child and Family Services Act*, which had a five-year review clause that was ignored by the then-government. They were 14 years in power when they could have reviewed this act. They could have reviewed the *Child and Family Services Act*. They could have reviewed a lot of acts, but they didn't.

I appreciate, as well, that the member opposite seems to pine for the day when our government is not in power and when I am not the Minister of Justice, but this is what's happening now. This is what Yukoners have done. They have sent us here to work together. They have sent us here to take on incredible responsibility. One of the responsibilities in my role is to make laws responsive to the needs of Yukoners, and that is what we are doing in bringing this bill, Bill No. 13, before the Legislative Assembly.

This is third reading. I truly look forward to it passing and us being able to proceed with the work of a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. I have spoken about this matter before and indicated that this review will begin in 2023 and that it will be a priority in the legislative agenda at that time. I certainly look forward to that work on behalf of all Yukoners.

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: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 13 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 13 has passed this House.

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Cathers: I would just like to recap before turning the floor over to the Premier. When we finished yesterday, I had asked the Premier a number of questions. Those include what the status is of the development of a health authority, particularly what the status is of discussions that officials told us about with First Nations.

Secondly, we understood from officials that the government doesn't plan to have any health professionals on the oversight group, board, or committee. Could the Premier confirm or correct that?

Thirdly, as I noted, the Yukon Medical Association passed a resolution at one of their AGMs urging government, instead

of developing new legislation or a new health authority, to consider making use of the *Hospital Act*, which includes the provision in it for the potential of the Yukon Hospital Corporation eventually becoming a health authority, which was envisioned as a possibility when that act was tabled and passed in this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There are a couple of other questions that the member opposite had asked as well. What I will do is head back that way as well. The member opposite asked for a breakdown of the \$9 million in COVID spending for Health and Social Services. It's probably something that normally would be better discussed in debate when Health and Social Services arrives here in Committee of the Whole, but I spoke with the minister today and just had some numbers, so I can provide that information now.

The \$9.097 million total can be broken down as follows: Economic Development has the Yukon emergency relief program for \$820,000; the Economic Development department also has the vaccine verification rebate program for \$157,000; and TNASS, the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, is \$3 million. By the way, that was all mentioned in my preamble, but they asked for a breakdown.

Health and Social Services communication support was \$200,000; Health and Social Services vaccine rollout was \$400,000; testing, same department, was \$300,000; Yukon Hospital Corporation overtime and lost revenue was \$1.5 million; self-isolation was \$1.5 million; rapid test implementation was \$600,000; and miscellaneous needs was \$500,000. All of those were for Health and Social Services. The Executive Council Office cleaning services were \$120,000. So, that is the total of \$9.097 million.

There was also a question asked by the member opposite the other day, and it was about whether the process for selecting the High Country Inn was competitive or not, and I did say that it was not. No invitation or procurement process was there, as it was an urgent need to support Yukoners. Speaking to the department today, they did want me to mention, as well, that the High Country Inn was the only facility that offered both the SIF capacity and also the space for the vaccine clinic and had a close proximity to the hospital as well. So, there were some specific considerations as to the need for this to be expedited and specific.

This service is now available, as folks know, in other areas in the Yukon, and there is more information available online for all members on support services for self-isolation, and that can be found at yukon.ca.

The member asked here again today — providing more information on the status of the development of that health authority. Yesterday, his question was — and I quote: "... I would appreciate clarity from the Premier about what exactly has been offered to First Nations..." and he asked it again here today. He also asked yesterday — that they heard there would be no health professionals on the oversight panel. That is an interesting one, Deputy Chair. I stated yesterday, in response to the *Putting People First* report, recommendation 1.2, and as part of the commitment under the 2021 confidence and supply

agreement to implement *Putting People First*, that we were working on policy options to develop that health authority.

Government-to-government work with the First Nations is essential — of the system transformation — and the Government of Yukon is absolutely committed to that partnership and working with the First Nations, as we have all along the process, from the independent review all the way forward to *Putting People First*.

We have initiated discussions with the First Nation governments to designate a structure that will support the development of a set of shared principles to guide the system changes, as we move forward, as well as collaborative planning, priority setting, and decision-making. We will definitely ensure that we will continue to work closely with not only First Nation governments, but all the affected partners in health care, including the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, nurses, and physicians, and also Yukoners who access these medical services.

An additional deputy minister is now in place with the Department of Health and Social Services — that was Mr. Hale — to oversee the creation of that health authority. That is extremely important, as we do that.

As far as where the members opposite heard there was not going to be any health pros or officials on the health authority, that is news to me; that's for sure. If the member opposite can maybe give some more information on that — I don't see that as being so.

There was also a question about what work has been started on the legislation for the health authority. I can say that a lot of prep work for developing a legislative plan and identification of policy issues is definitely underway now. Development of legislation to support the creation of a health authority in the Yukon is a priority for our government.

There was a question, as well, about whether or not the government is considering listening to the advice of the Yukon Medical Association to use the *Health Act* to develop the health authority, rather than set up one from scratch. Again, as I said today and in the past, we consider a number of legislative options that will support a comprehensive health authority for the Yukon, and all voices are absolutely welcome in that pursuit.

I think that's the questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate receiving an answer to some of the questions I had asked. I am pleased to hear the Premier saying that there may be health professionals on the oversight committee for the development of the health authority. My understanding was based on the briefing with officials. Perhaps what they said, or what I understood, was different from that. It was, I should say. I will just leave that issue there, as far as whether they didn't explain it well or whether I perhaps misunderstood something.

I would move, then, to just asking for some clarity on what consultation has happened with health professions, including the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Pharmacists Association, and other health professions throughout the territory on their involvement in this process. Has the government reached out to them and

consulted with them on what they would like to see? Have they offered them a seat — or seats — on this oversight body, however it is being structured, and what is the status of that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that I have answered the member opposite's question as far as an update to date. If he wants to get into more detail about something that is outside of the second supplementary budget in general debate, I would ask him to bring it up with the minister when that minister is available during Committee of the Whole or in Question Period. I have given the member opposite an update on where we are on the legislation and on the process beforehand, the policies and procedures, and in general debate, that's all I have for the member opposite at this time.

