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HANSARD

Wednesday, April 27, 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
Wednesday, April 27, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have a tribute today for local food, and we have quite a few folks for that tribute. Could we please welcome, from Sunnyside Farm, the Roske family — Krista, Jason, and Kate. We also have, from Tum Tums, Simone and Tom Rudge. We have, from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Anne Savoie. We have, from the Yukon Agricultural Association, Jackie McBride-Dixon and Carl Burgess, the new executive director. From our own Agriculture branch, we have Jonathan Lucas, Randy Lamb, Bradley Barton, Shannon Gladwin, Matt Ball, and Kirk Price, our new director. Matt used to be the director and is now with the Land Management branch. I will also acknowledge that Randy Lamb is president of DUGS — so, if we could just please welcome everybody.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming some guests to the gallery. We have our press secretary, Tim Kucharuk, and his daughter, Olive, and Olive is a keen urban gardener and is here for the tribute.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Air North inaugural flight to Toronto

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Air North's inaugural direct flight to Toronto. This May 10, Air North, Yukon's airline, will depart Whitehorse for the first time ever for a scheduled flight to Toronto. This new seasonal route, operating between May and September 2022, will originate in Whitehorse, pick up passengers in Yellowknife, and continue on to Toronto, creating new potential for the Yukon as a destination.

We are thrilled for Air North, which, since inception, has continued to be visionary as they pursue new opportunities. From the early beginnings with the flight school and supporting the mining sector to charter flights and, later, scheduled flights, adapting, growing, and providing incredible service and great

employment opportunities for Yukoners has certainly set Air North apart from others in the sector.

Air access is critical for any destination to develop a market, particularly in the north. Because of this, we are tremendously excited that travellers from southern Ontario will now be able to travel to the Yukon on a direct flight and experience a very different part of Canada than they usually see. This opens up many new opportunities for tourism, creates new economic opportunities, and will help our territory to attract new Yukoners as well. It couldn't have come at a better time here in the Yukon as we recover from COVID-19 and we continue to show growth in both the economy and in our population.

The flight will not only make it easier for Canadians to travel to the Yukon, but also increases our territory's reach to other important global target markets.

Toronto is a major Canadian gateway to the eastern seaboard, the Americas, Europe, and even Asia. This unlocks many other opportunities in business and global relations. I am very excited for the many benefits and connections that this new route will create.

Air North remains an incredibly well-regarded business in the Yukon, and I applaud them for their endurance throughout the pandemic and for their efforts to continue expanding, despite difficult circumstances. This has been a significant year for Air North as they celebrate 45 years of high-quality service as the Yukon's airline.

I want to thank Air North for continuing to provide excellent service to Yukoners, and I congratulate them on this next step forward.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to congratulate Air North as they embark on a new journey — this time from Whitehorse to Toronto. On May 10 until October 7, 2022, the flight is open for booking. This newly scheduled route will provide Yukoners with a greater ability to connect with eastern Canada. It is going to open many possibilities to travellers from across Canada and beyond, especially for those in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

Air North has expanded their service a number of times in the past and notably began offering flights to Ottawa in 2014. While many took advantage of this route, we understand that it is anticipated that the Toronto route will appeal to many more travellers. They will have the opportunity to connect to even more cities from this international travel hub. I am sure that local businesses will echo this excitement as this will open the door to increased tourism levels to the Yukon and will help boost our Yukon economy.

In 2019, Air North was awarded Best Specialty and Leisure Airline in North America. For this 100-percent Yukon-owned company, it is the best. They work with Yukoners and their need for special arrangements without question. Many share various stories about the excellent service, care, and cost, and I am of the same mind.

Congratulations to Air North on this wonderful news and for offering Yukoners more choices. We look forward to seeing the positive effects that this new route will have for all involved.

Best wishes to Joe, Deb, and all the Air North staff across the country on this new journey.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: The Yukon NDP are delighted to add our congratulations to Air North's inaugural Whitehorse-to-Toronto route. This is another example of the ingenuity and determination coming from Yukon's own Air North. Yukoners everywhere, I think, are delighted and proud. I know I feel pride every time I see an orange-tailed plane in the sky. So, thank you to Air North for their ongoing support to Yukoners and their commitment to keeping us connected. We can't wait to be on the ground cheering for that first flight.

