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HANSARD

Monday, April 4, 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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NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 369, notice of which was given last Thursday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is out of order. In addition, the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are outdated: Motions No. 36, 37, 69, and 70, standing in the name of the Member for Klwane.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome some guests here today for a tribute and a ministerial statement: Katie Swales, Partners for Children program and the Network for Healthy Early Human Development; Clayton Keats, vice-chair of the Yukon Child Care Board; and Sophie Partridge, secretary of the Yukon Child Care Board. Thank you very much for coming today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon I would like everyone to welcome my mom, Susan Mostyn, who is up here visiting the territory for the first time since the pandemic hit in 2020. I also would like to welcome Edmund Patton, who is a decades-old friend and retired director of the National Aviation Museum in Ottawa and who provided guidance to me on my very first front-page story in the *Ottawa Citizen* so many decades ago in the late 1980s.

Finally, I would like to welcome my brother Peter Mostyn, who you might know through the old-timers hockey or the Emergency Medical Services, and yes, Mr. Speaker — it pains me to say it, but he is my younger brother.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Dental Hygienists Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge National Dental Hygienists Week. The month of April is Oral Health Month, and an important part of this celebration is National Dental Hygienists Week, celebrated annually during the first week of April.

While we are focusing on COVID-19 and how to keep our communities healthy, we cannot forget that maintaining good health includes protecting our oral health. This week's theme, "Oral Health for Total Health," reminds all of us that taking care of our mouth, our teeth, and our gums positively impacts our overall physical and mental well-being. Taking care of our teeth requires more than brushing, flossing, or visiting your dentist regularly. We need to understand the risk factors that can affect our oral and overall health. The major risk factors include an unhealthy diet that is high in sugar, tobacco use, the harmful use of alcohol, or poor oral hygiene.

The good news is that most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Dental hygienists and dental therapists are our health partners, and they play an important role in keeping us healthy at any age.

This week's focus is on the importance of maintaining good oral health practices and helping Yukoners understand the role and the importance of dental hygienists. Dental hygienists and dental therapists are registered health professionals who work in a variety of settings with people of all ages to prevent oral disease and oral health issues that they bring.

Dental hygienists and dental therapists are essentially primary health care providers who are part of health care teams that are needed by every Yukoner. They examine our mouth, our head, and our neck at every appointment and offer preventive treatments, such as scaling and root planing and dental sealants and fluoride.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge today the work of the Yukon children's dental program and the team of dental hygienists and dental therapists and the services that they provide in schools throughout the Yukon Territory.

If your dental hygienist has made a real difference in your life, either before or since the pandemic began, consider nominating them as a dental hygienist superhero at dentalhygienecanada.ca.

I invite all Yukoners to join my colleagues and me this week in showing our appreciation to all dental hygienists and dental therapists in the territory, even if we don't like to go and visit them.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the work done by dental hygienists here in the Yukon during National Dental Hygienists Week. Dental hygienists play an important role in preventive maintenance for your teeth. It's important that Yukoners understand the importance of maintaining good oral health practices and also be aware that there is only so much they can do themselves. There are some things that are best handled by dental hygienists.

Dental hygienists do more than just clean your teeth. They work with you to determine appropriate actions to meet your oral health needs and to keep your teeth clean throughout the year. They may also offer support for healthy lifestyle choices, such as nutrition counselling, oral cancer screening, and smoking cessation.

Thank you to all of our dental hygienists for the role you play in the dental health, and overall health, of Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Dental Hygienists Week during Oral Health Month.

Teeth are part of our body. Oral health care is part of health care. These statements seem obvious, but they're worth saying, because until we treat our teeth as essential, Yukoners will not have access to the health care they need. The Yukon NDP believe so strongly in the importance of access to oral health that we included it as a commitment in our 2021 election platform and then included it as a condition of our support for this government.

Today, we're thanking a group of people who have made their careers about supporting good oral health: dental hygienists. They are registered health professionals who work in a variety of settings with people of all ages. Their work ranges from cleanings to preventive treatments to education. My personal favourite experience with a dental hygienist was the time when one told me to think of her as my "personal trainer for teeth brushing".

Dental hygienists create the foundation of good oral health. Their hard work has prevented many cases of gum disease, cavities, and all the health consequences that those entail, including lung disease, diabetes, and heart disease.

Thank you to all of you and all that you do to keep us healthy.

Applause

In recognition of Elizabeth Kyikavichik, early childhood educator

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, today I have the pleasure of paying tribute on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to one of Yukon's most beloved early childhood educators, Elizabeth Kyikavichik. Elizabeth is a Vuntut Gwitchin elder who operates a family home for toddlers and preschool-aged children in Old Crow. Elizabeth is 81 years old.

Trinin Tsul Zheh, which means "home of little children" in Gwich'in, is the only licensed early learning and childcare program in the community, making it the most northern licensed program in the Yukon. "Grandma", as the kids call her, opened her day home over 30 years ago and some of those children from 30 years ago are now parents of little ones in the program today. Elizabeth understands how children thrive developmentally in engaging learning environments before entering school, learning to communicate their feelings and describe the world around them. At the "home of little children", Elizabeth embraces both traditional and contemporary approaches, incorporating traditional stories, Gwich'in language lessons, access to traditional foods, and encouragement of on-the-land experiences.

Recently, one very excited little girl showed off her homemade stick-and-skipping-rope fishing pole to her mom because she was so excited to be fishing like "Grandma". Elizabeth also knows the importance of connecting with

caregivers, providing comfort and assurance for new parents, and sharing feedback on their child's progress while they are learning parenting skills themselves.

Elizabeth is making remarkable contributions to the families of Old Crow and to language revitalization, sharing the Gwich'in language and culture with the community's youngest, most influential learners.

I spoke to Elizabeth this morning, and she had the children speak to me in Gwich'in. She also spoke to me about self-care and traditional practices on the land and how important it is to take care of our well-being.

Mr. Speaker, with this tribute today, I raise my hands up in gratitude and appreciation for Elizabeth Kyikavichik, an inspirational early learning childhood educator.

Applause

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party are delighted to add our voices in celebration of Elizabeth Kyikavichik, or Elizabeth Kaye, as she is fondly known. You only have to Google her name to be able to see how many other folks celebrate her many accomplishments as a language teacher, storyteller, artist, and an amazing beader. I am fortunate enough to own a beautiful pair of her beaded gloves.

About a year ago, I was sitting at Elizabeth's kitchen table, drinking tea and listening to stories, along with her son Edward and the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. We were laughing and celebrating her and Edward's recent days of ice fishing. I knew I was sitting with someone special, but you wouldn't hear it from her directly. Elizabeth makes you feel at home. It's her soft voice and her laughter. It's so easy to understand how kids are drawn to her. For many, many years, she has been in charge of the daycare, and it is through her that so many young learners started their journey of learning Gwich'in.

Elizabeth is a champion of the Gwich'in language and young minds. She knows that language is memory, that it holds intricate knowledge and information that has been kept safe for thousands of years. She knows that language is identity. It is the essence of who her people are and how it shapes their world view. She believes that by using the language, a person's connection to the land grows stronger and that speaking the language makes you spiritually, mentally, and emotionally healthier. She says that Gwich'in is more accurate and it helps translate exactly what needs to be said in a precise way, far more so than English does.

A big thank you to Elizabeth. I do look forward to sitting down and having tea again at her kitchen table in Old Crow soon.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a Yukon Party press release, dated March 30, 2021, entitled "The Yukon Party will bring in a made-in-Yukon carbon pricing system."

Mr. Cathers: I have a few documents for tabling today. The first is a letter addressed to the residents of the Lake Laberge riding, dated April 7, 2021, signed by the then-Deputy Premier, the Member for Porter Creek South.

I also have for tabling the conclusion of the assessment by YESAB of the Stevens Quarry development project, 2012-0124, recommending that the project be allowed to proceed.

Finally, I have for tabling the decision document issued by the Yukon government regarding the Stevens Quarry development, YESAB file 2012-0124, rejecting the recommendation that the project be allowed to proceed. The date on that document is February 8, 2013.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a letter from Autism Yukon to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to honour the election promise his predecessor made to residents of the Lake Laberge riding in a letter dated April 7, 2021, including the clear promise to “maintain the administrative hold that is currently in place on Stevens Quarry”.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to dedicate a portion of the Department of Highways and Public Works 2022-23 capital budget to improve maintenance of the Kusawa Lake road and the Aishihik Lake road.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to dedicate a portion of the Department of Highways and Public Works 2022-23 capital budget to upgrade the gravel stretches on the Champagne access road with BST.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use its 2022-23 budget to build turning lanes at the entrances of the Takhini and Mendenhall subdivisions.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement universal dental coverage by including dental care services under the Yukon *Health Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with youth, parents, educators, and community experts to develop clear policies regarding the safety and well-being of children in schools, including a process to report incidents of violence and sexualized violence.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Universal childcare

Hon. Ms. McLean: Today, I rise to acknowledge the first anniversary of universal childcare in the Yukon. I would like to recognize the incredible work, dedication, and achievement of the Department of Education’s Early Learning and Child Care unit, who have led the implementation of our universal childcare model and many initiatives to help improve access, quality, inclusivity, and affordability. With our government’s initial investment of \$25 million for the 2021-22 year, licensed program operators enthusiastically participated in the new Yukon early learning and childcare funding program, immediately providing affordable early learning and childcare to Yukon families.

The federal government also committed to bolstering our universal childcare system through two funding agreements, contributing an additional \$53.4 million over five years. Costing less than \$10 a day on average, in the first year, families automatically saved up to \$8,400 for each child registered full time in a licensed program.

In addition, we created 200 new spaces for children this year, including new programs in Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Ross River.

A few short weeks ago, I rose in the Assembly to provide an update on how we are making investments in early childhood educators, or ECEs, to help improve the quality of care and education that Yukon children receive. This year, we provided over 60 post-secondary bursaries for ECEs and developed the accelerated early learning professional development pathway program at Yukon University and invested in enhancing Yukon University course offerings in rural communities.

ECEs in the Yukon are now the highest paid in the country, have access to a comprehensive benefits plan, and can upgrade their level of education while working in the territory.

In addition, we launched a fund for developing enhanced, culturally rich early learning programs and environments that incorporate Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing, play-spaced outdoor and experiential learning, francophone language and culture, and more. Forty-three licensed programs and 225 individual early learning educators have participated in the first five months of this program.

We know that COVID-19 has had an impact on the childcare system, and access to early learning and childcare proved to be vital throughout the pandemic. To support childcare providers during the pandemic, we provided additional funds to enhance on-site cleaning, covered family

fees and impacted operator costs during the July wave, and provided rapid antigen tests for staff and families.

The first year of the Yukon's universal childcare program has been very successful and it could not have been possible without the collaboration and engagement with the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nation governments, early learning and childcare operators, educators, and partners.

The future of early learning in the Yukon is bright and that means the future of our territory is too. I look forward to seeing Yukon's youngest learners continue to thrive and contribute to a better future for our territory as a whole.

Mr. Dixon: The Yukon Party Official Opposition agrees that childcare is important to many Yukon families and that the program implemented last year has indeed helped many Yukon families. Childcare was a very important issue in the last territorial election and all three political parties brought forward unique policy approaches to childcare and early learning in our respective platforms; however, I would like to express my concern about why this is the subject of a ministerial statement today. Ministerial statements are normally reserved for new policies or emerging issues that the ministers would like to address, and of course, this is not a new policy. We are all very familiar with this policy. It has been in place since last year. The ministerial statement even contained a reference to a ministerial statement from a few weeks ago, which explains how repetitive some of these ministerial statements have become.

As we said last year, while the Liberals' childcare plan does have some merits, it is not truly universal as it does not cover children who are not in daycare, who are on a wait-list, or whose parents utilize other types of care. If it's not available to all Yukon children, then it's not truly universal.

Over the last few weeks and months, Mr. Speaker, we have heard a number of organizations raise serious concerns about the availability of supports for Yukon students. Those groups include: the Child and Youth Advocate, Autism Yukon, the Speech Language pathologists association, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and the Association of Education Professionals as well as the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, as well as several others. So, we had hoped that the minister may have used the opportunity to address some of these pressing concerns that are facing the department today instead of celebrating a policy that is one year old.