Mr. Cathers: I gather the Premier either doesn't want to or is unable to answer the question at this point in time, but I would note that, since this is related to one of the government's key policy announcements and involves more than one department that would be affected by the implementation of the comprehensive health review, it is something that I think is appropriate to bring up with the Premier and not just with one minister, even if it is with the lead minister on this.

We do have questions about the structure also, since the Premier has made reference to the fact that there is consultation with First Nations going on. Typically, First Nation consultation does involve, at least peripherally, the awareness of the department that is usually the lead on that, which is the Executive Council Office, which reports to the Premier. I would expect the Premier to be fully briefed on what the government is doing with regard to the health authority. So, again, the question I am asking is: What opportunity will there be for health professions to be represented on any oversight committee? Has the government made an offer or an invitation to those health professions, either to nominate a member or perhaps to seek their advice on what the structure should look like? Have they reached out to them at all, and if so, what have they said in reaching out to those health professions?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is speculating and reaching right now, so I have no answer for him. We have a list of the questions that were asked in the briefing. The member opposite is incorrect right now. Their party asked: What is the status of the work with the new authority?

The answers that we gave didn't speculate on anything as far as an authority having a council that doesn't have any health professionals on it, so I'm not going to answer the question — pure and simple. It's speculation, and he is incorrect, so I'm not going to go there. He can try embarrassing me all he wants, as far as what I know and what I don't know. So, okay, I can talk about the health authority. I will spend my time answering his question on the health authority, but I'm not going to answer his speculations.

We know that we are the last jurisdiction, really, to go into this arm's-length, independent body from government approach — a people-centric approach — when it comes to the health and well-being of Yukoners. We believe that we have a responsibility to have that coordination of delivery of services in this way. Examples of these arm's-length types of bodies — we have examples that the member opposite can take a look at,

as far as structure, boards, and these types of things. He only needs to look as far as the Yukon University as an example. Imagine us not having educational professionals on these types of bodies.

I don't know where he's going with this, but he can browbeat me as much as he wants about my intelligence, but I'm not going to speculate. The health authority and their bodies are accountable to the minister, and the proper human resources — professionals — will be in those roles. We hold this model very high. We think that this is the right way to go. I talked yesterday about the Peachey report when his government was in power, and they developed hospitals in rural communities without a plan. When we asked questions about collaboration, their answers on the floor of the Legislative Assembly were that they collaborate all the time.

Again, we believe that this is the right way to go. We believe that, like I said, all jurisdictions in Canada, except for Yukon — sorry, I misspoke, Nunavut as well doesn't have a health authority yet — but it's time. It's well overtime.

The establishing of that health authority is foundational to the recommendations from *Putting People First*, moving the service delivery outside of the government, allowing for increased agility and accountability in that service delivery as well. I think that this is important work to be done. I hope that the member opposite is excited about the pathway forward. I don't have much more to add today on his speculations. He has an opportunity to talk directly to the Minister of Health and Social Services when she appears in Committee of the Whole for that department as well.

Mr. Cathers: Again, this is a major policy issue, something that was addressed in the mandate letter from the Premier to the minister, and as I mentioned because of the aspect of this that relates to First Nation relations, certainly that part of it would seem to be directly the responsibility of the Premier through the Executive Council Office. I don't understand why the Premier is not willing to share the information that I am asking for. These are not "gotcha" questions. I am just asking for public transparency on what the structure is and what government has said to date to organizations representing health professions in the territory. Have they reached out to them about the oversight of this process? Have they offered them the opportunity to participate? Have they asked for input on the structure? Ultimately, have they said something to them and, if so, what have they said to them?

With all due respect regarding the Premier's relaying of what questions were asked and answered at the briefing, I was at the briefing; the Premier was not. I am well aware of what was said. I can't speak to what was passed on to the Premier or what his understanding of it was, but I know what we asked and what the answers were.

So, fundamentally, what I am asking here — for something that has been a signature commitment, a keystone commitment of the government's approach and their plans — is: What is the plan right now? What efforts, if any, have been undertaken to reach out to health professions about transforming the health system?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the member opposite doesn't like my answer; I have answered his question. I said earlier that we were working closely, and ensuring that we will continue to work closely, with affected partners in health care. He is asking if we have done that and I am saying yes and yes. So, I don't know — again, I am just confused. The member opposite is stalling here, I think. We talked about including the Yukon Medical Association. I just answered that question. We talked about the Yukon Hospital Corporation, nurses and physicians, and Yukoners who access health services. We also talked about, in response to *Putting People First* recommendation 1.2, how we are moving forward on these particular conversations and engagements. Government-to-government work with Yukon First Nations — absolutely essential to a system transformation. We are very much committed to continuing down that road. I spoke yesterday about our government being very committed to establishing that health authority and also talking about that in the *Putting People First* report, also the independent expert panel recommending the “Wellness Yukon” existence — and so establishing that new arm's-length, statutory agency that would deliver a range of health care services.

We spoke to an update as far as where we are right now. We are continuing to engage with these entities. The member opposite keeps asking if we are engaging with these folks and what the update is. We've answered the question. I don't know what else the member opposite is specifically looking for, but I can take these questions back to the Minister of Health and Social Services, because it sounds like he is not willing to ask those questions of the minister responsible. As far as government-to-government work, I can talk about that policy. We could talk about the good work that we just witnessed here today — a milestone in the Legislative Assembly as far as working together with First Nation governments and stakeholders and in consultation.

I believe I answered the member opposite's question. I am trying my best to stay within the eight minutes, as we try a new way of doing business here in the Legislative Assembly, but I will keep on answering the member opposite's question over and over again if that is how he so chooses to use his time in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier indicated that the answer was yes but then didn't provide the details. All I'm after is the key details and information about this. If the Premier is wondering if we want to use our time on this — well, to get information about the government's proposed transformation of our health system, yes, we are going to take time to ask questions about what they have done, particularly in terms of what outreach has or has not occurred to health professionals and to partners in health care, including the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Hospital Corporation, the pharmacists, physiotherapists, optometrists, dieticians, et cetera. I could go on at length listing health professions, but my key point comes down to this very simple question: Has the government reached out to them regarding this process in an official manner and, if so, what have they said, offered, or asked?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have talked about the initial conversations that have begun with physicians at the hospital. We have talked about the work with the Yukon Employees' Union. I know I have mentioned it. The minister has mentioned it. Further work does await the finalization of partnership structures from the Yukon First Nations. We have had conversations at the Yukon Forum. I will let the chiefs know that the Member for Lake Laberge is not satisfied that we are moving fast enough on this, although, I will say that there was an acute care model with them for years. We are moving at lightspeed when it comes to changing the paradigm here in the health care system.