Applause

In recognition of local farmers and food producers

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to pay tribute to some of our local farmers and food producers who are contributing to homegrown Yukon goodness.

The Downtown Urban Gardeners Society, also lovingly known as "DUGS", will celebrate 25 growing seasons of green thumbs this year. DUGS is a passionate collection of people invested in community food production, security, and accessibility.

DUGS is nestled under the clay cliffs on the corner of 7th Avenue and Ray Street for people to garden in a plot all their own. If you haven't, I would encourage you to take a stroll by this summer. It's stunning to see giant red poppies growing alongside vibrant purple cabbages and creeping nasturtiums.

There is also an apiary where DUGS president Randy Lamb dotingly tends to the buzzing insects and harvests honey every year. Raw honey is donated to the Whitehorse Food Bank annually. DUGS volunteers also gather and deliver a weekly harvest to the Golden Age Society. This past summer, DUGS donated nearly 450 kilos of produce, squashing their previous record of 375 kilos.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a few moments to talk about fresh whole milk and the Sunnyside Farm in the Ibex Valley, owned and operated by the Roske family for the past 10 years. About three years ago, Krista, Jason, and their daughter Kate decided to change their focus and become a year-round commercial dairy farm. Sunnyside Farm's journey involved dairy plant training, designing their own milking parlour and processing building, joining traceability and herd health programs, and ensuring their operation provides the best care possible for their herd of 22 dairy cows, and they love their cows.

Mr. Speaker, setting up as a dairy farm was an epic endeavour with Krista and Jason sourcing their Jersey cows from Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia and their farm equipment from Ontario, Romania, the Netherlands, and Ukraine. They faced many challenges along the way, from supply chain issues to COVID-19, certification, and all the

logistics of setting up a small dairy. But Krista and Jason persevered.

Sunnyside Farm received its licence to sell commercially earlier this month and recently began delivering milk to local retailers. By the way, Mr. Speaker, I understand that their milk is fortified with vitamin D, which of course, we all need. Their two-litre bottles of pasteurized whole milk can be found at local retailers Super A in Porter Creek and Tum Tum's Black Gilt Meats. Krista and Jason are currently milking five cows and hope to be milking 10 by late summer.

So, congratulations to Sunnyside Farm and to DUGS and to budding gardeners like Kate and Olive for building local food sustainability. We are thrilled to be able to enjoy refreshing local milk, fresh produce, and Yukon honey, and I personally can't wait to try it all.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Sunnyside Farm and to the Downtown Urban Gardeners.

Sunnyside Farm is a small family farm located in Ibex Valley, 15 minutes west of Whitehorse. They recently reached a major milestone in bringing their dairy farm into production. Sunnyside Farm is now producing and selling milk for Yukoners to enjoy. This pasteurized whole milk can be found at Tum Tum's Black Gilt Meats and Porter Creek Super A, and plans are for Sunnyside to add other stores to their list of distributors.

The farm's goal is to provide food that is grown and raised sustainably and is affordable to their customers. They believe in a business model that supports other local farmers and agribusiness as much as possible. The farm currently milks several cows, with more being brought in this year to add to the operation. Mr. Speaker, this is good news for residents of the Whitehorse area, and we're happy to see a dairy farm producing milk here locally. It is a welcome addition to the Yukon growing sector of the economy. I know there's a lot of work involved in this stage and we would like to congratulate Krista, Jason, and Kate Roske for all their work on this endeavour and their success so far.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to remind the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources how close the proposed Stevens Quarry is to this dairy farm. If the minister is wondering who would be negatively impacted if he decides to proceed with developing Stevens Quarry, despite the written election promise his predecessor made in April 2021, he can start by looking at the gallery here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. The Whitehorse community garden is located at 7th Avenue and Ray Street at the base of the clay cliffs. Members are required to volunteer over the season, contributing a minimum of eight hours apiece to upkeep and maintenance. Weekly worker bee nights bring together volunteers, and daily tasks include filling water barrels, weeding, and mowing common areas.

Over the last few years, the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society has been slowly replacing older garden beds, and the result of those efforts and some big work this spring will include around 80 beds for members to use this growing season.