When she has a chance to respond, I hope that the minister will provide us an update on the serious concerns with regard to the supports for Yukon children that have been raised by these numerous lists of organizations that have expressed very serious concerns and we hope that the minister will use that opportunity to provide us an update on those issues.

Ms. White: Universal childcare has been a topic of importance for the Yukon NDP long before my time and remained a focus of ours until it finally became a reality. I thank the minister for her statement. I was incredibly pleased to finally see universal childcare come to the Yukon. It is a huge

step in supporting Yukon families and education and goes a long way to recognizing early childhood education for what it is: education.

The first time I heard someone ask directly about moving early childhood education from Health to Education was the French language debate during the 2016 territorial election. The concept blew my mind because, of course, this was the route to make early learning accessible to all children because access to education is a right under the *Education Act*. We appreciate and acknowledge that the move from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education was monumental and was exactly what many early years professionals and other advocates had been asking for, for a great number of years.

We echo our thanks for all of those on the ground and on the front lines of early childhood education. Unfortunately, that seems to be where the good news ends. The government loves to talk about their commitment to high-quality education, yet early years professionals have been asking for mandatory professional development of their choice for years and their requests have gone unheard and unanswered. Why is it that the government feels that professional development is necessary for some educators, but not for all educators?

There is also the topic of spaces. Over the last years, we have seen daycares and preschools opening in all manner of buildings, scattered throughout Whitehorse and the territory, but what we haven't seen are many purpose-built preschools. Those who have chosen to go this route because it is better for children to have a purpose-built space, both inside and outside, have been stuck paying the building costs out of pocket. How many operators of early learning facilities does the minister think are both able and willing to mortgage their own homes to build new centres?

The government is currently in the process of building one new school and planning the replacement of another. Will this involve purpose-built early years facilities attached to both new elementary schools? Is the government working with programs that don't fully meet their criteria of full time, but are valuable to families, such as Purple Stew or Chickadees? When will these families and early learners benefit from universal access?

Families are unique and, as such, have unique needs. If early childhood education is indeed to be universal, what supports is the government offering to shift workers and other Yukoners who don't have nine-to-five jobs? What is the government doing to incentivize longer and more flexible hours to support these families?

Finally, will the minister commit to sitting down with early years educators and listen to what additional supports they need?

Mr. Speaker, we want to watch Yukon's youngest learners thrive but believe that the mark has been missed in some areas. We agree that this has been a big first year, but there is much more that needs to be done to make this program truly universal.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank my colleagues from across the way for their comments today. I am really pleased to be able

to bring an update to Yukoners. I think that is what ministerial statements are there to do.

This is a historic moment in our Yukon history in terms of the amount of investment that has been made to early learning and childcare in the Yukon and is certainly a commitment that our government has made. I know that I hear my colleagues across the way saying that this is important to them too. As Yukoners, I think that we are united on that front.

So, I thought that on the one-year anniversary of the implementation of universal childcare and moving toward quality, accessible, and inclusive early learning and childcare, it would be a good opportunity to celebrate this with Yukoners.

The Yukon is leading the country and providing high-quality childcare at an affordable price for families. In fact, according to the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, Yukon is Canada's new leader in early learning and childcare. Our universal childcare program definitely ticked all the boxes to address affordability, quality, and accessibility.

Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. That is why we are continuing to be committed to building this program to meet the needs of Yukoners.

I note what the Leader of the Official Opposition has just stated around their platform for early learning and childcare. A simple tax credit to families, as opposed to other jurisdictions and other parties, would not have addressed these areas. I know that, as I have stated, we still have a lot of work to do on our early learning and childcare and enhancing it and continuing to lead the country and to help other jurisdictions that are really just starting to embrace this concept. I'm looking forward to having those conversations with my colleagues across the country.

Our government is working hard to make investments that will make life more affordable for Yukon families and ensure that every Yukoner has an opportunity to succeed. I think that affordability aspect has definitely been met.

As of January 1 of this year, 100 percent of licensed early learning and childcare programs in the Yukon have transitioned to our universal childcare program. That is something to celebrate. I'm very pleased that these centres have chosen to embrace this aspect of our program and other aspects of the program as well.

In 2021, the Yukon was one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to reach an agreement with the federal government to ensure that we were able to take advantage of the opportunity that was being offered throughout the country. We were the first territory for sure. So, there is a lot to celebrate here and I am happy to continue doing this work on behalf of Yukoners.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Child and Youth Advocate recommendations to Department of Education

Mr. Dixon: Last week, the Child and Youth Advocate issued a press release raising serious concerns about the Department of Education's conduct regarding an investigation

at Jack Hulland Elementary. While there were several troubling aspects of the release, the one that stood out was the accusation of political interference relating to the Minister of Education.

The release cites a trend of administrative staff who have spoken out about the situation being reassigned shortly after. In response to this, the minister wrote a letter to the advocate, that she tabled in the Legislature. However, that letter completely ignores the very serious accusation of political interference.

Why did the minister completely ignore the Child and Youth Advocate's serious concern about political interference in her letter of response tabled last week?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to questions that are on the floor regarding the Child and Youth Advocate, but, first and foremost, I want to focus my attention on the safety and well-being of students as a priority for our government. It will always remain at the centre when we are talking about any issues that arise in our schools. It is vital that our education system meets the needs of individual students in a way that reflects the diversity of learning needs for our schools. We are working really hard with all of our partners to ensure that our education system supports all Yukon students.

In terms of interactions with the Child and Youth Advocate, first, I will also say that we agree that children have the right to learn in a safe environment and that their perspectives need to be included in investigations. That was one of the issues that the Child and Youth Advocate raised. The Child and Youth Advocate reached out to me about some concerns and I quickly met with her on the same day that she reached out to me.

In terms of political interference, there has been no political interference from this side of the House.

Mr. Dixon: The minister ignored that as she did completely in her letter tabled last week.

In responding to the Child and Youth Advocate in the media, the minister did not hold back. CBC reported that the Education minister — quote: "... says she's disappointed by the advocate's accusations." Similarly, CKRW reported — quote: "Yukon's Education minister wasn't happy with the news release from the Child and Youth Advocate earlier this week."

It seems like the minister is going out of her way to pick a very public fight with the Child and Youth Advocate. Why is the Minister of Education choosing to take her fight with this independent officer of the Legislature to the media instead of simply working with the advocate's office to address her concerns and act in the best interest of Yukon's children?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think that I have been clear all the way along, as I've been in this position for almost a year now, that I absolutely respect the work of the Child and Youth Advocate and respect her position.

When she raised issues with me, I quickly met with her on March 18. Then I proceeded to set up a meeting with a number of deputy ministers, including Education, Justice, Health and Social Services, and the Executive Council Office. That happened on the Monday after the meeting that I had with her on March 18. We scheduled an inter-agency meeting, which happened on April 1. Certainly, I respect the work of the Child

and Youth Advocate and have kept her in the conversation as the issues arose at Jack Hulland school in November and continue to provide updates to her.

I may note as well that I did reach out after the meeting with the deputy ministers of Education, Justice, Health and Social Services, and the Executive Council Office to ask how she thought things had gone, and she said she felt very positive about the conversations. So, I was surprised to see the news release in the way that it was presented, but I'm still committed.

Mr. Dixon: It's not lost on Yukoners that, less than a year ago, this very same minister tried to pick another fight with the Child and Youth Advocate when the advocate announced that they would be investigating the Liberals' massively inadequate handling of the incidents at Hidden Valley. The minister said that the Child and Youth Advocate did not have the authority to investigate the Liberals. The minister told the *Whitehorse Star* — quote: "... it is the view of the Government of Yukon that the Child and Youth Advocate does not have the legal authority to conduct the kind of review that has been proposed..."

So, why does this Minister of Education keep picking public fights with the Child and Youth Advocate, who is an independent officer of the Legislature?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I take issue, of course, with the preamble to this question from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I respect the work of the Child and Youth Advocate. We have continued to work with her office on various issues in our education system and I will continue to do that. I definitely respect her work and will continue to work with her and with others.

I may note as well that the Child and Youth Advocate is, in fact, conducting a review of the matter that the Leader of the Official Opposition has spoken about today, and we are anxiously awaiting that report. When we receive it, we certainly will work with the Child and Youth Advocate to review it and look at the recommendations that she may put forward.

I am happy to continue answering questions today or as we go forward in this Sitting.

Question re: Child and Youth Advocate recommendations to Department of Education

Mr. Dixon: Well, if the minister respects the office so much, she should consider stopping with the public barbs at the office.

In direct response to the Child and Youth Advocate's comments, the Minister of Education wrote a very public rebuke and criticized the advocate. In fact, the minister tabled the letter in the Legislature just a few hours after she signed it, making it clear to everyone that she intended her criticism of the advocate to be public.

Why is the minister publicly criticizing the Child and Youth Advocate for raising concerns about the safety of children?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I guess I will go back to the main point here in terms of continuing to work with our school community and also continuing to keep at the heart of the issues the safety and well-being of our students as the key priority. I

have said today that I share those concerns with the Child and Youth Advocate. It is vital that our education system meet the needs of individual students in a way that reflects the diversity of learning needs in our schools. We are certainly working with all of our partners to ensure our education system supports all Yukon students.

Again, the Child and Youth Advocate reached out to me with concerns on February 18. I quickly set up a meeting. I met with her and then set up other meetings, as I have talked about already today here on the floor of the Legislature.

The words that the opposition is choosing to use about some sort of level of disrespect for this office is just simply not true. I can certainly speak for myself that I respect the work of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Mr. Dixon: The only words from the minister that I have used are direct quotes from the minister.

In her public letter criticizing the Child and Youth Advocate, the minister mentioned a March 18 meeting. According to the letter, the advocate shared concerns with the ongoing internal investigation into Jack Hulland that is being conducted by the department, and the minister just relayed that she shared those concerns.

Can the minister tell us what those concerns were? Has the minister made any adjustments to address those concerns?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will again continue to keep at the heart of this conversation that the safety — that we're talking about children in our schools here. The investigations into the use of holds and physical interventions at Jack Hulland Elementary School — there is still an active investigation happening by the RCMP and Family and Children's Services. That is ongoing. We continue to fully cooperate with this investigation.

The Department of Education is reviewing all workplace risk assessments and other relevant reports and conducting staff interviews at Jack Hulland. This important work continues.

I will take note that I have met with the Jack Hulland school council, with parents, and with teachers to hear their concerns. I understand the stress that parents and school staff are under. We remain committed to working together with the Jack Hulland school community.

I know that the non-violent crisis intervention training has taken place. It was a priority request from families to conduct this training, which has happened. Again, I'll continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

Mr. Dixon: So, the Child and Youth Advocate has taken to putting out a press release and raising concerns with this investigation the minister has cited. The minister, a few answers ago, said that she shared many of the concerns that were raised with her by the Child and Youth Advocate.

My question was simple: What were those concerns? What has the government done in response to those concerns? Have they made any adjustments to the investigation that falls under the gamut of the Minister of Education?

As well, can the minister confirm if any members of Cabinet, or current or former Cabinet staff, have given any direction or input into the investigation at Jack Hulland?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will again say that the investigation into the use of holds and physical interventions at Jack Hulland Elementary School is ongoing by the RCMP and Family and Children's Services. We continue to cooperate with that investigation, and I have also stated that the Department of Education is reviewing all workplace risk assessments and other relevant reports and conducting staff interviews at the school. This is important work that continues.

We certainly remain committed to working with the Jack Hulland school community. As I was stating earlier, we have completed non-violent crisis intervention training. This was a priority request from parents at the school and the school council to ensure that all staff are familiar and up to date on proven strategies for preventing and safely diffusing anxious or hostile behaviour at the earliest possible stage.

Students continue to receive quality education at Jack Hulland Elementary School and good work is happening at this school, and I want to just emphasize that right now.

Question re: Electricity rates

Ms. Tredger: Almost a month ago, we asked the minister to investigate the over-earnings made by ATCO, while Yukoners struggled to pay their power bills. The minister said that he would look into it, but instead of taking action on affordability, the minister slapped on a band-aid and gave Yukoners back \$150 of their own money. The minister is using public dollars to shore up the profits of a private company, instead of doing the right thing.