I don't have anything else to update the member opposite with, but I do appreciate his tenacity on this particular subject.

Mr. Cathers: What I would encourage the Premier to say to the chiefs at the Yukon Forum, instead of what he suggested, is just to relay the fact that we're interested in the process and would like to know what government has offered to them or asked them for and what government has said to health professions regarding this and what have they offered, asked, or invited regarding the process — and to emphasize to them, and indeed to all Yukoners whom they speak to about this, that we want more information about the process, the timelines, and especially the involvement of health professionals in transforming our health system. We don't think that it is unreasonable for us to ask these questions or to think that the Premier would be willing to provide information and key details about the process, the attempts to involve health professionals, and the timelines.

I do have to remind the Premier — I know that this is a sore spot for him and for the Health and Social Services minister, but the government fumbled their process before and the Yukon Medical Association was upset at being reduced to being treated like a minor stakeholder in the comprehensive health review process. It was expected to participate at public meetings rather than actually through direct consultation by the committee. That was not the right way to go about that process, not only for them, but for other health professions — though the YMA was the one that publicly came out expressing their strong concern about it. I think that ordinary Yukoners would agree that, if you are considering changing and transforming the health care system, health care professionals should be front and centre and deeply involved in providing the advice on what those changes should be. Otherwise, you have people redesigning the health care system who are not working on the front lines and do not understand the aspects of what they are dealing with.

I know that the Premier doesn't like this line of questioning, but the simple fact is that, if you are changing the health care system and want to change how doctors, nurses, or others are involved in it, starting by talking to them is pretty darn important. What I'm asking the Premier for is information and clarity about the timelines for this process — and particularly what the government has said or is planning to say to health professionals about this — and what formal communication, if any, has occurred with them regarding this, particularly about the development of a health authority.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, these are the member opposite's words, not ours, as far as who is going to be on these authorities and these panels — as far as not having health officials on these panels. These are his words that he is creating. As he keeps saying it over and over again, he is convincing himself that this is true. At no time has anybody from our government told that to him. He is now accusing the officials who gave him the briefing of being disingenuous to him.

Again, I am beside myself —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: In suggesting that I was making that accusation to officials, the member, I believe, is in contravention of Standing Order 19(g), imputing unavowed motives to another member. I certainly was not impugning officials. Those are the Premier's words and I believe that those words are a contravention of Standing Order 19(g).

Deputy Chair: The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Standing Order 19(g) talks about imputing false or unavowed motives. I think that what the Premier talked about was “disingenuous”, so, I don't think that is talking about unavowed or false motives.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: I do not find that this rises to the level of a point of order, but I would caution members to be careful with their choice of words.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I have a list of the questions that were asked from the member opposite and his team to the officials. I don't even see the question about health professionals on the authority, so it doesn't even seem like that question was asked in the briefing.

Again, you can understand my non-understanding of where the member opposite is coming from when this wasn't even a registered question.

I am looking at the responses from the team, and I'm looking at the responses today, and it is parallel. I will spell it out for the member opposite, and I will go back to the questions that they asked in the briefing. They're right here. With COVID-19 in the territory, we are currently providing isolation facilities. We talked about isolation facilities. They responded about where they are in Yukon — at the Yukon Inn, the Riverview, and the one in Watson Lake, at the Big Horn — with the assessments moving forward on a need basis for that, as far as the status of those isolation facilities.

He went on to ask about the status of the work on the new health authority. Again, we talked about ongoing conversations with First Nation governments. We promised that we would move forward with them on this, and that is what we are doing. The member opposite is saying that we are not moving quickly enough, because he wants updates. He wants to know what's

going on tomorrow and the next day. I can't answer that question for him. I can't, and the officials couldn't either.

There will be a joint oversight committee developed, which will help shape how the new health authority will be defined. The member opposite knows that, because that is the answer that the officials gave him during the briefing. Yet he's demanding to know about that here in the Legislative Assembly. Again, I don't know why we are going over these questions when the member opposite already got the answers in the briefing and we are really trying to manage our time here in the Legislative Assembly.

What is the anticipated timeline on this? Has the work started? He asked that question of the officials. He asked me about eight times here in the Legislative Assembly. The response they gave was very similar to mine. It's about scope; it's a multiple-year process for *Putting People First*. There has been an internal scan to develop scope, is what the officials told him, yet he is still asking if work has started on this legislation. The question was answered in the briefing. The member opposite is wasting the time in here by asking again and saying that he's not getting the responses. Again, I'm not sure what he's getting at here.

Another question asked by the Member for Lake Laberge during the briefing was, what discussions have been had with YMA, YRNA, et cetera? They told him at that time, again, as we are in the process — government-to-government — of working with First Nations, that we will do that first. At this time, those detailed discussions have not been happening yet, but where relevant, they have been involved in the process over the years, months, and weeks leading to today. They have been involved and will be involved — not they're not going to be involved, which is what the member opposite is telling us in the Legislative Assembly. They will be involved — it says it right here — as will health care partners. Again: doctors and nurses will be involved. The member opposite is telling us that he heard otherwise in the briefings. Now he is telling us in the Legislative Assembly that we're recklessly moving forward without the professionals involved. I just don't understand what he's doing right now.

With the reduction in health care providers, our community health centre is fully staffed. That was another question from the member opposite, and an excellent response there. Because we are trying to keep our time limited here, I'm not going to go through all the questions, but again, we have the questions that he asked. We have the responses. Not only did I answer them here in the Legislative Assembly yesterday and today, but the officials from the department also answered his questions in the briefings.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the Premier is being pretty combative and pretty confident about what happened at a briefing he wasn't at. I was at the briefing. I know what was said and what answers were provided. I don't know what information was provided to the Premier. I would point out as well that, considering the change that the Premier announced yesterday shortly after the House wrapped up, that said — and I quote: “Current Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services Stephen Samis is leaving the Government of Yukon.”