The garden is also home to donation beds, which grow produce to be donated to the Golden Age Society, communal berry bushes and rhubarb, an apiary with beehives that benefit members and neighbours alike, and a self-contained composting system that is put back into garden beds.

The community garden is certainly a welcome part of the neighbourhood, and members have proven to be excellent stewards of the area, with the season usually kicking off with a neighbourhood cleanup.

So, congratulations to the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society as they celebrate this milestone anniversary. Congratulations again to the Roske family and Sunnyside Farm, and thank you as well to all of the farmers, producers, and members of the agriculture sector who are in the gallery here today, as well as listening on the radio.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to local agriculture. I would like to echo my colleague's words of appreciation and support for Sunnyside Farm. It's a very exciting day. I would also like to talk a little bit about a very special piece of my riding, and that is the Whitehorse community garden run by the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society.

2022 is a very special year for them. They have been a success story that has been greening the heart of downtown Whitehorse, and this will be their 25th growing season. The idea for a Whitehorse community garden was first conceived in 1997 when the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition saw a need, and they organized a meeting for all people interested in community gardening. About 15 people were at that first meeting to talk about the concept of the community garden, and from there, the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society was formed as a registered not-for-profit society to run the new Whitehorse community garden.

The City of Whitehorse land planning department helped to identify public land available for locating a community garden. The ground was broken, the first gardens were planted in 1998, and the rest is history.

The Whitehorse community garden provides fresh vegetables for many families and individuals and has given back significant amounts of produce to the community year after year. As mentioned, last year they donated almost 1,000 pounds of their locally grown vegetables to the Golden Age Society. DUGS is also a role model for many other community gardens. We have seen an increase in community gardens in neighbourhoods, at the Whitehorse Food Bank, and across the Yukon.

Perhaps even more important than providing space for growing nutritious and affordable food, the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society builds community and provides opportunity for exercise, education, and friendships.

We want to thank the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society, which took this idea and created such an amazing community space and the provision of food security for so many. Thank you, and here's to another 25 years.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling, pursuant to section 22(8) of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*, the 2020-21 annual report of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling five legislative returns from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for various questions during Question Period and debate on appropriation acts to table today.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling two legislative returns.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling one legislative return.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling the *Second Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*.

I also have for tabling the *Third Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees to be presented?

Are there any petitions to be introduced?

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 Education to respond to the growing number of families with school-age children in Grizzly Valley north by adding a school bus stop at Ursa Way before the start of the 2022-23 school year.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse to consult with local residents and the public before proceeding with any significant changes to the Alaska Highway and streets in the Porter Creek area.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support Yukon businesses by extending the application deadline for the Yukon emergency relief program from April 15 to May 31, 2022.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Lot development

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise before the Assembly today to detail all the lot development projects underway in the Yukon this year, including those under our rural land development program. The Yukon government's Land Development branch is working hard to plan and develop an adequate supply of lots in Yukon communities for housing as well as business and economic development opportunities.

We are investing more than \$30 million for land development in Whitehorse and other Yukon communities. This includes \$13.3 million for continued development of the Whistle Bend subdivision. Work is underway on phase B of the subdivision — 101 lots — and is on track to be completed this summer. Phase 7 of Whistle Bend has just been awarded, and the smaller phase 8 will be awarded shortly. In total, we are targeting completion of more than 200 lots in Whistle Bend this year. Early this fall, we will be tendering phase 9, a third lift station, storm-water outfalls, and designing the next phase for release in early 2023.

We are also beautifying Whistle Bend. We have invested in landscaping Kadzo park, Casca Boulevard, and will be starting work on green streets and additional boulevard work.

We will be completing the Range Point Road masterplan with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, advancing detailed design, and looking forward to working on other joint First Nation-Yukon government land development projects.

There are many other land development projects underway across the Yukon, and our government is targeting the completion of lots and advancing planning work in all municipalities. In Dawson City, we are wrapping up the masterplans for Dawson's Dome Road and Dredge Pond II and advancing design so we can tender the first phases later this year.

We are also working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo to advance planning for country residential development on the upper bench above Mayo and advancing design and completion of additional lots in the village.