Will the minister commit to making electricity bills more fair for Yukoners by ordering a rate review for ATCO Electric Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Indeed, what I said when I was first asked about this — and I don't think that it was over a month ago, because I'm not sure we were in this House over a month ago, but it was in March. I stated then that I had already had a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss this. I had met with the Minister of Justice to talk through the issue, and I had already approached ATCO to speak to them.

Subsequent to the questions here in the Legislative Assembly, I have had several more meetings with ATCO to discuss the issue and am working toward solutions with them to review what is happening with our electricity bills. Of course, I need to be respectful that there is a Utilities Board that has the responsibility around this issue.

So, yes, we did. I thank the member opposite for noting that we stepped forward right away to address rising costs and to bring in place an inflationary rebate for all Yukoners on their power bills. That was a move that we did right away. The Premier announced it at the chamber luncheon.

So, yes, I have continued to work with ATCO and also Yukon Energy Corporation. That work is ongoing as we speak.

Ms. Tredger: Well, the Yukon NDP also met with ATCO, who said that they welcome the opportunity to work with the Yukon government to review the rates. ATCO has been transparent that their costs have remained the same while revenues continue to rise due to population growth and increased usage. The minister told this House — and I quote:

"... there is an estimate of what is expected in terms of a rate of return. If the return goes higher, you bring a new rate application and you adjust it."

So, is it yes or no? Does the minister think a rate review for ATCO is the right thing to do for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I absolutely have been in this conversation with ATCO and Yukon Energy. The Department of Justice has been doing some work on this front as well to see what avenues we have open to us. I have had several conversations with the chamber of commerce. I do think that it is important that rates are appropriate and reflect the cost of our utilities. I can say that the utilities think that as well.

I can also say that, as soon as I talked to ATCO, the vice-president and I agreed that it would be good if there was a conversation between ATCO and the Yukon NDP, so I am very pleased to hear that this conversation got underway. It was unfortunate that it didn't happen first, but that's fine; I am glad that it has happened now.

Ms. Tredger: I still actually haven't heard an answer to the question.

When the government grants a monopoly on an essential service to a private company, it is the responsibility of that government to ensure that the company provides quality services at a fair price. This is why we have the Yukon Utilities Board. The board is mandated to establish electricity rates that are, according to the *Public Utilities Act*, just and reasonable. Nowadays, many Yukoners do not feel that their electrical bills are just or reasonable, but the Yukon Utilities Board can't solve this on their own; they need this government to order a rate review.

Will the minister commit to ensuring Yukoners pay utility rates that are just and reasonable?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, Mr. Speaker, there are several possible solutions here. I'm in exploration on all of them. For example, we could have a negotiated rate settlement where we work with the public around that and then present that to the Utilities Board afterward. Or we could ask the Utilities Board to direct for that rate review.

What I will say is that I have been working closely with ATCO, and I want to thank them for their work. They have acknowledged to me the situation. After the chamber raised it to my attention, I reached out to ATCO before I heard about it here and I want to thank ATCO for their diligence around this.

What I will say is that I share the member opposite's concerns that we want to get a rate that is fair for Yukoners around electricity.

Listen, what we're working to do is to transform our energy economy away from fossil fuels. If you look at our budget, we have \$80 million in this budget alone to work on that transition away from fossil fuels. Our electrical utilities are incredibly important in that direction.

So, absolutely, I am working with them to make sure that the rates are fair for Yukoners.

Question re: Hemodialysis services in Yukon

Ms. White: Just over two years ago, I stood in this House as a friend of mine chose to die in the Yukon, surrounded

by friends and family, instead of being able to live in Vancouver away from his loved ones for the rest of his life.

Mr. Speaker, he didn't need to die. What he needed was in-centre hemodialysis. Despite years of advocacy by many Yukoners who need this essential medical treatment to stay alive, the Yukon still doesn't have in-centre hemodialysis. Our friends and neighbours still have to leave everything behind to receive the health care that they need to stay alive. No one should have to make this choice.

When will Yukoners be able to access in-centre hemodialysis in the territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm pleased to have this question. It is an important one for Yukoners and an important one for the service of Health and Social Services and the options that are available here in the territory. The department is working with the British Columbia renal agency — BC Renal is the name of that organization — to improve services available in the territory for Yukoners with kidney disease and to develop guidelines that follow best practices.

The current focus is on early intervention and support to delay the process of kidney disease and providing home-based dialysis therapies.

Our guidelines are rooted in evidence and experience and research developed by BC Renal to ensure that Yukoners have equitable and logical access to high-quality kidney care.

Ms. White: I'm glad to hear that the minister is pleased to talk about this, but I can tell you that I am not pleased to ask the question again. My friend had hoped that his death would shame the government into action, but, sadly, it hasn't. Still today, if a Yukoner needs in-centre hemodialysis, a permanent move down south is the only option and that is if they want to live. The government has told Yukoners over and over that we don't have the numbers to support in-centre hemodialysis, but in the meantime, our neighbours in the Northwest Territories are providing not just one but two in-centre hemodialysis sites, in two separate communities. It is this government's responsibility to make sure that Yukoners have access to lifesaving health care here at home.

When will Yukoners have access to in-centre hemodialysis in the Yukon instead of being forced out?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I have noted, our guidelines are rooted in evidence and experience and the research that is developed by BC Renal to ensure that Yukoners have equitable and logical access to high-quality kidney care. BC Renal supports Yukoners who need dialysis or a kidney transplant and their guidelines do not recommend developing a hemodialysis centre here in the territory.

As noted perhaps in the question, based on the territory's population and the number of Yukoners who would need the service, I completely appreciate that this is not the answer if an individual needs care. But, like other rural and northern settings across Canada, the Yukon does not have the advanced health infrastructure needed to support all dialysis clients. Even if we had in-centre hemodialysis services here, some Yukoners with more advanced kidney disease would still need to leave the territory for medical care, even if that were here in the territory.

We are acting on many initiatives that have a direct impact on Yukoners with chronic kidney disease and BC Renal has recommended improved travel support for those with kidney disease, which we have made some strides in to address the changes to medical travel and the subsidy.

I look forward to the third question.

Ms. White: Governments have the ability to make decisions that put people first. Again, we just have to look at our neighbours in the Northwest Territories to understand how inadequate our services are for those requiring in-centre hemodialysis. This government is willing to cover hundreds of thousands of dollars per patient per year for them to stay in Vancouver, but is not willing to invest in long-term, life-sustaining infrastructure that would allow Yukoners to get treatment in the Yukon and stay in, and closer, to their communities.

Can the minister tell us how much the government spends each year to send people down south for in-centre hemodialysis instead of investing in the long-term health care of Yukoners here at home?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Proactive and preventive care are key elements and important to delaying the progress of kidney disease. We are working with Yukoners who have this medical condition. We are funding glucose monitors for Yukoners with type 1 diabetes — just one part of the piece of that puzzle there. Currently, information that I have would be from earlier this year — approximately 50 people in the Yukon with chronic kidney disease do not require dialysis, seven of whom receive at-home peritoneal dialysis.

BC Renal regularly monitors and updates the department on kidney and dialysis services that are provided to Yukoners. Chronic kidney disease is often managed by primary care physicians or a nephrologist.

Only a small number of patients with chronic disease have to travel or go to other jurisdictions to receive a transplant, for instance. The number of Yukoners with chronic kidney disease and patients requiring dialysis has decreased over the past two years. Identifying the disease earlier and receiving proactive care and delaying disease progression are really key and important factors.

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Education system

Mr. Cathers: Earlier this year, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Autism Yukon, LDAY, and the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees wrote a joint letter to the Minister of Education.

They wrote to express concern about the lack of action taken by the Liberal government following the 2019 Auditor General's report on Education. Here's a quote: "We are disappointed that in the two years since the Department of Education received the report, we see no substantive changes for our students."

Why hasn't the government made any substantive changes since receiving the Auditor General's report in 2019?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think it is very rich that the — I'll get to the answer to the question — Yukon Party is framing

their questions in this way — that there has been no action since the 2019 Auditor General’s report. That is simply not true. I think that is true when we look back to 2009 and look at their inaction with the Auditor General’s report on Education at that time.

I think that’s certainly a very big contrast in terms of what we’ve done, as a government, to address the Auditor General’s report of 2019. It’s good that the Yukon Party is now interested in education, because it certainly didn’t look that way back in 2009.

In terms of where we’re at with the 2019 Auditor General’s report, we have taken a very different approach. We have been working very closely with all of our partners. I acknowledge the letters that have been written by our partners; it tells us that we have more work to do. I’ll continue building on my answer as we go forward.

Mr. Cathers: The partners the minister likes to refer to are saying they’re not happy with their lack of action. It’s the Liberals’ second term in office and it’s time to stop trying to blame someone else for lack of action.

Here’s another quote from this group of education stakeholders’ letter to the minister: “No substantive action has been taken in the last 2 years and, in fact, it appears the current approach seems to be at the expense of addressing the current well documented needs of many students in the system.”

Can the minister explain why so many important education stakeholders feel this way about the government’s lack of action?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, deep contrasts in terms of what our government has done in receipt of the Auditor General’s report of 2019 and the one in 2009. It is relevant and Yukoners do need to hear this, because we are doing the hard work that they did not do when they were in government and had the opportunity to make these changes and just didn’t do it.

In terms of where we’re at with the work that we’ve done — we’ve done a complete review of inclusive and special education. This is not something that was done. It was asked to be done in 2009 and it didn’t get done.

We have launched the universal childcare model. We have enhanced early learning kindergarten in rural communities and established a Yukon First Nation School Board. We advanced the review of inclusive and special education, as I’ve mentioned. We created a data-sharing MOU with First Nations and recently announced that work to develop a student outcomes strategy, and that is underway. Again, this was called upon in 2009 and didn’t happen.

This outcome strategy will develop clear targets to evaluate progress and close the gaps.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the four groups that came together to jointly write this letter are deeply involved in the education system and obviously felt concerned enough about the lack of action from this Liberal government to write this joint letter. They felt that, under the Liberals, the Department of Education was — and I quote: “... seeking superficial approval for directions already determined internally.”

So, does the minister intend to meaningfully and fairly collaborate with Education partners, including these four groups, and if so, how will the minister address these serious concerns raised by these four groups in their joint letter?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will talk directly about how we are working in terms of the implementation of the review of inclusive and special education, which is a key piece of work that our government has undertaken. We now have a very detailed work plan that was developed with the Yukon First Nations Education Commission and education partners through the advisory committee on Yukon education and the Government of Yukon. We are working together in meaningful partnership.

I think that the member opposite should note the date on that letter that he is referring to and look at all the work that has been done over this last year.

In terms of direct response to a number of partners, we responded to a number of partners jointly regarding the issues that they have raised with us. We continue to work closely with all of our partners. There are a number of community inquiries that are underway that include the partners he is speaking of today.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 204: First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of

Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Community Services — *continued*

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will just take a very few moments to introduce once again my colleagues from Community Services to the Chamber this afternoon. We have Matt King, who is the deputy minister, and of course we have Phil MacDonald, who is our finance specialist. It's great to have them here. The department has been doing just a tremendous job supporting me here, and I will just let them continue to do that good work and pass the floor over to my good colleague in the opposition benches.

Ms. McLeod: Of course, welcome back to the discussion in Community Services. I welcome the officials, of course.

A few days ago, we were speaking about flood preparation. I had asked the minister about the government's plans for each of the communities that will be potentially affected by flooding this year. The minister confirmed that the flood preparedness team had met with Carmacks and Teslin. Considering that the team has not yet met with other communities, can the minister confirm what work has been agreed to be done in advance of the flood season in Carmacks and in Teslin?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the member opposite this afternoon.

It is very important to recognize that, right now, it's still early days in our flood preparedness and that municipalities really have control over emergency preparedness inside their communities. As the member opposite has noted, we met with Teslin. They provided a proposal. They've had concrete proposals to us about upgrading rip-rap in the community. We've agreed toward financial assistance for some engineering work in the Teslin area.

In Carmacks, at the official level, we're talking about — just trying to get a sense of the needs within the community — that the community itself, being a municipality in and of its own right, has to assess its needs, but we have made the overture to say if any community — any incorporated community in the territory — needs support, they can come to us and identify what those needs are and we will work with them. Of course, we're currently projecting what the flood modeling — we're doing our flood modeling to find out exactly where and what resources are going to be needed throughout the territory, but it's still very early to determine what those needs are until we know more.