That wording in a press release does tend to suggest that the Premier relieved him of his post. Since he was one of the officials at the briefing, the Premier might want to be a little less confident about what was asked and what was answered at the meeting.

I would also note here that the Premier is trying to spin a narrative that I'm suggesting what the membership is going to be on the oversight committee, when, in fact, if he would actually listen to what I have been asking, I am asking him. He has indicated that health professionals will be on the oversight committee. At least, I think he said that, but we haven't heard a clear response. If they are going to be on the oversight committee, what is the structure? Is there going to be one representative from the YMA, one representative from the YRNA, et cetera? What structure are they looking at for involving them? If they haven't yet made a decision on that structure, are they asking for feedback from health professionals on the structure? If not, when do they expect to be in a situation where they can provide some clarity on how health professionals will be involved, because we know that they screwed it up during the comprehensive health review.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The structure has not yet been decided.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that answer. Next question: Have they reached out to health professions about the structure and asked for input? If not, do they plan to, and when?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes — how many times do I have to say that though? Again, the member opposite is repeating a question over and over again that I answered. Initial conversations have begun with physicians at the hospital, and also with the Yukon Employees' Union. These folks will be involved. Work is ongoing. The structure has not yet been decided.

Mr. Cathers: I would note that one of the things we have seen here is that the deputy minister, who was the DM of Health and Social Services for most of the Liberals' time in office, is no longer with the government. The wording in the press release issued yesterday, suggests that it was a decision made by the Premier, not a decision made by the former DM. Of course, that is the Premier's prerogative, but when government appears to have dismissed a deputy minister who was responsible for spending roughly one-third of the government's O&M budget, and was responsible for leading both the response to COVID-19 and the response to the comprehensive health review, it suggests a lack of confidence in how things have been handled, and suggests the possibility of a major shift in what government is going to be doing in the future. So, we are asking for clarity about that.

I would also note that the Premier, prior to taking office, promised that, if elected, he would release information to the public on the costs of severance for deputy ministers. So, I would ask, with both the decision yesterday and anything else throughout the year, what is the total cost of deputy minister severance in this current fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is incorrect. Deputy Minister Hale is responsible for the development of the health authority piece, so he is again connecting dots that are not

connected, and very much speculating unfairly about the situation — personal and private information, really — and the members keep on going back to, yes, when I was in opposition, I talked about providing that severance, but today, I don't recall the Yukon Party government ever releasing those details about deputy minister severance, and when I took office, I looked into this practice.

There is a reason why the members opposite never did that. It's illegal. It's illegal to do that. So, the member opposite knows that, but yet he is asking me to do something that he knows would be illegal. This is personal disclosure of information, and our laws prohibit it.

Mr. Cathers: For starters, the Premier is effectively telling us that he made a promise without checking into whether he could actually deliver on it, then got elected, and decided he couldn't keep the promise after all.

Also, I should note, in asking for the total amount of deputy minister severance that the government has paid, they could do it in an aggregate manner. If the Premier feels he is legally prohibited from talking about the exact amount for the person who appears to have been relieved of duty yesterday, and wishes to provide an aggregate number, that at least would be some progress in keeping with the Premier's commitment to disclose the cost of deputy minister severance. I would ask him, can he, either for the fiscal year, or for the total life of his government, if he prefers, tell us the total amount they have paid in deputy minister severance packages?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is right. When I was in opposition, I thought that was something I could do. I looked into it, and I can't. He knew the whole time that we couldn't, yet he still asked these questions. I don't know what to tell him, other than I would expect a former Cabinet minister would understand this. As far as an aggregate, I don't have any aggregate numbers in front of me right now. I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I do understand what is legal. I also understand that the government has the ability to change the law. They have made changes to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, which could have dealt with this issue in the same manner as some jurisdictions. The Premier knows very well that there are some jurisdictions in the country that have what they typically refer to as a "sunshine list", where government employees who are paid over a certain amount have that information about their salaries disclosed online. There are those who would argue against that on the basis of privacy, but the point is, it can legally be done, and has legally been done in other jurisdictions.

The Premier made a choice not to do that when they changed the ATIPP act, but they could have considered doing it at that time. If the Premier doesn't have that information at his fingertips, I would appreciate him getting back with that information on the total deputy ministers' severance costs paid during his time in office.

I also want to return to another issue that I asked about yesterday. Upon reviewing the Blues, I note that the Premier didn't actually answer the question. I asked how many government employees will still be on leave without pay after

April 4. The Premier noted during his announcement this week that most of the employees who have been on leave without pay because of either being unvaccinated or unwilling to fill out the attestation about vaccination status will be able to return to work on April 4. The question I asked yesterday was about how many of those employees will still be on leave without pay after April 4, because the Premier himself has indicated that in some sectors, such as long-term care, those employees will not be allowed to return to work on April 4.

What I got back in response was that the Premier gave me the breakdown of the number of government employees on leave without pay as of March 2. I appreciate that information, but it doesn't answer the question. The question is: Of those government employees who are on leave without pay because of vaccination status on March 2, how many have the opportunity to return to work on April 4 and how many of those employees will not be allowed to return on April 4?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the fiscal year is still underway, we cannot necessarily identify a specific amount of fiscal lapses — I know that was part of the question that the member asked — for staff on leave without pay at this time. The full expenses for 2021-22 will continue to be analyzed and will not be finalized until the Public Accounts are completed, as they are every year.

Not all positions being done by employees on leave without pay are identified as essential work. Any essential work that was previously being done by employees on leave without pay was and is still being done by departments. No departments identified a lapse in their variance reports yet, and none have reflected that in these secondary supplementary estimates as well.

So, there is nothing in the supplementary estimate on this particular question. An example of this would be if a grader operator was on leave without pay, highways would still be cleared — so to alleviate the member opposite's concern — but I don't have specific numbers. Those are things that are being worked on through the Public Service Commission, and I know that the minister responsible can answer more detailed questions as time becomes available and also as information becomes available.