In Carmacks, three country residential lots are being prepared, and a small urban development will be tendered this summer to provide an additional six lots. In Haines Junction, we are completing seven infill lots and planning for urban, country residential, and industrial developments. In Teslin, we are finishing the Yukon government's side of the Lone Tree country residential development that will deliver up to 23 lots and advancing joint planning with the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council. We have numerous residential and

industrial development projects in Watson Lake ready to advance. Just last week, I met with officials from Faro, who are preparing to advance their official community planning process and have great ideas for further lot development in that community.

We continue to engage with municipalities and First Nations to develop a range of lots to meet short- and medium-term demand and support their plans for land development needs for the long term.

Ms. McLeod: As we have seen many times with this Liberal government, they talk a big game and under-deliver when it actually comes time to perform. The Liberals have had six years to figure out land development, and yet we are in a lot development and housing crisis. We have repeatedly brought this issue to the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

The Member for Kluane talked about land prices just last week. Since the Member for Kluane didn't get an answer last week, I will try again. Will the government sell the lots that the minister just alluded to at the development cost, the appraised cost, or somewhere in between?

In Watson Lake, area residents have been waiting for a number of years to see lots developed. Land on the Frances Avenue extension has been identified for development and lots were expected to hit the market in the spring of last year. The town has done its job and submitted an updated OCP; however, the Liberal government has failed yet again this year to tender the development of the subdivision. The minister said that he is working on residential lots in Watson Lake, so is the Frances Avenue extension part of this development?

The minister references lots being developed in Carmacks, Mayo, Teslin, Faro, and Haines Junction, but he hasn't noted the anticipated cost. Is the government considering taking action to mitigate rising costs and ensure that the costs are affordable for residents in those communities?

In Whitehorse, residents and developers have been clamoring to access more lots in the growing subdivision of Whistle Bend. I point to the delays in getting phase 7 on the market. Originally, lots were slated to be released last year; however, there was a cancellation and retendering of the construction contract. I am pleased to hear the minister say that the contract has finally been awarded. Will the minister tell us, in his response: Can we expect phase 7 lots ready for land lottery this year?

Mr. Speaker, last election, the Liberals made the commitment to relocate the Marwell grader station and convert the site into housing lots. This was notable because the site is a former oil refinery and is a contaminated site. Can the minister provide an update on the Liberal plan to convert the former oil refinery location and Marwell grader station into a residential neighbourhood?

Last election, the Liberals also committed to meet the request of the Northern Community Land Trust for a land grant. Could the minister update us on how his department is working to facilitate this project? Is he aware of any other requests from organizations for free lots or land to be provided?

I certainly appreciate the scope of the update from the minister on lot development in Whitehorse and rural Yukon and will be paying close attention this summer to see if the minister's assertions actually come to fruition.

Ms. Tredger: There seem to be plenty of plans and promises but mostly plans, and who knows when the homes will actually materialize? The minister spoke about residential lots in Carmacks, but there were no timelines or details — just promises. In the meantime, they do not have any residential lots to offer people wanting to move there or for Carmacks citizens wanting to build a home.

Despite the one-government approach that we are told about, the Minister of Highways and Public Works has told the Village of Carmacks that their priority — the demolition and remediation of the abandoned grader station lot — won't start until 2025 — three years from now. This is a problem for that municipality, as I highlighted in the letter that I tabled earlier this week.

So, what is the Minister of Community Services doing to expedite this issue so that Carmacks can move ahead with their official community plan to offer lots for commercial and residential buildings that are so desperately needed, to say nothing of the eyesore left behind that was once the grader station?

What about all of the other communities that can't currently offer a single residential lot for building on? Over-the-counter residential lots for purchase do not exist for any Yukon community. Spring is here and the building season is well underway.

It is interesting that the Yukon Party questioned the high cost of lots that are coming online, because the system changed under their leadership, but here is the thing: The Liberal government has been in power since 2016, and lot prices have only continued to rise. They know that there is a problem, but they haven't fixed it. Market value and development costs are different, but again, no action.

And what about the decision to change the Yukon Housing Corporation home building loan program? We have shared examples of people being pre-approved for mortgages, buying lots, and then not being able to build an actual home because they can't finance their build. How is this helping Yukoners?