Last year, for example, we had a problem — there was flooding around the sewage treatment centre in Carmacks. We actually worked very, very closely — successfully — and it was in doubt, but we actually successfully saved that sewage treatment facility.

We have learned some lessons from that from last year, and I'm sure we'll put those lessons to good use this year as we go forward, as will the municipalities that we are working with. In that flood relief in Carmacks last year that was tremendously successful, we had the City of Whitehorse actually assisting

Carmacks in their efforts, so we had some real synergy and some really good cooperation happening among our municipalities across the territory that successfully staved off some potential real disaster. It didn't happen because we worked together and worked so well together.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister tell us how much money has been budgeted in this budget that we are debating today for this upcoming flood season?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There is \$1.7 million budgeted for this year.

Ms. McLeod: Of this \$1.7 million, does that form part of any additional funding that communities may require once the fullness of the flood is upon them, should it happen — understanding that, yes, \$1.7 million is set aside for flooding throughout the territory — but should there be an extreme circumstance for any of these communities, how quickly and from where is the government going to come up with money?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have \$354,000 for personnel and \$1.3 million for other expenses at this point.

As the member opposite will recall, last year, we had very little in our flood budget. We hadn't actually anticipated one last year. Floods are not something that normally happen in the territory. We did manage to come up with, I believe, about \$7.7 million. If we have to, we will find the money to make sure that our residents are looked after in this coming flood year. My hope is that we don't have to do that, but we will, as always, prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Ms. McLeod: I am going to move on to talk a bit about rural EMS coverage.

Obviously, we all heard about the problems with EMS personnel being impacted by the vaccine mandate of this government. So, how many people were affected, and of those people, how were their services covered off?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We did some — the member is correct — during the latest wave of COVID — the measures we took — as did many other jurisdictions across Canada — to protect Yukoners, to make sure that they were looked after as best as possible, and to curb the spread of COVID throughout our rural Yukon communities — we did experience some shortages of EMS people. Those staff were covered off from neighbouring communities and from Whitehorse.

We have taken action to bolster our training programs aimed to attract new talent and develop the talent that we have. This includes clinical educators with a community focus, and it includes improvements aimed to reduce administrative hurdles to get involved in the Emergency Medical Services team.

Ms. McLeod: We will get to that discussion in a little bit here, but my question was: How many personnel were directly affected in terms of, you know, being laid off or put on leave because of the vaccine mandate? My question is: How many people were affected by that and how was coverage maintained in their absence?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will endeavour to get the member opposite the exact numbers. We don't have the numbers of staff who were absent. I will say that every single community was covered with EMS staff. We recruited some new EMS staff. As I said in my earlier answer, we covered off those staff who were

missing, when necessary, from surrounding communities or from Whitehorse.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister give us some indication as to how many volunteers were not allowed to work due to the vaccine mandate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said just moments ago, I will endeavour to get that answer for the member opposite.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I thank the minister for that. I look forward to getting that.

When will the mandate be lifted for EMS? There has been some discussion, I've heard, about different levels of employees who may or may not be reinstated — if the minister can just tell us how emergency personnel will be covered, both staffers and volunteer.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As a matter of fact, it's today that we're welcoming back most of our staff — those who have been on leave without pay and elected not to get vaccinated. The regulation that we have drafted is based on location, so in high-risk settings, people are going to have to have vaccinations still. We are hopeful and would like to encourage all of our volunteers to get their vaccinations and make sure that they are all up to date, but if you are a volunteer and you have to access a high-risk facility and you are not vaccinated, you won't be able to do that. We will have to look at ways to employ them in a way that does not make them interact with a high-risk setting, such as a health centre.

In some cases, our ambulances are parked in health centres, which further complicates it. There are nuances to this whole situation as it is unfolding, but we will continue to work with our staff and our volunteers to make sure that they can contribute in meaningful ways where possible. If our staff can no longer go to a high-risk setting, like a health centre, as defined by the regulations we put in place, we will have to find accommodations for them.

Ms. McLeod: I am sure that the minister will forgive me if I am a little bit mystified by that response. Today, the mandates are being lifted for EMS personnel, but it doesn't sound like anyone who is not vaccinated will be going back to work, so I'm in a little bit of a state of wonder that an ambulance attendant who is not vaccinated would have any ability to be of service if they have to go to a hospital, for instance — where most ambulances end up after being on a call.

So, I am certainly looking for a little bit more clarity on that, because it does sound like, on the one hand, the minister is saying that vaccines are gone and, on the other, that nothing has changed — so, if the minister could just clarify that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First of all, I would like to correct the record or at least bring home the point that I actually didn't say what the member opposite has just said that I said.

The fact is, the mandate has been lifted, and as of today, we are welcoming back our staff who are unvaccinated who have been on leave without pay — the first one. Today is the day that they come back in.

The second thing I said is that, in order to go into a location that is a high-risk setting, they have to be vaccinated. We have health care workers, health care-involved vaccinations across the board in the health care field. Vaccinations are safe — that

is why we are administering them to people. It is the best way to prevent COVID-19. It is important that our people who are forced to enter high-risk facilities are most protected from this virus that besets communities — it still besets our communities across the territory and frankly around North America and the world.

So, the people who work for us in certain jobs no longer have to be vaccinated. If you are entering a high-risk facility, you must be vaccinated. We are looking to accommodate people as much as possible. If you're a medical professional who elects, for whatever reason, not to be vaccinated, then we will do as much as we can to employ your skills in a way that does not bring you in contact with people living in, or forced to seek care in, a high-risk facility.

We're trying to protect those people. If you're unvaccinated, you pose a risk to those people, and you will not be able to enter those facilities — that's fairly clear.

There are other tasks that somebody could do, I suppose. You can clean the ambulance bays. You can do all sorts of things in there that might provide an ancillary service to the health care provision. If we're at a site, you might be able to secure the site or do other tasks, but if you're a health care professional providing assistance to somebody who is injured and you have to go in a health care facility — a high-risk health care facility — you must be vaccinated.

It would be great if it were black and white, but the world we live in is no longer — maybe it never was black and white. There are all sorts of permutations to policies in the situations we find ourselves in every day.

As I said many times, the only consistency with COVID is inconsistency. There are all sorts of things — the only certainty, rather, with COVID is uncertainty.

Ms. McLeod: I couldn't really hear some of what the minister said. For instance, I did not hear what it was he was correcting the record on. I guess my statement remains the same, then: that nothing has really changed for these volunteers and these EMS highly trained people with regard to vaccination status.

I'm wondering about, for instance, a driver of an ambulance. Obviously, they are a very important part of an ambulance call — probably a very important part in helping get that patient in and out of the ambulance, even to the door of the hospital, let's say, if that's as far as they can go. I'm wondering how this will affect them.

I wonder how many of the highly trained EMS personnel are now going to be cleaning the ambulance bays, if you can tell me that, please?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In order to correct the record, I basically said that I did not say what the member opposite had summarized me as saying.

What I did want to say is that things aren't back to normal. They simply are not. These are extraordinary times we are living through. I totally empathize with people who are going about their daily business for years and years and then find themselves in the midst of a global pandemic that puts people's lives at risk. It has ripped through and killed millions of people around the planet, and because of that, governments across

North America, including ours, have taken extraordinary measures to safeguard those most at risk in our society. We are continuing that business, which is why we put the mandate in place and why we are continuing to protect those in high-risk emergency situations.

Those highly trained professionals who elected not to take advantage of the wondrous medicines that we have now before us to protect ourselves against this virulent virus that we have in our midst and who want to get back to work can come back to work. But unfortunately, given the risk that is posed to people in high-risk medical facilities, they will not be able to enter said medical facilities without a vaccination.

But because we do value the work they've done, we're looking to try to find a way to employ them in other ways in places where they do not put others at risk, and so that's what we're doing on a daily basis now since they've come back — as they come back to work today.

I don't want to sugar-coat this for them. This is a difficult situation for everybody. It's a very, very small number who have elected not to get vaccinated. It's not a large number, and so we are working very, very hard to find meaningful work for those volunteers and for those staff who have come back into the fold — who have been welcomed back — to actually provide some care to Yukoners, and we will find a way that they can best do that job with the situation where they're lacking a vaccination that is essential to have if you're moving into a high-risk facility.

Ms. McLeod: I wonder if the minister today has information on the current number of EMS staff and volunteers for each of our communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have a total of 93 volunteers active as of January 28, 2022. That's throughout our communities. We had — the number who took leave — after March, it was 22 total.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that, although I had a little trouble hearing the numbers there, but I'll check with the Blues and come back to that.

I wanted to have a bit of a discussion yet again about the FTEs for Watson Lake. So, the minister will recall that last year — last fall — we had a discussion where the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes said that there were 3.2 FTEs in the supplementary budget for last year for EMS in Watson Lake, and the minister — a day or two later — referenced two. It prompted me to write a letter to the minister, and he did respond, for which I thank him.

Now, in a briefing again this year for the mains, I was advised that there were 3.2 FTEs in this budget for EMS in Watson Lake. So, obviously I am a little bit confused about that, because in the minister's letter, the minister referenced that two full-time staff were hired to provide EMS services in Watson Lake in 2008 — I don't know if I mentioned that.

In 2020, two additional full-time positions were created because of the call volume. So, that would mean four people working in Watson Lake in EMS as full-time employees, and that would agree with my understanding of what is going on in Watson Lake.

So, I don't know why these 3.2 FTEs have come up now in two different budgets if these positions were fully funded prior to last fall — for instance, in 2008 moving forward, in 2020 moving forward — but suddenly, last year, I don't know if we were retroactively funding these positions. Maybe today we can get clarification on that. Let's start there.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I hope to be able to clear up the confusion in the member opposite's mind. I know that we have gone through this a couple of times now, both in the House and at the briefing with officials for the budget.

Let me explain it this way: The budget for Community Services is tens of millions of dollars. It's approaching — it's a lot of money. There was an emerging need in Watson Lake identified that showed that we needed more EMS coverage.

The reason we needed that was because we found that emergency responders in Watson Lake were responding to more than 450 calls per year. This is in a very large area. It's unlike many other places in the territory. The coverage in that area is challenging. So, we saw an emerging need; we needed more people in Watson Lake. So, from within the department, we moved resources from other projects and other needs to provide more EMS — exactly 3.2 more positions in Watson Lake.

What has happened now is that is now permanent. It is now funded. We have gone to Management Board and said that we need these resources. Management Board has accepted that we have been funding it out of — that it hasn't been properly funded and not funded permanently, and we have now done that. That takes care of that first bit. We are actually now funding those positions, and we have the full support of the Yukon Cabinet to do that.

The 3.2 positions are additional employee-based coverage, so that covers — that's full-time positions of additional employee-based coverage and funding to cover standby costs when volunteers are unavailable. This money — this 3.2 positions — is going to fund a variety of positions, not only standby, but also full-time and part-time positions, but it will be employee-based coverage, so we are actually saying that there will be 3.2 employee positions attributed to the Yukon government for the base down in Watson Lake.

Those positions can be broken out into full-time, part-time, or auxiliary-on-call positions and will provide the important piece for the member opposite, which is our commitment to provide more than 10 hours per day, seven-days-a-week coverage in Watson Lake. That is what we want to do. We want to have people on staff who can provide more than 10 hours per day coverage seven days a week in that community. That is what this funding does. It is 3.2 positions to cover the cost of providing service for more than 10 hours a day, seven days a week in Watson Lake.

Ms. McLeod: Here is the confusing part: In this letter last December for last year's budget — not the budget we are debating today — the minister said that 3.2 FTEs were now going to be locked in for the reasons that the minister stated. Why again this year? If these PYs are locked into the system, some as far back as 2008 and adding more as we go along in 2020, and if we said last year that we are locking in the money

to make these employees permanent, why are we adding — as was advised in the briefing — another 3.2 FTEs in this 2022-23 budget, if they were locked in for 2022? I am curious.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I've just consulted with my officials. Perhaps confusion in the member opposite stems from the fact that they were added in last year's supplementary budget and now, for the first time, they're in the mains. So, that's really what happened. They were in a supplementary budget last year, and now they're flowing into the mains for the first time. So, that may be the source — they were identified as a need for the supplementary budget last year.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. I suspect I may have to revisit it down the road.