Mr. Cathers: I guess I am not going to get an answer to that question here today, based on the Premier's response. I would just note that, based on the number that the Premier provided to me — he indicated that, as of March 2, 92 full-time employees and 294 in total were on leave without pay. Every one of those people is a Yukon resident, every one of those people has a family, and it is affecting a lot of people, so I just would urge them to come back, if he is unable to provide it today, to provide that response early next week so that we can share that information with people who are affected by it, and also just for public understanding of the impacts of this. When government made the choice to implement a vaccination policy — and to do one that applied to more areas of government than many other provincial governments have done — that did have an effect on families, and there are people who have been, in some cases, without employment income since the beginning of December. I know that those people reach out to government and they also reach out to us, and that information is a pretty

important question to answer, so I would ask the Premier to provide that information early next week, or for the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission to provide it and tell us: Of those 294 employees who are on leave without pay as of the beginning of March, how many of those people will be able to come back to work on April 4, and how many will not be allowed back?

I am going to move on to another area, which is flooding costs. As the Premier will know, there weren't additional appropriations asked for Community Services in this supplementary bill, so the only chance that we have to ask questions about Community Services or others that didn't request new money is during general debate.

As of the fall, we had the government's estimate on what the flood response was going to cost in total, but there was some indication that, just because of the timing of the variance reports, there might be additional costs coming in later. So, what I'm asking for now is what the current number for the total cost of flood response by government is, preferably broken down by department, if the Premier can provide it that way.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is correct that there is no money in this supplementary budget for the question that he is asking about, so I do not have those numbers in front of me. I do know that in the 2021 flood season, for that upper Yukon River — the whole watershed — that was the most extensive flood season on the record in the Yukon. It affected homes, property, and critical infrastructure, and it involved a heavy cost in response. Our first priority when addressing this and when responding to floods is obviously public safety, the protection of critical infrastructure, the vital community services, the environment, and the economy.

We are preparing to support the flood response again this spring. It is hard to speculate how much it is going to cost moving forward. As the member opposite also knows, Public Accounts will have complete finalized costs of flood seasons. But, as I said, we are preparing to support a flood response this spring in the event that it is required. We hope that it isn't required. Engineers have been hired to assess the existing berms that are in the Marsh Lake area right now. They have also been advising on community-level infrastructure needs and trying to help inform us of our response if needed, basically. They are also providing guidance on the decommission of some of the temporary berms that were not needed if they are not needed. Also, as we all know, one of the important things to look at right now as we prepare for this year's flood season is to track the snowpack. This year, the Water Resources branch began snow surveys one month earlier than previously, knowing that this is probably something good to do after looking at last year's levels of snowpack.

The first snow surveys occurred in February of this year. We are continuing to go until May 2022 as well. I believe that the minister responsible spoke to this in the Legislative Assembly already, but the snowpack in some of those areas in the territory is currently above average, but it does remain well below the peak snowpack of 2021, which is really good to hear. It's the snow up in those mountains that really caused a lot of concern last year from the folks at the Water Resources branch.

The average snowpack suggests that there is an elevated flood potential, so we have to be on guard for sure. Information on water levels for some of the Yukon lakes and rivers, including current advisories and flood warnings — the member opposite and others who are listening in can get that information at yukon.ca/water-levels. The member opposite also knows very well that, in Supplementary No. 1, there was \$11 million put aside there for flood relief. The minister spoke about that in the fall, thanking the coordination of efforts that we had. It was unbelievable to see everyone coming together last year, including military individuals and all of our community members. I have to give a bit shout-out to the Filipino community of Yukon. They really stepped up, that's for sure. It was really great to see all of the different contributions. It's what makes us all Yukoners.

I think that's about all I can say at this point, other than that there have been a series of community meetings planned this spring to share the latest information on moving forward the flood recovery efforts for this year. This is including the Yukon Housing Corporation program along with work that is now underway by engineers as well, as I mentioned, to assess those berms and the infrastructure. All of the information is being gathered there and community meetings are being set up. We are, again, very grateful for the outpouring of volunteers, municipalities, First Nation partners, and contractors. It was unbelievable to see all of the partners.

We have learned a lot from our efforts. Preparing is extremely important. We know that we are also preparing a request for financial assistance from the Government of Canada's disaster financial assistance arrangement in order to offset the costs of responding to this type of a natural disaster.

We will keep the member opposite updated with any other information, but that's all I have to share with the member opposite at this point.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that the Premier doesn't have those numbers at his fingertips, but I would ask him to get back to us expeditiously with the total costs of the flood response last year. He noted that there was \$11 million added in the supplementary last year related to that. I appreciate that number, but as the Premier knows very well, it is quite common and could be expected that it very likely may have happened that government may have used resources already voted to departments through internal transfers, et cetera, to cover additional costs once the full number for that flood response came in. I would just ask him to look into that and to get back to us by way of a legislative return with that information on the total cost of the flood response for 2021, as of now. I appreciate that some of the stuff like the disaster financial assistance costs could still be subject to change. All that I'm asking for is him to get back with a legislative return with the total number known to date of costs to Yukon government that apply in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Just in closing on that, I want to note that I do give the government credit, and give officials credit, for listening to citizens earlier in the beginning of this year with public meetings and information about the flood. There were also some gaps in communication, as the Premier will be aware —

including people both in my riding and at Marsh Lake, who had been seriously impacted by the flood — in some cases not actually receiving an invitation themselves to that. I would just urge the Premier and his ministers to work with officials and ensure that every effort is being made to ensure that those who were seriously impacted are invited to any meetings. I would also urge government, in addition to that, to ensure that they are advertising those meetings in social media, newspapers, et cetera, so that if there are any gaps in their contact list — such as through changeover in home ownership, et cetera — people aren't being missed in that.

Last but not least on the topic of flood response, I do just want to thank all of the staff, contractors, and volunteers who helped out last summer for the work they did.