What we need is housing that is actually affordable, and as long as this government leaves that up to the market, prices will just keep going up, and Yukoners will keep moving away because they can no longer afford to live here.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have just given a four-minute update on the amount of work that's going on in the territory, and apparently the opposition did not hear that, so let me just recap a little bit here. This year's budget includes more than \$30 million for land development across the territory, as well as \$11 million to incentivize residential construction projects, like the proposed Kwanlin Dün First Nation subdivision extension in Copper Ridge, which will create more than 180 new residential lots.

This is a project that is going ahead. We know that the MLA for the area is not that interested in this development, doesn't act supportive, but it is providing needed housing for Yukon residents.

Mr. Speaker, under the 14 years of the Yukon Party government, we saw continuous growth of the population in the Yukon with very few housing projects being developed. Frankly, we're still paying the price for the Yukon Party's inaction on this file.

Under the leadership of the MLA for Lake Laberge, the Yukon Party cancelled a \$13-million affordable rental housing program to appease private sector developers. Shortly after that, the Member for Lake Laberge was removed from his position as Community Services and housing minister.

Our government's approach differs from the previous administration. Our Liberal government has built strong relationships with municipal and First Nation partners. We continue to make unprecedented investments in building homes across the territory to increase housing options for Yukoners.

Over the next five years, our goal is to develop 1,000 new residential lots across the Yukon. Meeting the increased housing demands in the Yukon is not something that one government or organization can accomplish alone. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships and develop creative approaches to addressing the housing demand in the Yukon.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Public sector growth

Mr. Dixon: The Liberals like to tout their record for growing the economy, but as we have seen, the main thing that they have grown is the public service and government spending. Since they have been in power, we have seen an unsustainable surge in the public sector, and we've seen the private sector shrink. The government's own stats bureau confirms this.

When the Liberals were sworn into office in December 2016, there were 8,600 public sector employees, 9,400 private sector employees, and 3,500 self-employed. Just last month, in March 2022, there were a staggering 10,400 public sector employees, 9,000 private sector employees, and 3,200 self-employed. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker. Since the Liberals have been in power, the public sector employment has exploded and the private sector employment has shrunk.

When will the Liberal government get this rampant growth of government in check and stop the unsustainable growth of the public service?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Of course, the overall Yukon economy has rebounded from the COVID-19 economic shock faster than any other Canadian jurisdiction. I think some key points that I'll share with Yukoners today — Statistics Canada, of course — our GDP numbers show that Yukon's economy grew at a blistering 5.2 percent in 2020 while Canada's GDP shrank overall across the country. Then Yukon's economic growth rate is by far the fastest in the country.

So, I think that part of the dialogue we've had — two weeks ago and then again today — is: Why is the Yukon's economy growing? I think there's a difference of opinion. The biggest driver is exports, specifically mineral exports. Exports grew strongly in 2020 despite difficult COVID situations, and there are still pressures on tourism.

A close second — the next driver is investment in infrastructure, roads, bridges, and schools. Residential construction also contributed roughly the same growth rate as anything within government. Statistics Canada says that Yukon's expenditure-based GDP growth in 2020 was attributed to year-over-year growth from 2019 to 2020. I think it's important — the numbers: 18.5 percent exports and goods and 18.6 percent on investment in infrastructure. That's why we're growing, not based on what —

Mr. Dixon: We have no doubt that the economy has grown, but it has grown because of government spending and government employment. We've seen that in the numbers. The fact is that there are 1,800 more public sector employees than there were when the Liberals got started, and there are 700 fewer private sector employees than there were when the Liberals started.

As well as inflating the public service, the Liberals have set new records for government spending. This record spending has thrown fuel on the flames of inflation and helped to drive the cost of living through the roof for Yukoners. Here is what one local economist wrote in the *Yukon News* — quote: "Budgetpalooza 2022 will stimulate an already stimulated economy. There is a cliché among economists that the job of a prudent central banker is to take away the punchbowl just as the economic party is getting started. This budget is more like the Redbull truck pulling up at a frat house on Friday night."

The fact is that the Liberals' spending and unsustainable growth of the government is choking out the private sector. When will the Liberals get out of the way of Yukon businesses and let the private sector lead the economic recovery that this territory needs?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I think that we do know is that, first of all, when we talk about expenditures in infrastructure in the territory, who we look to is the private sector. The private sector is who builds our infrastructure and they do it very well.