Now, the minister advised in the last budget — in the supplementary budget from last fall — and maybe we can have some clarification whether that was just the government talking about it last fall, and this year it is being implemented — maybe the minister can clear that up, but \$348,000 in the supplementary budget was to hire a new clinical educator and to fund enhanced peer-support wellness programs. So, I would like a little bit of clarification on the peer-support wellness programs. What does that involve? How is that being rolled out to all of our EMS responders throughout the territory?

Perhaps the minister can give us an update on the clinical educator to let us know how that person is spreading their knowledge throughout the territory, and maybe the minister can tell us how many communities this person has visited to date and what has been achieved.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We certainly recognize that training and education are essential in supporting the delivery of emergency medical services throughout the territory. Yukon Emergency Medical Services delivers programs to aid a number of training methods that include a training centre, mobile training centre, high-fidelity training mannequins, online learning platforms, local training nights, certificate courses, and the two dedicated clinical educators who provide in-person and virtual training in Whitehorse and the communities.

The Yukon Emergency Medical Services team works around the clock really tirelessly to make Yukon a better and safer place for both residents and visitors; that goes without saying.

So, the continuing medical education program that we have been talking about ensures that all responders are equipped with the knowledge required to provide the best possible care to Yukoners. I haven't got details on their schedule to go out to the communities. Of course, over the last few months, that has been complicated by COVID, but I am sure that now that we are in a new COVID era, we will get out to rural Yukon communities with these training coordinators. Their goal is to actually provide in-house training to Yukon Emergency Medical Services staff in Whitehorse and across the Yukon in all Yukon communities.

Ms. McLeod: At this time, the minister does not have information as to what kind of training has already been provided through this new clinical educator. The minister may recall that I am a big supporter of training outside of Whitehorse

in the communities where these responders are. I think that it is a pretty key component in attracting volunteers.

What I have heard recently is that the current certification program takes up to a year to complete, which to date has involved some of our community members spending up to two weeks in Whitehorse. So, obviously, this is a detriment to attracting new volunteers.

So, I'm happy that some of this work will be done. I'm wondering if one year to reach the certification is going to continue. Is that going to continue to be the time frame that volunteers are going to be looking at?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First of all, I would like to thank the member opposite for her support of training. I think it is very important; that's why we're doing it, and I'm glad to hear that she recognizes the importance of that training as well.

I'm not a trainer. I have a brother — we met him this afternoon — who does EMS. I know the extensive training that he was forced to go through to become an Emergency Medical Services staffer. I know the continual updates they all do. I really think it's extraordinary — it's not only extraordinary work done by extraordinary people, but I think they take their training very seriously and I applaud them for that.

I will also say that I tend to disagree with the member opposite saying that the training that we're providing is a disincentive for people to get involved in the field. I think the training is actually a lure to people, because you can actually better yourself and get the training that we're providing. We're actually investing in that training in the territory — \$90,000 in the budget per year now for travel and training in the territory. I don't think that's a disincentive for volunteers; I think that's an incentive for volunteers to get involved in the program and to actually get the training they need to be comfortable doing this very, very grueling and very, very important job on behalf of citizens of the territory.

As far as it taking a year, I am not a trainer. I don't make curriculum for Emergency Medical Services staff. My deputy doesn't set up the curriculum for Emergency Medical Services staff; that is done by professionals in the field who want to create and mold some of the best EMS staff in the country. I applaud them for that effort because, quite frankly, emergency medical services staff are at a premium right now across the country. There are not many of them, they are in high demand, and they are difficult to recruit, so the more we can do here in the territory really behooves our service to the territory and to the citizens of the territory.

I don't know if it can be sped up. I am sure that they will look for efficiencies and do it as fast as they possibly can. I bet if we talk to them right now, they would say that it's a year, and I am fully confident that if that is how long it takes, that is how long it takes. I can't dictate that it will go faster. I am sure that they are very good at their jobs and that they are delivering that service as quickly as they possibly can.

Ms. McLeod: Training obviously is a very important part of the job if you are a first responder. Nobody will argue with that. We want these people to be highly trained. We want them to take the time to get the training they need to do those jobs, because they are jobs. It is their vocation; it is their

occupation. Of course, they are trained and of course we want them to be trained. What I am talking about are volunteers who volunteer their time to help their community — to help those people who are in dire need of that bit of assistance that they provide — because we rely on our professionals.

I can go by what people tell me, which is that leaving your life in a community to go to Whitehorse for training for two weeks is a bit of a hardship for them. They still have a life that needs looking after. Perhaps they have a job already that they need to take time off from so that they can go to Whitehorse to take this training. There are some who are less able to do that. People aren't necessarily looking at being an emergency responder as a vocation. As I say, they do it as a volunteer service.

Now, the minister may feel that a year is no time at all, but it's a big chunk of a person's life, especially when burnout for volunteers is quite an issue. Now, I wasn't actually suggesting that their training be cut down, but I am suggesting — which is why I have always been an advocate of getting that training out to the communities. I am maybe suggesting that the department may wish to review the training that is required and how it's being delivered. Why, if training is such a lure, is it hard to find volunteers?

In the minister's letter of last December, he said that they would be increasing the honoraria for responders — we presume that means volunteers — who are attending improved education and training. My question is: How much was that increased, or has it been done yet? Is there a built-in cost-of-living increase for the volunteers? Because I assume they were not covered by this statement. How often is their honorarium reviewed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Okay, so we agree that training is important, and we agree that we both value our EMS volunteers in rural Yukon, and I am suggesting that the training the Yukon government provides greatly improves their effectiveness and their confidence in delivering this important job for Yukoners.

There is a mobile training unit. We have an online learning platform; we have local training nights; we have the two clinical educator positions, which we have spoken about this afternoon, who are to provide in-person and virtual training in Whitehorse and communities. Yukon Emergency Medical Services recently increased monetary compensation to four hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage community responder attendance and support for bi-weekly training nights. We provide equipment, we fund the volunteer ambulance society, and we work with community ambulance stations to maintain an ongoing biweekly training night for which, as I have just said, they get paid four hours of non-operational pay to attend. We have invested \$108,000 for in-classroom learning sessions.

Through transfer payments, Yukon Emergency Medical Services will provide \$60,000 for training to the Volunteer Ambulance Services Society. We are investing in training. One of the reasons why we started to fund these new clinical educator positions is to greatly enhance the ability of our service to provide that training to Yukoners who live in rural Yukon communities. We are continuing to support our rural

ambulance services because we greatly value the service that they provide to our rural Yukon communities.

Ms. McLeod: Perhaps the minister can answer the part of my question in which I requested the information on the honoraria for the responders taking training. Last fall, they were getting an increase, and I would like to know if that was implemented and how much.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The government has increased honoraria from \$15.90 per hour to \$19.08 an hour; plus we've added that four hours of training.

Ms. McLeod: Plus — I didn't catch the last part of the minister's statement. "Plus", he added —

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Four hours, the four hours I spoke about in my previous answer.

Ms. McLeod: Okay, thank you. Now, the other part of that question had been whether or not volunteers in the normal course of their duties — how often their remuneration is reviewed and improved upon.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The review is not tied to any regular incremental increase. This was something that we — as Yukon Liberals — committed to in the platform and we made good on that promise. I will endeavour to find out when the last time was that this was done, but I am more than happy to take a look at this on an ongoing basis and I will consider that request from the member opposite, but it was a promise that we made in our platform and we made good on that promise.

Ms. McLeod: So, was that in the 2016 platform or the 2021 platform? If it was 2016, great. If it was in 2021, my question would be: What has changed in the last year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the endorsement. The change came this year, as was the four hours, so we made good on that promise to increase the rates under which our volunteers are paid; we made good on that.

Ms. McLeod: Now, when the minister referenced the increase from \$15.90 per hour to \$19.80 per hour — I believe it was — we were talking about the training component that the minister referenced in his letter from December, because — the minister's words: "We will also increase honoraria for Responders attending improved education and training." — which is great.

So, my question is: For those people who didn't undergo training this year, did they get an increase? When might they?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The commitment was made in our 2021 platform, just for clarity. We made good on that within our first year. We made good on that promise, and as I said in the letter, it is for their training for this, but we're confirming what other benefits they get.

Ms. McLeod: I did not hear what it is that the minister is confirming.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am confirming that the promise was made in our 2021 platform.

Ms. McLeod: Okay, great. So, I suspect then that the promise was to increase the honoraria for responders attending improved education and training, which, yes, I think we can rely on the minister's words that it has been done.

Back to my question about volunteers who are not undertaking training and improved education that would

qualify them for this funding. I believe they are probably already being compensated in the neighbourhood of \$19.80 per hour. Can they see a raise in the future?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: At some point in the future, they could see a raise.

Ms. McLeod: I am sure they will take great comfort in that. Thank you.

I am going to move on now to community pools. Which community pools are getting maintenance this year, and are there any plans for any of our pools to be replaced?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Community Services has worked to upgrade facilities to meet safety standards. They are a lot more exacting today than they were in the past. They have undertaken assessments and repairs over the past two seasons in Ross River, Beaver Creek, and Carcross.

We are replacing the pool in Pelly Crossing, and work is underway to build the new community pool in partnership with the Selkirk First Nation. Our Sport and Recreation branch coordinates with municipal and First Nation partners on the recruitment of staff to operate recreation programs and pools, to bring in specialists as needed for maintenance, repairs, and upgrades, and to train seasonal staff and specialized pool managers.

Ms. McLeod: That didn't really answer my question, but I suspect that the minister might know that.

What is the status of the pool in Haines Junction at this time?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The municipal-owned pool in Haines Junction has reached the end of its life and has been closed permanently. I have been in Haines Junction. I know that the municipality is considering options for recreation, including whether and how to replace its pool.

Ms. McLeod: What is the status of the pool in Beaver Creek? Will that pool be open this year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Beaver Creek pool requires additional assessment and repair and is not expected to open in 2022.

Ms. McLeod: When can the citizens of Beaver Creek expect an update on this, as a way forward?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Our sports and rec folk are in touch with the sports and rec people up in Beaver Creek on a regular basis, as well as our community advisor in the community. They are keeping folks up on the north highway abreast of the situation. If the pool repairs exceed the facility's — if they are more than — if they cost too much, the pool simply will not reopen. We are doing the assessments right now. We are in touch with officials up in Beaver Creek on a regular basis.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister give us an update on the pool in Ross River?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is expected that the pool in Ross River will open this summer, with the successful recruitment of a pool manager.

Ms. McLeod: If a community decides that they want or need to have a pool replaced, what is the normal funding mechanism for that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Normally, the community will come forward with a list of requests under the Investing in Canada

infrastructure fund — we have, I believe, close to \$1 billion in requests for the fund, which has now been totally tapped out. This is in addition to the first stretch of money. We're working with our federal partners, but I know my predecessor in this role and I am asking the communities to prioritize their request to this government and we will then look at the requests as they come in and fund them as we can.

Ms. McLeod: Now, it's my understanding that the ICIP fund requires a 25-percent investment by the Government of Yukon. For instance, in the case of the pool for Haines Junction, is the Yukon government going to look to download that 25 percent to the municipality of Haines Junction?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said in my earlier answer, the Village of Haines Junction is looking at what they need within the community and how to proceed with their pool facility. I know they have gas tax and other funds; they could perhaps pool them. I don't know how the Village of Haines Junction and the Government of Yukon will work together to fund a new pool if they decide to proceed with that program. We're still working on that with the Village of Haines Junction.

Ms. McLeod: I'm going to take it then from the minister's answer that the Yukon government is most likely to require the municipality to use gas tax funding to fund this 25 percent of the Yukon's share.

Since we're talking about municipalities, of course, we know that AYC has their AGM coming up in May. So, some of the issues that we are aware that are likely to come forward — maybe we can get the minister's take on them today. One of those issues is the need for additional funding to support the increased costs that municipalities are facing or have faced through COVID and are continuing to face.

Can the minister provide us with what he believes is the amount of money that municipalities are seeking? Is the minister contemplating providing any additional money to municipalities? Is it covered in this budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First of all, I would really like to correct the record. The member opposite has not captured the conversation I had about Haines Junction correctly. I didn't say that we were forcing Haines Junction to pay for any pool facility with the gas tax. What I said was that we are working with the community to ensure that we know what their priorities are and we will find ways to fund it.