In the interest of moving on to individual departments — and the fact that we would like to spend most of the time for our questions related to budget and policy matters on the main estimates rather than on the supplementary estimates — I will ask the Premier to get back by legislative return, as I indicated, and I will turn the floor over to the Premier or the Leader of the Third Party, whoever wishes to stand at this point in time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as a legislative return, I am not sure if that is necessary. The \$11 million that was spent in this fiscal year was sufficient. Otherwise, you would see a budgetary item in this *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, which you don't see.

I will take the member opposite's point, though, that we can learn more from what we experienced last time. One thing that I noticed was a lack — I think it was based on the sheer size of the outpouring of volunteer help. We weren't ready for that; we really weren't ready for that. We didn't have enough bathrooms for people — porta-potties — and that type of thing, and the Leader of the Third Party and I have spoken about this in the past as well.

So, having such an outpouring of support took people by surprise in a way, but I take the member opposite's point as far as residency and those who are on lists and not on lists. I know that it is going to be part of the conversation with the community engagement that is happening as well.

I can give one example of a department's flood response — because the member is right that there are other budgets and other ways of utilizing funding for floods. I could talk about the Yukon Housing Corporation, for example. They joined our efforts and were collaborating with the government in an intergovernmental way, working on remediation and recovery programs to assist Yukoners in restoring their properties and mitigating against future flooding costs. So, inside their own appropriations, they can do that work.

We have also involved the corporation in the community open houses, which took place in October of last year, to make sure that impacted homeowners had information that they needed and were able to provide feedback as suggested as well. The Housing Corporation distributed a survey, as members opposite would recall, to residents who were impacted by the flood, and they received 57 completed questionnaires and completed 51 on-site residential property inspections to understand and to assess.

So, all of this feeds into a greater intergovernmental response to flooding, but as I said, direct money needed for flood mitigation — you won't see a line item in the third appropriation because the department didn't go over the \$11 million that was appropriated. To the member opposite's points, there are different ways in which other departments will use funding to help out, so I just wanted to provide an example of that to agree with the member opposite.

Ms. White: Although the debate over the last number of days has been enthralling, my interest really is in discussing the mains. There are a few questions that we have for the departments about the supplementary budget, but for the most part, we are looking forward. We want to know what the 2022-23 year has and talk about those programs.

I thank the Premier and my colleague from Lake Laberge for the riveting conversation. I look forward to the next steps.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1. The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of these schedules is schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: I will now call the House to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Economic Development

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to welcome officials as they come into the Assembly today with me. Here is our director of Finance, Beth Fricke, as well as our acting deputy minister, Michael Prochazka. I would like to welcome Michael to the Assembly on his first visit. I know the opposition will be kind to him and kind to me.

I will just start with some opening comments before we get into the detailed supplementary budget. As the Minister of Economic Development, I rise today to introduce the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* for the 2021-22 fiscal year. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Yukon has taken focused steps and implemented rapid responses to support the Yukon's economy. As we step cautiously through this evolving situation, we are committed to supporting our residents, businesses, and communities through this global crisis. The supplementary budget includes supports for businesses affected by the pandemic and the additional funding for new media development programming. The total increase is \$3,977,000 for our COVID-19 response.

Costs incurred for the new programming to address the impacts of COVID-19 on Yukon businesses are reflected in this estimate. This includes the Yukon emergency relief program, which supports Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations financially impacted by the orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. This program increased the departmental budget by \$820,000. The department also offered the vaccine verification rebate to support businesses and non-governmental organizations that needed to purchase equipment to ensure that visitors are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The program provided a 50-percent rebate toward the purchase of equipment up to a maximum rebate of \$500. The vaccine verification rebate added an additional \$157,000 to the department's budget.

The main contributor to this supplementary budget request is the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement for restaurants and bars. The original supplement program provided funding to non-accommodation businesses that relied on tourism and were operating at a loss. This was recently expanded to provide greater assistance to restaurants and bars. This increase adds an additional \$3 million to the departmental budget. In total, these pandemic supports created to keep our territory's economy strong have increased the department's budget by, again, \$3,977,000. Operations have also increased by \$500,000. In addition to our pandemic response programming, the department recently announced updated media funding programs to support the territory's film sector. In order to stay aligned with the film funding programs across Canada and to grow the industry, we are asking for an additional \$500,000 to be added to the program's annual budget.

Across the department, as we worked proactively to determine the support needs, we recognized the need for flexibility in how we approach this, whether through changes to existing programs, variations and uptake based on the progression of the pandemic, or new programs for new challenges. We will continue to work with industry organizations and local businesses to support Yukon businesses and workers impacted by the pandemic. This important work will continue. Through the supplementary budget, we are seeking an increase of \$4,477,000 to support these efforts.

To summarize, we are putting forward a total of \$27.88 million in operation and maintenance and capital for the Department of Economic Development. The work that the department undertakes using these funds will continue to pave our path to recovery during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will continue to adapt and respond as the impact on the Yukon evolves. I would like to thank the department for their efforts, local chambers of commerce, as well as our local private sector leaders for their commitment to supporting the Yukon's economy and our local businesses.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to thank the officials and welcome them to the House this afternoon as we discuss the supplementary estimates. The briefing was very succinct and very clear, as most of these dollars were expended on the COVID response.

I was a little curious about the \$500,000 for the review of the film funding program. Is that review finished, and what were the expected goals to come out of those changes to the programs? Was it increased dollars for applications? I am just curious.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have concluded that work. We have four new media funding programs, including the administrative business guidelines that were announced on January 10, 2022, to support the production of professional film, television, and digital media projects. The key changes, which are consistent with the national funding agencies, were requested and supported by industry. We have simplified the administrative processes for the media programs and reduced red tape. The budget to support these new programs is \$1,160,000, which includes the increase of \$500,000 that we're talking about today. The four programs are: a pre-development fund, which is \$60,000; we have a development fund, which is \$80,000; we have a media production fund, which is \$940,000; and a training fund for \$80,000. These programs support the growth of Yukon's growing media industry, which creates local jobs, builds capacity, supports Yukon businesses and entrepreneurs, and contributes to economic diversification.