So, if we want to look at just general hiring, staffing, and O&M for government, that's 6.6 percent of growth. So, no, it's not driving growth. What's driving growth is the 18.5 percent in exports coming from things such as the mineral industry, 18.3 percent in general — I mean, the members opposite might not want to agree with this, but this is Statistics Canada. If they have been looking at the statistics, those are the numbers that were given and that's what has been put out. They can reach out to our stats branch too. Again, 18.3 percent general government growth — again, infrastructure. That's the roads being built and the schools being built; that's the work that we're doing.

Again, when we talk about building new homes, we have 6.2 percent in residential structures. So, again, I think — you know, these are the numbers. I guess you can interpret them in a different way.

Have we hired more staff? Yes. We talked about this before. Do we need more staff from time to time? Yes.

We had long-term care with no HR plan. Yes, we hired 150 people to look after folks. If we saw the stats out today, we know that we have to make sure that we're investing in our seniors. We're doing that.

Are we improving our infrastructure? Yes. Is the private sector doing it? Yes. Those are the numbers.

Mr. Dixon: The minister has just shown how out of touch with reality he is. Everyone except the Liberals acknowledges that they have grown the government at the expense of the private sector. The stats from the Yukon bureau make this clear. The public sector employment has grown; private sector employment has shrunk under their watch. Earlier this year, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce told the Premier that the Liberals' policies, actions, and proposals felt like they were being kicked while they were down.

Here's another quote from local economist Keith Halliday: "The risk is a spiral where ever-bigger government crowds a shrinking private sector, especially at a time when inflation is already at a 30-year high. This increases our reliance on federal cash, and sets us up for serious pain if there is ever a financial crisis or change of priorities in Ottawa."

When will the Liberals stop crowding out the private sector and start letting Yukon businesses lead the way toward economic recovery?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I did touch — I mean, these are the current numbers from StatsCan. I don't know what else to say than that.

We, again, have had five years of very strong growth. Again, when we look at what has happened, we're seeing our exports driving our growth. Again, I think the argument that was posed, as I had heard it, was that the growth in the economy is coming from the private sector. That theory that is being posed by the Leader of the Official Opposition is fundamentally incorrect, based on Statistics Canada. Let's get that out of the way.

If we go through — what we also can see is that — we look at our GDP — growth leading the country. If we talk about our labour market, what we're hearing right now, again, is strong growth. We need more workers. Yes, we do.

We have listened to the private sector. That's why we moved the labour market unit over to Economic Development and we are focused on that. We have seen record budgets come for lot development and investment in housing. We are seeing that. We are listening, and we are doing that good work.

Then, when you get into things like retail sales — again, we have just seen growth in retail sales in the private sector. We've seen growth in wholesale sales. Again, these are the numbers that we have been provided. I think it shows a good picture. Almost any province or territory in this country would say we are in a very enviable position and we will continue to do the good work and continue to support the private sector.

Question re: Fuel prices

Mr. Istchenko: There is no better example of the high cost of living that Yukoners are facing than our fuel prices. Last

week, Yukon statistics put out their fuel price survey and it paints a very scary picture for Yukoners. The year-over-year increase in the price of gasoline is almost 29 percent. For diesel fuel, it is over 40 percent. This affects all Yukoners, but especially those in rural Yukon. The best tool the government could use to address this to cut the fuel tax. Unfortunately, the Premier has dismissed this as a parlour trick.

When will the Liberals actually take action to help Yukoners with the rising cost of fuel?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will make sure to send *Our Clean Future* over to the member opposite. This is a whole strategy we have about moving off fossil fuels, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, and moving to a renewable, green future. There is a conference happening right now at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre called “Renewables in Remote Communities” where people have gathered from across the country to talk about how to move forward with renewables. They chose the Yukon because they felt it was a really good example of a strong path forward — so, thank you for that.