In the past, it was YG that paid the 25 percent of ICIP funding for most recreation projects in rural Yukon. If Haines Junction or any community wanted to fast-track a recreation facility or some sort of facility and wanted to push ahead, they could cover the cost of the 25 percent themselves, perhaps using ICIP, perhaps using the gas tax, perhaps using their own funds.

So, I don't know what Haines Junction is going to do with their pool. I know that they're looking at this. I know that we're working with them on it, and we will find a way forward, if that is indeed the priority they want to proceed with.

As far as the AYC and COVID support dollars, we did provide about \$4.4 million in the last year to help kickstart the communities in the territory that were struggling with COVID. I understand that there is a need to — they have come forward

with a request for more money. We are considering that, but there is no dollar figure associated with that request. We're looking at it as we speak.

Ms. McLeod: Something else that is likely to come up at the AYC meeting is moving from a three- to a four-year elected term for elected officials for municipalities. So, if AYC approves that motion, will the minister be tabling legislation to bring that into force?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the hypothetical question from the member opposite. I'll take a look at the motion when it comes forward.

Ms. McLeod: Fair enough, but in the normal proceed, as things proceed, I presume that is what would be required. If AYC passes a motion, does it then fall to the minister to table an amendment to the bill — the *Municipal Act* — to allow that to happen? Is that what happens here?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: If I received a hypothetical motion asking for terms to change, I would hypothetically have to amend the *Municipal Act*, yes, to change that term.

Ms. McLeod: Okay, if such a thing should come to pass, what would the normal length of time be for the minister to effect that — although — no, I take that back. I mean, I presume that we are going to set this for the next election cycle, so I am not even going to ask the question.

I would like to move on to the Community Development part of the mains. We have \$2.5 million — I am looking at page 6-11 and I don't know if you have the same paperwork that I do here, but — where it talks about, under "Capital", gas tax funded projects — \$2.5 million. Can you tell me which communities that is from, please?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The community projects that we are looking at are projects in Carcross, Judas Creek, Keno, and then three projects that are really identified throughout the territory; they would be electric fence upgrades, solid-waste facility upgrades, and solid-waste facility weigh scales. It just depends on which communities come forward with their concrete plans first.

Ms. McLeod: Now, when we were at the briefing, I told the officials that I would be looking for a breakdown of the ICIP funding of \$52 million and suggested that perhaps they could get that to me ahead of time, which I have not received. So, today, I would like to have a breakdown of that \$52 million, please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will endeavour to get the member opposite that list.

Ms. McLeod: Well, that's a bit of a problem, because this is our time for debate on this budget. If I don't know what those budget figures are, it's difficult to have a conversation about it. So, I hope the minister can do better, because there was a heads-up given on this.

So, in addition to the \$52 million that is being expended in this budget, there is a line item under "Recoveries" for \$36 million. So, I would like the minister to confirm that, of that \$52 million, \$36 million is being recovered from Canada.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can confirm the number that the member opposite just used is correct. I will also say about the list for the \$52 million — it is complicated, because that's an

envelope. Projects will come in and out, depending on when indeed — where they are in the construction cycle, where they are on the planning cycle, where they are with the municipalities coming forward with their projects. So, the list does change. It is a total envelope of cash through which we fund projects that are ready to go when municipalities are ready to put them forward.

Ms. McLeod: Where to even go with that — there's \$52 million in a budget that we're supposed to vote on. The minister cannot tell us today where the money is going. That's a bit of a problem. So, if the minister only has an idea of those projects that have been approved and the rest of it is some kind of rainy-day fund, then perhaps we can have that list of what has been approved.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I've had a long history with rainy-day funds. I really haven't heard that term in a very long time. I know that a former Premier used it — 30 years ago.

This isn't a rainy-day fund; this is a \$52-million envelope for programs that are coming through the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund put forward by municipalities and then approved by Management Board, adhering to the *Financial Administration Act*.

So, there are a whole bunch of funds — a whole bunch of projects available for that fund. They come forward from the municipalities on a daily basis, because it is our municipalities that actually are responsible for managing these projects, and they will then go through the process of — their democratically elected councils will come forward with the money, put those things, and finally they will say, "Hey, why, Yukon government, we actually have the money and the approval now to go forward with said improvements to X building or said project for pipes in the ground", and we will then say, "Fantastic, we have actually approved that through Management Board, and here is the money."

So, it is an approved fund of \$52 million for this year through which projects, as they get approved by municipalities, will then come through that fund and be funded. It does change; it will change. It's not like it is some sort of opaque thing. It is approved projects through the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund, which actually goes through federal Cabinet, which goes through Management Board, and which then goes through democratically elected councils.

It is a bit insulting to municipalities, I am sure, to call it some sort of rainy-day fund.

Ms. McLeod: Well, I am not sure what else we would call a fund with no items in it. It is \$52 million — \$52 million of Yukoners' dollars. The minister wants us to say, "Sure, spend it on whatever you like." Yes, I get that there are communities with projects lined up — good — but why can't we know what those projects are? Why can't we know where the money is being spent, instead of saying, "Trust us"? That doesn't work in my own household.

I am disappointed that \$52 million of Yukoners' money, to my mind, remains unaccounted for. That is what this process is for. This budget debate is about identifying where the money is going. It's not like this is a surprise to anyone. This is not the minister's first day at the rodeo, so to say, "I suspect we will

never know where the money went, because there's no after-reporting period; we are just going to know next year what the next ask is, but we won't know where the money went" — this is not accountability. Again, I am pretty disappointed that the minister can't answer these questions on his own department.

Let's move on to "Lot Development". Let's see if we have some success here. Can the minister tell us how many lots in rural Yukon — and in which communities — are set to hit the market this year, in 2022-23?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: While my officials secure the information transparently on the number of lots we're expecting to build in rural Yukon this year, I will say that I'm a little bit surprised by the reaction from the member opposite. We have been having such a lovely conversation this afternoon and I'm really sorry to hear her consternation.

I have said that the work that we're doing here is fully transparent and open. I actually said to the member opposite that I would endeavour to get the member opposite the answer that she was requiring. I said I would endeavour to get her the response, and I will. I absolutely will.

We do have a five-year capital plan that lays out the projects. I can go through it. It's sitting right here.

We have Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation public works facility upgrades; that's \$200,000 to \$500,000. We have Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation water treatment plant upgrades; that's \$1 million to \$2 million. This is all stuff in this line item that the member opposite is talking about. We have an arena replacement of \$1 million to \$2 million in Carmacks. We have a lagoon estimated at \$200,000 to \$500,000. We have a public works building.

It's all here. All these projects are here in the five-year capital plan that we tabled with a budget. They're all highlighted in the 2022-23 line item, and it goes out from there. Once they're built, we see that. We have the Auditor General of Canada monitoring this. We have the good officials in the Department of Finance and the Department of Community Services who are working very hard to make sure that everything is done appropriately and working with municipalities to get the projects out the door in a reasonable time to put Yukoners to work and to give them the infrastructure they want in the most reasonable and efficient method possible and in the most cost-effective way as possible for the people, the territory, and the Government of Canada, as required.

I'm very sorry to hear there is no trust in her household. I think that's a problem, but I really do think that, inside the Government of Yukon, we're making sure that we fund projects that benefit Yukoners in the most cost-effective way possible.

I'm not sure if my officials have come up with a lot number yet for me; they have. Thank you very much. I really do appreciate that.

So, this year, in 2021-22, in Dawson and Mayo — we have two lots in Dawson and three in Mayo, for a total lot release in 2021-22 of five. In 2022-23, rural lots — 20 to 45 rural lots in fiscal year 2022-23 — that would be this fiscal year.

Ms. McLeod: I have to respond to the minister's comments about the budget. I find it difficult to fathom that the

minister would put before us a funding pot of \$52 million and say, "Trust us." Now, this is the time that we have to debate this budget, so it is all well and good for the minister to say: "I will get you that information some time down the road." But that doesn't help us during debate on Community Services. It is not like we can call Community Services back at the end of the Sitting when we have the information.

So, yes, I appreciate that the minister and I frequently have very good discussions here in the House when we are talking about Community Services, and I don't mean for this to be unpleasant today, but I do have certain expectations when I am debating money and I don't think that it is too complicated for me.

I am going to move on. Five lots in Dawson and Mayo, 20 to 45 lots somewhere else — and that "somewhere else" is what I would like some information on. Which communities? How many lots?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There's so much work going on throughout the territory on housing development. It's quite remarkable. A lot of these things are happening in municipalities, and in many cases, it's a municipality taking these projects forward. In some cases, the lot development is supported by CS but is really in the municipality's hands. For example, in Carmacks, the target is three- to five-lot country and six-lot urban residential lot development to tender this spring/summer.

In Dawson City, we have the north end development. We have the Dome Road serviced residential development project, which is looking for target approvals very soon. The phase 1 tender could happen as early as 2022; it's up to the municipality. We have industrial mixed-use infill projects. We have vacant lots. We have a completed assessment for multiple vacant city lots in Dawson City, including two Yukon government lots that had been released in 2021, which we were just talking about, and there are two more targeted for 2022.

We have the Dredge Pond 2 country residential, where feasibility work is primarily completed. Master planning is underway to complete it in the spring of 2022, and the phase 1 target tender is the fall of 2022. There is an awful lot that is in Dawson and Destruction Bay. We have Glacier Acres phase 2.

In Faro, we have a possible three-lot servicing and release in 2022. In Grizzly Valley, we have a possible development of 15 to 20 more lots in 2022-23. In Haines Junction, we have seven to 10 potential residential lots as part of water, sewer, and road extension work being done there.

In Keno, there is feasibility work for two to four lots complete and pending next steps, given contamination and regulatory requirements. In Mayo, we have released three country infill, which we just spoke about. Country residential, there is some work being done with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation. In Ross River, a zoning amendment was recently approved for two new industrial lots. Environmental cleanup work led by the Department of Environment is underway.

In Teslin, we're partnering with First Nations. In Watson Lake, we've completed feasibility planning and design work for various country and urban residential and industrial

development projects, all of which are Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board-ready.

The Frances urban development is near tender-ready. The Watson Lake land development, of course, is being done in consideration with the Liard First Nation at the negotiating table, and then of course, there is a whole bunch of other work going.

So, our target is between 20 and 45 lots. You can hear that there is work going on in every community across the territory to get more housing lots into the market.

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

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. McLeod: When we left off, we were discussing lot development and the minister quickly ran through some of the lot development that is going on throughout the territory. My question was: How many are going to hit the market this year? I don't have any clear answer on that, but the minister quickly referenced negotiations going on with the Liard First Nation, with regard to land development, I presume.

I would like the minister to expand on that and talk a little bit more about the subdivision development that has been ongoing in Watson Lake for a great amount of time and was supposed to go to tender at least last year and didn't. I am hoping that the minister can update us on where that tender is at, in addition to the negotiations that are going on with the Liard First Nation.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Just to begin, there was an official community plan that came before my desk. I reviewed it and I have approved it, which means the municipality can now determine how land is used within its borders because they have a new official community plan that I have approved. So, that is in the municipality's hands in Watson Lake.

As far as the negotiations go, I am not negotiating or revealing the state of negotiations on the floor of the Legislature. I wouldn't expect them to do it; I'm certainly not going to do it this afternoon.

We are conducting negotiations with the Liard First Nation through Aboriginal Relations and the Executive Council Office, including overlapping land development items. A part of that of course is that it's a complicated environment, but we're working respectfully with our First Nation partners. That has been an approach this government has taken since we first came into office. We're not abandoning it; we're going to work with our First Nation partners and our municipalities to make sure that we provide the services that Yukoners need going

forward. I'm certainly not going to go into chapter and verse of the negotiations here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. McLeod: Well, I raised it because the minister raised it here first. Obviously, the people of Watson Lake are feeling pretty hamstrung, I guess, by the government's — I don't want to say "inability" because of course the government entirely has the ability to release land, but they aren't.

So, Watson Lake is the same as any other Yukon community; we need lot development. The government has promised lot development and has not delivered. So, simple question: When is that going to be done? When are those lots going to be released? They've been under development for quite some time. So, I would like the minister to tell us when Watson Lake residents are going to be able to buy land to build on to help alleviate their housing shortages. Let's just start there.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I hear the member opposite's frustration. She lives in the community. She knows all of the relationships and negotiations that have to happen to make sure that lot development happens in her community. We have completed feasibility planning and design work for various country and urban residential and industrial development projects, all of which are Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board-ready.