For folks who are watching, you will see that the local talent continues to grow. We are seeing amazing work from our local producers and directors. The goal in the department is to have as many homegrown projects as possible. If folks go back over the last decade or two decades, what they will remember is that a lot of the push was around bringing feature films from outside of the Yukon here. You might remember the motto on different clothing and hats that said "Need snow". It really talked about the spring season and that last quarter of the fiscal and the first quarter of the next fiscal — in that spring session where this was a great spot for people to come and shoot. We have phenomenal light at that time of year. It would definitely provide positive impact, but now we are seeing a lot of homegrown talent. They came and spoke with us. We had multiple meetings. It was a very significant process that was undertaken. In the end, we settled on these programs.

One of the other things that is important for Yukoners to be aware of is that it is really challenging, when you provide a tax incentive that you provide for coming here for a filming location — it is really difficult — we have talked about that in the Assembly before — to understand exactly what the demand is going to be for those programs. You try to risk-manage it as best as you can. An example that I sometimes use is that, in my first couple of years in this job, we had a really significant feature that reached out to us. They likely were going to spend \$20 million over a short period of time. They reached out to us and said that they are going to need 300 tradespeople, and they are going to come and build a very significant set. You never want to turn that down, but at the same time, you then have to start to do the calculations on that to figure out how much for an incentive. What I have heard from officials on many occasions on this is that, as a jurisdiction, you don't want to turn down a significant player to come and shoot because that conversation moves throughout the industry — whether it be through Vancouver, Toronto, or Los Angeles — and it's harder

to get folks to come back in the future because, like anything in business, they want to see certainty.

With that, what has really been an advantage to us is to continue to have the local talent work with us. We can manage that better when we are projecting out what our costs are going to be. As well, the new funding programs address the four themes identified through the engagement, which included: streamlining production funding; strengthening support for development; simplifying access to training supports; and standardizing business policies.

After announcing the new programs, the department held 10 online information sessions with industry representatives to provide detail on each individual program, the business guidelines, and to answer questions. I am hoping that members of the Assembly or those who might be listening in today would be aware that there was overwhelming support from our industry association, SPYA. They were there when we made this announcement. This is something that they felt was long overdue. I want to thank Kelly Milner who was there and really shared some very positive words. One of the talents as well was Teresa Earle, who has been doing so much. There were a number of people, but I think it would be appropriate to mention those two individuals who have been extraordinary in building and increasing the local industry here.

Ms. Van Bibber: The close to \$4 million for COVID response — that will be my last question and then I will turn it over to the Third Party. I am assuming that this total amount was fully subscribed to and is also 100-percent recoverable from Canada. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I should add that, no, this comes out of the Yukon framework. This was a commitment by the government. This government felt that this was an appropriate place to allocate these funds. They are not funds that, at this time, we would be refunded. I am not aware of that happening. It would come out of the TFF that receive and, of course, would have to be budgeted that way.

I will quickly just go through it — I know that the Third Party may have some questions. The department did an extraordinary job. Just to let folks know that I can't get into the detail. We have what we have allocated broken down by every sector, and then I can cross-reference that by all nine programs that we delivered over two years. If the Third Party would like, I can then break that down by every single community and then again over the nine programs.

I guess I would start by saying that I can bring that down — so when we talked in the opening comments, I talked about the fact that our total appropriation that we are looking at in this particular case was going to be \$27,088,000. Then what I can do with our programs alone is bring that down to \$26,962,907, so you can see that we can pretty much bring that right down. That is the exact allocation across, so I think it is important. Economic Development has just been doing an absolutely extraordinary job through this whole process. It is nation-leading work.

I will just touch on a few things that, I think, address the question: Was it fully subscribed? Absolutely, we have put that

money out there. I will just quickly go through the nine programs and then I will give you the communities.

The Yukon business relief program — without getting into it by sector — we allocated \$13,486,426; the Yukon emergency relief program, we have provided \$66,042; the Yukon essential workers income support program, we have allocated \$5,470,399; the paid sick leave rebate, we have allocated \$1,949,711; the regional relief and recovery fund, we have provided \$3,446,202; the tourism sector support — and this is just between October 2021 and March 2022 — we have provided \$570,368; the tourism sector support, hospitality, we have provided \$297,667.

The temporary support for events fund — which you will remember from last year and through this past bump we had — we have allocated \$1,665,369; the vaccine verification rebate, we have provided \$10,723; and that gives us our total of \$26,956,755.

I will just touch on the communities, which I think is important. Through our funding, to Beaver Creek, we provided \$111,936; to Burwash Landing, we provided \$9,322; to Carcross, we provided \$215,926; to Carmacks, we provided \$143,459; to Dawson City, we provided \$1,063,239; Destruction Bay, \$67,543; Eagle Plains, \$1,484; Faro, \$109,988; Haines Junction, \$701,387; Keno City, \$1,931; Mayo, \$23,225; Old Crow, \$27,896; Ross River, \$158,046; Tagish, \$83,643; Teslin, \$46,096; Watson Lake, \$596,809; and Whitehorse, \$10,124,496; for a grand total in those categories — this is just the business relief program — of \$13,486,426. I think that is appropriate, because that program — essentially, we funded almost every community, and the other programs, we have gaps where, depending on the program, it wasn't subscribed, if you look across the entire Yukon.

Again, to the department, thank you for this work and amazing detail. Again, it just shows the complete integrity and accountability in the work that is undertaken, but it is so — you know, I think that the other point is, when you are trying to do public policy in this level of speed, you are taking chances. Usually, opposition parties, as well as the public, don't give public servants and politicians much room when you are trying to be innovative, and usually your mistakes get highlighted and magnified immensely.

So, when you take the chance to build programs like this — in some cases, just over a week or two, and you do your best due diligence — coming back and seeing this level is something that we — we actually spoke with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business the other day and asked if they would be doing a grading for all of the provinces and territories, because we feel that the work that has been done here has been exemplary.

I could get into more detail, but thank you for the questions, and I look forward to speaking with the Third Party.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you also to the staff again.

Ms. White: It is a pleasure to have the officials today in the Assembly, and I will just build on both what the minister and my colleague have said, that there is great work done by this department.

I appreciated that the minister just read off that long list of successful programs, but this would be a pitch that I would make toward departments, as that is the kind of information that is incredibly valuable — to be able to have in front of you — because I am not going to lie; the chicken scratch numbers that I have for programs right now may not be accurate, but I hope that the minister will correct me as we go through it.