We put out a rebate for our electricity rates for three months. We are working with ATCO to take the next step. I hope to hear from them shortly. There are ways in which we are working, but overall, our main message is to help Yukoners reduce their dependency on fossil fuels. That way, when the markets shift and fluctuate like they have been, we just see less impact. That’s the way in which we are going to work to support Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: I’m not sure if the minister realizes it or not, but there is no option for rural Yukoners when they need to travel to Whitehorse. They need to buy fuel for some of the services that they need to get. The simple fact is that Yukoners are facing a cost-of-living crisis. Fuel is through the roof; food prices are increasing. We have continually asked the Liberal government to take action, but they have continued to stick their heads in the sand. All they have been able to come up with is \$50 a month for three months.

We proposed doubling the homeowners grant for seniors and doubling the pioneer utility grant. In response, the Premier shrugged his shoulders and said that is just “parlour tricks”.

So, when will the Liberals finally take action to help seniors with the rising cost of living?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the Yukon Party cherry-picks stats from our government’s statistics branches, we have been very conscientious of the effects of the rising inflation — and families have taken to protect their finances. We have done it for four budgets in a row, and we are going to continue to do it on the fifth one today.

So, again, making sure that Yukoners mitigate the financial impacts of everything from fighting climate change to international conflicts that are happening — that is absolutely what we are doing. We have mentioned many different things, but the members opposite won’t listen to the things that we have talked about — significant investments in housing and in lot development. We just talked about that today. Historic investments in early learning and childcare — the members opposite don’t want to hear it. We have talked about what is included in the 2022-23 budget, but we also talked about what

is not included in that budget — no increased taxes. We have actually reduced the business taxes from when the Yukon Party was in — reduced it from when the Yukon Party was in. We have also not increased the fees, either.

Again, as far as our budget goes —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker’s statement

Speaker: Order, please.

I am having a hard time hearing the member speaking.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, they don’t want to hear the answers. They clearly don’t want to hear the answers because they think, again —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: On a point of order, Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Under Standing Order 19(g), it says that we should not, in this House, suggest that people are not being honest. The Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Yukon Party, just stood up and said “That is not true” and said it loud enough that we can all hear it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask that this remark — off-mic as it is — be withdrawn.

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

Mr. Cathers: The Standing Orders are typically understood as covering remarks that a member actually makes when they are speaking and recognized to speak, not what the member thinks he heard off-mic.

Speaker’s ruling

Speaker: Order, please.

Members should temper their remarks on or off the mic during debate.

Hon. Premier, please continue.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we won’t want folks to do is to go back to the time when the Yukon Party was in power. We were in a recession. Mining companies were leaving, and the relationships with First Nations were abysmal. Again, this government is making sure that we are moving forward on all of our commitments, including making lives more affordable for Yukoners. Members opposite are feeling dismayed because we didn’t take them up on their offer to do one thing: to reduce the lowest taxed fuel in Canada. We will do all of the other things that we mentioned instead.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are facing record levels of inflation and the cost of living. All the Premier has been able to come up with is giving Yukoners \$150 of their own money. He’s dismissed our proposal to cut the fuel tax or the insurance tax and to double the homeowners grant for seniors. The Liberals even said no to doubling the pioneer

utility grant. This shows how out of touch the Liberals are with the challenges facing Yukoners, especially our rural Yukoners.

When will this government finally take action to address the cost-of-living crisis facing Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We're going to have to go back and take a look, Mr. Speaker, at the pioneer utility grant and how the members opposite reduced that amount.

But for the record, we just started —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: That is true; that is absolutely true. So, again, we have to take a look at what we were just saying. The member opposite sticks to his notes, but he didn't hear every single thing that I just mentioned about making lives more affordable. I'll continue.

He did mention that we did add a new inflation rebate — a relief rebate to reduce impacts of rising prices that are on Yukoners, for sure. That rebate offers a \$50 credit each month for three months to all of the government, residential, and commercial electricity bills. Although the electric rates in the Yukon remain the lowest in the north, this rebate is in addition to the existing interim electric rebate for residential customers, which already saves Yukoners up to \$270 per year.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: Members opposite are wooing as we try to be respectful in the Legislative Assembly. Clearly, across the way, they don't like when they hear the comparison to the record.

What we also won't do is go back to a time where the Yukon Party would promise to build a certain amount of capital assets and then we would have to wait for the Public Accounts later on to see how abysmal their track record was of actually getting the job done.