I believe what the member opposite is talking about is the Frances urban development. It's near tender-ready and I have signed off on the official community plan. This is a Watson Lake project. The Watson Lake council was elected by the people of Watson Lake to do lot development on behalf of the people of Watson Lake. We're ready to go. We're waiting to hear from the town council of Watson Lake.

Once we get the go ahead, we're the project manager and we will activate. We have \$2.6 million — \$2.6 million — for lot development in the budget this year. We're optimistic it can go forward, but we'll see. It's a municipal government project and we're waiting to hear from the municipalities for when we can go ahead.

Ms. McLeod: I'm pretty sure that, having just met with the mayor and council, that will come as quite a surprise to them, but good to hear.

Just to remind the minister, the Frances Avenue development, I believe, was approved in the previous OCP. It's not a change to the OCP; it was simply a carry-forward. So, really, there is no reason I can think of as to why that development has not proceeded, but, of course, I will have that conversation with mayor and council.

The minister did talk to some degree about the number of developments taking place throughout the Yukon, and I had asked if the minister would commit to getting me a list of lots that are going to hit the market this year and in which communities. I would appreciate it if he could commit to that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question, which I believe was a list of potential lot developments throughout the Yukon. I think that I answered that question with a lot of detail just before our break, so I am sure that the member opposite can comb through that and see all the work — and there is a lot of it — that is happening throughout the territory. I am sure that if

she needs more after reviewing the Blues, she can come forward and I will be happy to try to do that, but providing an actual list is — there is certainly the foundation of a list there. A lot of projects were listed in that answer I gave earlier.

As far as Watson Lake goes, as I said in my previous answer — and I just want to make sure that there is clarity around this issue for the residents of Watson Lake and the member opposite who represents the community — and I would be happy to hear her insights on potential hurdles to development, because I am sure that if it was in the prior OCP, she must have pretty detailed knowledge of some of the hurdles that prevented lot development in Watson Lake over that time from the previous OCP development. I am a relative newcomer to this portfolio, so any insights that she can provide that might help me get those lots out would be greatly appreciated.

As far as Watson Lake town council and the development of lots with the Liard First Nation, as I said earlier in my answer, we are working very closely with the Liard First Nation and the municipality of Watson Lake to get lots out the door so that we can start to provide housing. I have had conversations with the Liard First Nation. We have had conversations with the town council. I was just on the phone with the Mayor of Watson Lake last week, I believe. I had a great conversation with him about some infrastructure projects going ahead and I will continue that conversation, because ultimately, we want lots to be developed in our communities and I am working with that.

The Town of Watson Lake has responsibility for lot development, but it is a very convoluted, difficult, and challenging environment to work in because of the overlapping interests of the Liard First Nation and the Town of Watson Lake. So, we are sorting those issues out. We know that there is a strong desire to get lots out in the Town of Watson Lake, and once our negotiations and our work with the Liard First Nation and the Town of Watson Lake reach some sort of consensus, I am sure that we will be able to get lots out. We are so optimistic, in fact, that we have \$2.6 million in the budget this year to try to make that happen. We are prepared to go once a deal is reached between those two parties. We have a project manager on the job and we are working very hard with our Aboriginal Relations folks to reach a conclusion so that we can get lots out in Watson Lake. When that is going to happen — I'm hoping quickly, but we just don't know. We will have to see how the negotiations continue and resolve.

Ms. McLeod: With all due respect to the minister, this money for lot development was in last year's budget as well. So, I just remind the minister of that. The fact that there's money in this year's budget for lot development is not especially comforting.

Now, in the budget there is \$13,562,000 for rural residential. Of course, I will review the Blues to review what the minister referenced, as far as lot development throughout the Yukon, but as I recall, there were limited numbers in that statement that the minister made — but of course, I will review it.

In the meantime, can the minister give us a breakdown of the \$13.5 million designated for rural residential? I don't need

that broken down by lot in this instance; I would appreciate a dollar amount by community.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Haines Junction and area, \$550,000; the Alaska Highway north, \$180,000; Dawson and area, \$4.2 million; Carmacks, Pelly, and area, \$800,000; Watson Lake and area, \$2.6 million — we've been talking about that; Mayo and Keno and area, \$404,000; Teslin and area, \$800,000; Faro, Ross River, and area, \$250,000; Marshall Creek, \$1.85 million; Dawson north end, \$1.92 million; total, \$13.5 million.

Ms. McLeod: The minister referenced some negotiations that he believes should be taking place in Watson Lake. I'm looking for, I guess, a commitment from the minister — or an agreement, maybe — that the minister is in fact responsible for the *Municipal Act* and will in fact stand behind the *Municipal Act* and allow municipal governments to govern — if I can get that commitment, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Under the *Municipal Act*, I have a responsibility — a duty, as a matter of fact — as the minister responsible to ensure First Nations are adequately consulted before approving an official community plan. I also have a duty to uphold and respect the timelines of approving an official community plan.

In Watson Lake, I did both things and signed off on the official community plan for the Town of Watson Lake.

I do support our municipalities; I do support the process, but I do also know that in Watson Lake particularly, where we have an unsettled First Nation, there are overlapping interests that we must also keep in mind and try to work through together so that there is harmony in the community. We are doing that currently with the Liard First Nation and the municipality of Watson Lake.

It is, as I said before, a challenging environment in which to work. I know that the member opposite has intimate knowledge about that. The member opposite knows how difficult and how challenging the relationship can be, but we are committed to working with our municipalities and our First Nations.

Yes, I do support the *Municipal Act* and I do backstop municipalities across the territory.

Ms. McLeod: The minister said that he was satisfied that the consultation process with the Liard First Nation was met. He was satisfied that the OCP was in order and, because of those things, he approved the OCP. I am at a bit of a loss to understand why we cannot proceed with those approved things that are contained within the OCP.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I've said before, I'm not going to negotiate on the floor of the House. We have Aboriginal Relations and the Executive Council Office, and the folks there are handling the negotiations with the Liard First Nation. There are tables set up for land development. Those talks are ongoing. I have every confidence that those negotiations are going to proceed and come to conclusion when they're ready to come to conclusion.

I do support the official community plan. I do support the municipalities in their desire to develop lots, but I'm also going to respect the negotiating process that is currently in place. I'm

going to await the outcome of that negotiating process at the land development table before we proceed. Work is proceeding on these projects. We have a project manager. We have cleared all the YESAA hurdles, et cetera, and we're just waiting to see what happens with the negotiation process, which is underway. I'm not going to put those negotiations in jeopardy here on the floor of the House.

Ms. McLeod: So, the minister is going to wait until negotiations take their natural path. If that takes five years, what's the government's plan for land development in Watson Lake? I ask that because we're telling our professionals, who are currently in the Yukon Housing Corporation, that they have to move. Where are they moving to? There's no land available for them to buy and therefore there are no houses for them to buy — so, rental properties.

So, I'm wondering what this government wants those people to do? What does he want those families to do, who are eager to find suitable housing or to build suitable housing, if this process takes a number of years?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There are processes by which professionals can get housing. I encourage any individual who can't find any to work with their folks to find that housing. We will do our best to do it. I understand these challenges. We are working very hard to get housing built throughout the territory, including in Watson Lake.

We also know that we have a different approach. Our approach, I guess — I have to take it from the member opposite's remarks this afternoon — is at odds with the Yukon Party's on the opposite benches, but we know that working with First Nations is the right thing to do. It is the appropriate thing to do and it is paying huge benefits. That relationship that we are building is paying huge benefits in the territory and we are not going to abandon it today. They have a different approach. We have all seen the outcomes of those approaches, and they weren't entirely successful or good for the territory. We are going to continue on the path that we are on and do our very best to get negotiated agreements so that we can actually get houses into people's hands across the territory.

Ms. McLeod: So, the minister's response to my question about what this government is going to do to get land in the hands of the people of southeast Yukon is to bring out his claws. Well, fair enough, if that works for him, but it doesn't work for the people.

So, again, I am going to ask: What is this government's plan should these negotiations go on for a number of years? What is the plan?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The answer is going to be quick and to the point. Our approach and our plan are to work with the First Nation and the municipalities to get land development in Watson Lake, and we're working right now, have been working, and will continue to work. As far as the length of time it takes, it's a hypothetical. The member opposite is throwing a number out and that's her opinion. I think it will happen quicker. So, we're going to continue to work to get land development there.

I do know that in rural Yukon, we are spending more — \$13.5 million roughly — on lot development in rural Yukon

this year. We're spending \$13.5 million in Whitehorse, so more than \$26 million on lot development inside the territory this year. That's what we're investing.

In four years of Yukon Party government, they spent \$24 million. That's the difference. We're spending more in one year than they spent in over four years on lot development. It's a priority for us; we're going to continue to spend that money and get lots out the door.

Ms. McLeod: I'm actually going to wrap up my comments for today because there are others who have some questions for this minister.

You know what? The minister can tell me and tell us that there's \$13 million for lot development. We know that's just a number. That doesn't mean there are lots that are going to be developed. We know that there was money for lot development in Watson Lake last year; it didn't get spent. There's money in the budget this year; it doesn't sound like it's going to get spent. So, the number doesn't mean a lot.

So, I'll grant that having this number — I certainly appreciate having this number and I certainly appreciate the breakdown of the figures by community because it's an indicator. Sure, it's an indicator. What gets out the door, I guess, remains to be seen, but I want to thank the officials for their time today. I thank the minister. Perhaps we'll be back to discussion.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for Watson Lake for the last number of days and the questions that have been asked. I do appreciate them.

I am pleased to see the minister and his officials here today. I want to flip up my reading glasses anyway and then I can see your faces. You are all very blurry.

So, one of my favourite things about the Department of Community Services is the sheer number of things that are affected by Community Services, because it is not like the Housing Corporation or Energy, Mines and Resources, and it literally goes all across kind of all aspects. So, I have questions that are really going to go all over the place, and I look forward to the conversation this afternoon.

So, on March 18, the Yukon government put out a press release saying that there would be a review done of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health Act*. So, if the minister can give me an idea of what kind of timeline we can expect and when that review will be underway.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I look forward to the conversation this afternoon with my colleague across the House.

So, the CEMA act review has begun. It is underway; it is in my mandate letter; it is important to us. It is going to be complicated; there's no two ways about it. This isn't going to happen in six months; this is going to be a couple of years to get this act fully reviewed. It's going to involve assessing the flood response; it's going to assess our pandemic response. There are jurisdictional scans that have happened. There are, I believe, 300 or 400 pages of documents that we're undertaking with my predecessor's review process that was begun. All of this is going to be worked into our approach to revising this act, which has its roots in the *War Measures Act* of 1966 — a very old piece of legislation.

We're going to make sure it works with our municipalities, with our First Nation partners, and that it takes into account the lessons we've learned through the pandemic and the floods and fires we have seen in the past. We're also going to make sure that it meshes with our health protection act. It's a complicated process; we expect it to take a couple of years. We have staff resources on it, and that process has begun.

Ms. White: So, around that review, I tabled a motion to call a public inquiry around the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*. The reason was that I imagine every MLA in this Chamber was contacted by the general public with questions or concerns around how CEMA was used in the last two years.

Is there going to be a public feedback aspect or would there be public engagement for the review of these two important acts?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Whenever we do any large piece of legislation like this — or in this case, a couple of pieces of legislation — we have made it our point to do a public engagement; so, yes, we fully support a public engagement on this important initiative.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. Does he have a timeline or an expectation of when folks will be notified, or has there been any intention of doing a press release to let people know that a public engagement aspect is coming for the reviews of these two acts?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The work, as I said, is proceeding. I haven't seen a Cabinet submission yet or even a Cabinet Committee on Legislation package on this yet, but that is generally where the decisions are initially made, after the initial plan is developed for the rollout of a piece of legislation.

Of course, we have, in the past, let Yukoners know when we are doing an engagement. We have had some very successful engagements — from cannabis to the time zone change to the *Motor Vehicles Act*, which almost overtook cannabis as one of the most successful engagements in Yukon history. It didn't quite get there, unfortunately, but we do have a process and systems by which we communicate with the public when engagements are coming and how they might be involved.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate that answer from the minister, if anything, in the last two years, I would hope that we have all learned the importance of clear and honest communication with the general public. That has been a criticism that we have all heard in the last two years when it has come to communicating around COVID.