So, having those programs, especially split out through communities and the different streams, is really valuable, because it shows not only what was happening in communities — and by that, I mean individual rural communities, the City of Whitehorse, but in different industries — but where we needed to put that support.

I have a question about income support, and I think I heard \$5,770,000, but I could be wrong. Can the minister again tell me — when we talk about income support or income supplementary — it was the program that I believe was a top-up that mirrored the federal government. You can correct me, but I believe it was up to \$20 or a maximum of \$4 per hour that was given. Can he break that down for me a bit? I would like to know how many individuals, as a grand number, and then I would like to know if we had people who were topping up before the \$4. Were they closer to \$20 than not? And how many got the full \$4 amount? Because I'm trying to get an idea of where we're at and the spectrum of employees who were being supported with this program.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I will do is give a bit of a breakdown about how many folks used the program. I will go back, and then I can give a quick summary of which areas in the economy people received it in the business sector, and then maybe I'll just do a quick run through the communities, if we have time. We will see where we are at. If there's anything I miss, certainly when we come back next week, I can get any additional information for the member opposite.

There was a great dialogue with the member opposite through this process. There were many individuals who the member opposite was advocating on behalf of, and we went back and forth on a number of things. I think we worked through some challenges that some people were having. It's important to state that not all employers embraced this originally, which was a bit sad to see, because we thought it was a fairly generous program. We can say that we are aware that folks who are in these industries continue, and have continued, to continue to do strong work and have been on the front lines. I think that's important to note. Our hope was — of course, we've seen some other changes within the rates of pay over the last year, and that partially has to do with the agreement that we have in place — our confidence and supply bill — and I think that has given many folks on the front line what they have seen as a bump. Of course, these are the people who we have all held up for their work.

Again, the Yukon essential workers income support program provided wage top-ups of up to \$4 per hour to essential workers until February 2021. We paid out \$5.4 million, of which the federal government provided \$4.3 million, to more than 2,000 workers employed by 160 businesses.

Again, I will just go through some of the sectors. What is interesting is that, when you think about this program, of course, the accommodation and food services had the second largest allocation, and that was \$1,899,610. The administrative and support, waste management, was \$143,863. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting was \$40,539. Arts, entertainment, and recreation was \$22,050. Construction was \$12,412. Finance and insurance was \$24,574. Health and social assistance was almost a quarter of a million dollars — it was \$232,793. Information and cultural industries was \$7,636. Management of companies and enterprises was \$16,008. Manufacturing was \$51,135. Other services — we can dig into that, but we are at \$45,846. Professional, scientific, and technical services came in at \$89,414. Real estate, rental, and leasing was \$10,126. Of course, our largest sector, which was retail, was \$2,778,460. Transportation and warehousing was \$71,095. Wholesale trade was just under \$25,000, at \$24,839, for a total of \$5,470,399.

You can see those sectors that we are all probably quite aware of. Accommodation and food services and the areas of retail trade were where the majority of the money went. Again, what's also interesting — which the member opposite may touch on — is that these are the areas that we are going to have the most difficulty — at least with accommodation and food services — getting people back, because we have a situation right now within our economy where those other sectors that we touched on, where you saw that there wasn't as much need, had higher wages.

Folks are now pivoting off for these higher paying jobs, and of course, that has left us with a real challenge in those two sectors.

Ms. White: I gave up trying to write down the numbers at a certain point, but it will be in Hansard by the time we come back the next time. Within those numbers, did the department do a breakdown to figure out, again — I was just looking to figure out a percentage — like, how many individuals — so, we said that there were 160 businesses and 2,000 individuals. Out of that 2,000, what was the percentage of the top-out for the \$4 and the percentage that was not — because, again, it was a maximum of a \$4 top-out to a maximum of \$20. So, that would mean that someone who made \$16 an hour, they could get the whole \$4 — \$16 and below — but if they made \$16 and above, it would just top out at \$20.

I am just looking to try to figure out what that breakdown is.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have, of course, our director, who will endeavour to take a look at that. She feels confident that is possible — a superstar when it comes to pulling these numbers together — so, I will leave that to director Fricke. But I will share one thing with you, through the data collection from the wage support programs — one thing I think that is important — suggests that the average hourly wage in Yukon that we're seeing is just under \$25, so it is \$24.67, is what the data poll has shown us, which I think is good to see.

But, again, it is going back to that question that was tabled by the member opposite: What is that delta between folks? First of all, what does it look like? How many people were topped

up, and how many people maxed out? Then again, I think that it is important for business owners to be aware — when you're thinking that is the average wage that is out there, that \$24.67. We have seen in the economy over the last number of months — and I will apologize to the Assembly that I don't have the exact, this month's, number yet — but we have been in that range of probably, I don't know, somewhere between 1,300 to 1,500 job openings. With our newest employment numbers that we saw, the good thing was that our unemployment rate has risen a bit, but that is because there are 300 more people looking for work, which we are very happy about. We have seen the business sector and the Yukon chamber come out and say that is a healthier place to be, because now we have more people working; we're not as tight and restricted within our available workforce.

Again, there is a lot that we can pull from this and things that we can learn, especially in Economic Development. As we move the labour market team over, these are things that we will be looking into and using it to guide us as we move forward and as we build a new strategy moving forward.

Ms. White: I will just get a couple of questions on the record, just because I am sure that this information will have to go back to the department. I look forward to having that conversation when it comes forward.

The minister just said that the average wage in the territory was just under \$24. Understanding that there are approximately 4,500 employees who work for the Yukon government, when we do that calculation, can the minister come back with the number of how many employees there are in the territory?

When we talk about an average of \$24, we understand that the biggest employer in the territory is the Yukon government. The Yukon government doesn't pay \$24 an hour. The City of Whitehorse is around that point. When we talk about \$24, we know that 2,000 employees needed a wage top-up, which means they made below \$20 an hour. I would like to have that conversation when we come back.

Things that I will also be asking about include the breakdown for sick leave — how many employees had access to sick leave and the average number of days — some of those numbers that the minister spoke of.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge 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. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third 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: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.