So, I guess that is not so much a question but an urging that the minister have that conversation with his colleagues. We often get told that this is a one-government approach and that it is not siloed. So, making sure that communication happens outward — because I know personally that I am getting e-mails from folks who would like to participate in that process, or have feedback, and they would like to share their own experiences for the last two years, and I do hope that the minister is able to do that.

Again, just because he referenced his mandate letter, the mandate letter is listed for July 5, 2021, and so, at this point in

time, it has been a fair number of months. You know, the commitment was made here again in March of this year, but again, that is a fairly lengthy time. So, anyway, I hope that I can encourage the government to reach out to the public and let them know that it is coming or let them know that things are coming in the future.

Another thing that is included in the mandate letter is — it actually mentions very specifically releasing 5th and Rogers for housing. So, can the minister let me know if 5th and Rogers has been handed over to Yukon Housing Corporation or if it has now been released for private sector housing development?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, 5th and Rogers is going out to a competitive request-for-proposals process. That procurement is well underway. We expect to have it done before the end of the session or going out — sorry, not completed, but going out before the public — before the end of the session. That's the estimated timeline right now — or close to the end of the session. It's in process right now to go out for a competitive bid process — a request for proposals. So, that's 5th and Rogers, and we hope to have some really great proposals there.

As far as my mandate letter goes, the mandate letter was issued in June. We are going to try to complete the review of CEMA during the mandate — is the goal. So, we'll see how that goes — more to come on that, but the mandate letter to come out in June — absolutely. It has been a year of another wave of pandemic knocking the stuffing out of the territory. We're working through this to make sure we get this CEMA review underway and take the lessons learned so we actually have a great piece of legislation for Yukoners before the end of the mandate.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that answer.

Another part in that same bullet point of the mandate letter is supporting the establishment of community land trusts in the Yukon. Can the minister update us on where his department is in the creation of community land trusts in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite this afternoon. I'm going to refer back very quickly to her opening remarks because of the number of things that this kitchen sink department that is Community Services touches.

We really do support a lot of departments in the work that we do, specifically, for example, the land trust. I'm told that there will be more information on the land trust coming out this week, as a matter of fact. That's fairly exciting. But really, where CS is involved in the land trust, it is in writing off the land that we actually make available to the trust. It's other departments that we're working with that have a much deeper involvement in the project itself. We are, in this case, support. We have a support role in the land trust, but that work is happening, apparently. I've been assured by my colleague that we should have more information on this coming up, perhaps in a few days.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Just to follow up on something that he said that I do appreciate, which is that it is in conjunction with the Yukon Housing Corporation. He did acknowledge that his department was responsible for the

land. Can he share with us what parcel of land has been identified for the land trust?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No, actually, I can't. As I said, I write off the land that is identified by my colleagues, so I'm waiting for that information to come before us and then we will actually do the accounting on that land. I don't have that information before me and I understand it is an exciting project. I can understand my colleague wanting to get a preview, but I don't have that information. Apparently, an announcement is coming in the next few days.

Ms. White: I guess having announcements made in press releases before we have the chance to have a conversation here is something that maybe I'll have the opportunity to come back to once that press release comes out.

Another thing that's included in the mandate letter is that it talks about support for the independent review of rural fire services to ensure our system is effective, balanced and considers the challenges that rural communities face when it comes to delivering fire services.

Like my colleagues here on the opposition side, I got a briefing from the minister's department around the report that came out. Can the minister fill me in on where we are as far as the fire-in-a-box concept or community fire departments, for example, in Destruction Bay? Where are we in that process? — making sure. Again, we saw two really sad fires happen in Keno that destroyed, I would say, buildings with historic value and people's personal property. We saw a home destroyed in Destruction Bay. Those are just two communities as examples that don't have fire stations. Where are we in implementing the recommendations of that review?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have continued to meet regularly with the 24 or so residents of Keno. We met in January. We met again. I know the new acting fire marshal met with Keno residents recently — sometime near the end of the month. We're in the process of recruiting two fire champions in that community. Then we have to design a structure for the responsibility for the equipment we're going to dispatch to Keno and then develop how we're going to actually do fire protection in the community, utilizing our new fire protection champions in the community.

We are dedicated to implementing the recommendations of the rural fire services review. It is a high priority for not only my deputy and me, but also for the new fire marshal, who is very excited to start to provide better service to our remote and rural communities.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. It is great to have the intention of increasing our service or our ability to support rural Yukon, but what is really, I think, of particular urgency is the timeline. So, what is the timeline? The minister has just said that there are ongoing meetings and they're looking to recruit two fire champions in Keno before moving equipment into those plants, but what is the timeline? How long do we expect that to take? Let's say, best-case scenario, what is the shortest amount of time in which it could happen?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, as I said, just in the last week or so, we actually had our acting fire marshal get to Keno, talk to the two folks who are now our fire champions in that town. We

are working with them. I don't have a specific timeline at this point, but I will work with the Fire Marshal's Office and endeavour to get that for the member opposite so we actually have some concrete — but this is moving quickly. There are still things to work out, not only getting the training on the fire in the box — who's going to do it. All that type of thing has to be worked out with the two people we have just recruited to do the job, and it is live. I will find out more information from my officials and endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I think, from the perspective of Keno, they would say that getting rid of the equipment that they had went lightning fast, and so I would hope that we are moving just as quickly to make sure that there is the support in that community.

What conversations have happened with the community of Destruction Bay? There was a fire there recently that destroyed a home. They have concerns about that and the ability to support their community. What conversations are happening in Destruction Bay about support for fire?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In our unincorporated communities, we do need volunteers to run fire services in those communities. Without the volunteer firefighters, it is very difficult to provide firefighter protection services in rural Yukon, which is why we had this review and why we are coming up with solutions, but these solutions are not the ideal solutions. They are basically solutions where we cannot recruit anybody to do fire protection services or recruit a full volunteer fire service, which would be the ideal solution in every community.

I am not sure when the acting fire marshal has scheduled himself to get up to Burwash. I will find that out and again endeavour to get back to the member opposite with that information.

Ms. White: So, the minister has just referenced that unincorporated communities — it's all about finding volunteers to volunteer in those positions. How does the department — how does the government actually engage with unincorporated communities around issues that affect them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Unincorporated communities have a number of avenues with which to make their voice heard. The first, of course, is through their local MLA. Pick up the phone and call your local MLA. You can certainly bring your issues to the forefront that way. That is probably a very effective way of doing it, and the MLA can then get that information to the minister responsible. I know that me and my colleague — my predecessor in the role of Community Services minister — has undertaken a community tour that is extensive throughout the territory. We go to these communities at least once a year. We go as often as we can and meet with local representatives about the issues that matter to them, gather the information and bring it back, and then hand it off to the appropriate minister. If it is us, we take it to the department and start to work.

We also have community advisors who work with, and are known to, these unincorporated communities. You can reach out to the community advisors and get the information that way. We have the Association of Yukon Communities, which is another avenue, and you can get your voice heard that way.

Democracy is important in the territory. If you're an unincorporated community and want a louder voice in the territory, you can always try to make yourself a local area council and start to move yourself toward a more democratic vehicle to make your voice heard, give yourself more structure and give your community more structure. And that's another avenue you can go through, and that's laid out in legislation.

So, there are a number of ways that residents of unincorporated communities can make their voices heard to the government through this Chamber.

Ms. White: So, it's interesting that was the minister's take in his feedback, because there is a CBC article dated March 25, 2022, entitled "Yukon ombudsman calls waste transfer stations consultations 'an unfairness'". Just to quote from that, it says: "In a March 4 reply to a complaint about the closure of the waste transfer stations, an investigator from the Office of the Yukon Ombudsman wrote that the four communities — Keno City, Destruction Bay, Silver City and Johnson's Crossings — did not have 'an avenue available to present their views' to a government committee that was looking at waste management, and that it was an 'unfairness.'"

So, it's interesting that the minister said that MLAs could bring it up if people were concerned. Interestingly enough, I don't represent any of those ridings, but I have talked about concerns about closing waste transfer facilities. I can say that the two MLAs representing Pelly-Nisutlin and Kluane have both highlighted concerns for their constituents about closing waste transfer facilities.

So, if MLAs speaking on behalf of residents and highlighting concerns isn't adequate enough to put a stop on something or to encourage more conversation before a decision is met, what does the minister suggest residents in unincorporated communities do to raise concern over issues that have been highlighted by their elected representatives in the Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair, and I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about this issue this afternoon.

So, to begin, the Ombudsman wrote a letter in response to residents' concerns they brought and found that the Ombudsman didn't have jurisdiction over the decision — and then weighed in on consultation and municipal — or residents' — say in responsible government and cited administered law or something.

Anyway, the reality is that the Ombudsman didn't talk to my colleague — didn't talk to me — about any of the work that was done within our worlds about what happened in these municipal — and how much consultation or what we heard or what we didn't consider or not when we got to the decision table at Cabinet — didn't talk to us. So, there's that.

The other piece is that we have — in Johnsons Crossing, we heard the concerns of — we heard the Johnsons Crossing, for example; it's one example. There are others in Burwash and Keno, all of which we have met — our community advisors have met. We have a very, very good read on what the issues are; we really do. And we have — I have publicly, my officials

have publicly, and my colleague has publicly said that we will work through the issues and we are committed to doing that.

But just because there are issues to work through does not mean to say we're going to reverse a decision that is important to the territory's environment and important in improving waste management throughout the territory.

So, yes, we have made a decision to shut down some transfer stations along the highway — the smallest ones — to make sure that our environment is better protected, so that people are not dumping noxious chemicals, waste, batteries, computers, and old tires in places that are unsupervised, outside the prying eyes — and free — to sully the environment. So, no, we are not willing to do that, and residents don't like that.

There are things that Community Services has committed to, that I have committed to, to address some of the concerns they have about bears and about how they can streamline the way of collection and disposal of their garbage that we are creating in tonnes. Everybody is creating tonnes of garbage, so we have to start to bring a cost — and actually, as I said, municipalities came to us and basically asked my predecessor to deal with this issue, and he, through his ministerial working group, did come up with a solution.

So, we are implementing that proposal, and some people are not happy with it. I understand that. That doesn't mean to say that they haven't been heard. It doesn't mean to say that we are not considering their concerns, that we are not going to work through some of the issues that we have heard. And I have heard them, and so has my predecessor, and so have the community advisors, and so has the media. There has been a very, very wide-ranging and long-lasting discussion about this issue inside the territory in many, many forums.

That is where it comes down to. We have transfer stations that need to be — not transfer stations — our waste management facilities have to be brought into the modern era. We are all generating way too much garbage. We have to pay for that disposal. We have to make sure that we do it in a way that protects the environment so that we don't have sites across the territory — "holes in the bucket", so to speak — where people can dispose of things without any oversight and without any controls. That is what we were asked to do so we actually limit the liability the territory and its municipalities have going forward. It is very, very important that we have that.

As recommended in the Ombudsman's letter, we will continue to provide information to impacted communities as the work progresses and to work with residents to help mitigate the effects of the closure. That has been my public commitment. That's what my predecessor has committed to; that's what the officials have committed to, both in public meetings and to the Ombudsman.

It's not that we haven't heard the concerns; we have heard the concerns and we will work to address them. That doesn't mean to say, though, that we are going to change our minds and create a liability by having unsupervised, uncontrolled sites in the middle of smaller communities where people can dump their waste without any repercussions.

Ms. White: I heard the minister's response; I did; I heard it. It's interesting, because we will have citizens be in charge of

building safety around fire issues. We have volunteer EMS crews. We have a lot of responsibility that we share with residents in unincorporated communities. It seems to me that it's odd that we never once looked at running these facilities on a volunteer basis and having, for example, designated drop-off days.

So, I'm going to leave that on the floor with the hopes of being able to come back. When we come back to debate on Community Services, I would like to talk about whether there's an opportunity to have those four rural transfer stations be peopled by volunteers, similar to what we have right now for EMS and fire.

Deputy Chair, 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

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

Written notice was given of the following motion April 4, 2022:

Motion No. 378

Re: fertility treatment tax credit (Clarke, Y.)