Question re: Homebuyer and tenancy advocacy

Ms. Tredger: When it comes to housing, this government likes to think it's all up to the market and supply and demand, but in fact, there are laws and regulations that can either help or make things worse. One of the issues at play with the housing crisis is the way we sell homes. The practice here is that all real estate agents in the Yukon must represent the seller, never the buyer. This means every agent is obligated to get the highest possible price for the home. It's driving up prices, and the legislation does nothing to prevent this. Buyers are just out of luck.

If the minister wants to help people afford a home, he can start by bringing the real estate profession in line with modern standards. Will the minister improve transparency for homebuyers and introduce buyer-agency regulations in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. What we are talking about is housing affordability, and this government is firing on all cylinders to get homes and lots into Yukoners' hands as quickly and as affordably as possible. That is what we talked about just moments ago in my ministerial statement. I know that my colleagues in Energy, Mines and Resources and the Yukon Housing Corporation also have a number of projects that they

are forwarding to try to make sure that Yukoners have the housing.

We have talked about the growth in the economy. It is growing very, very fast and so is our lot development. Our lot development and housing are growing at a six-percent rate, as my colleague from the Department of Economic Development just recounted a few moments ago. The reality, though, is that we inherited a lot deficit because of the inaction and the inability of the previous government, the Yukon Party government, to get the job done. We have been working to dig ourselves out of that deficit since we took office, and we are going to continue to do that hard work.

The member opposite brought up legislative changes. I am more than happy to look at legislative changes to make sure that we get lot prices and housing prices down. That takes a long time, but we will take a look at that option.

Ms. Tredger: Well, lots are great for the people who can buy them, but let's remember that we have had entire new neighbourhoods in the last 10 years and the housing crisis is still very much a problem. It's not just real estate that is under-regulated; Yukon tenants have some of the weakest protections in the country.

The Yukon Party's *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* has proven to be toothless when it comes to protecting tenants. In their six years of government, the Liberals have refused to even review it. Tenants are still vulnerable and protections are few and far between. By doing nothing, the minister is making it clear that he isn't interested in protecting tenants.

Why won't the minister review the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to ensure better protections for tenants?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have not said at any time that I am not interested in taking a look at that piece of legislation. We have a very heavy legislative agenda, as the member opposite knows. We have just come through a pandemic. We are looking at our legislative agenda.

I have endeavoured to work with the Department of Community Services to streamline and refine the processes at the residential tenancies office that we run out of CS. We are more than happy to look at ways to make sure that Yukoners are better protected, but a legislative review of the type that the member opposite is talking about — as she well knows, because we have spoken about it — takes years. We'll have to reconcile that process; it's not going to be a quick fix.

In the meantime, we have a lot of short-term efforts that we're doing to make sure that we get more lots into Yukoners' hands, that we get more rental suites available to Yukoners, and that we get more condos and more houses available for Yukoners. We're going to continue to do that work, and we're also going to look at — as I said just moments ago, I have no problem having a look at legislation. We have to fit it into our agenda and it's not going to be a quick fix.

Ms. Tredger: Well, the minister says that it takes years to review legislation. They have had six and they haven't even gotten started.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* is outdated in so many ways. In 11 of 13 Canadian jurisdictions, tenants are protected from being evicted without a reason. From BC to PEI,

landlords have to provide a cause before they evict a tenant, but not in the Yukon.

Things are so bad that the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition put forward a petition last fall demanding that this Liberal government end evictions without cause. Again, the minister did nothing. Over and over again, this minister has chosen to do nothing. This government seems happy to turn a blind eye when it comes to protecting Yukon renters.

Will the minister finally protect Yukon tenants and end no-cause evictions?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We hear the concerns from tenants, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and others regarding no-cause evictions. As a matter of fact, I was just talking to a constituent this morning on this very issue. This issue has been brought to the forefront in the current rental housing market in the context of the rental index, and we appreciate the range of perspectives on this matter.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was drafted at a time to balance the needs and the rights of landlords and tenants alike, outlining a process to end a tenancy either with cause or without cause. Making a change to how a landlord or a tenant can end a tenancy would require a change in the law. This takes time, as I said earlier. It could take up to three years or longer depending on how much work is involved in doing the legislation. It also takes consultation with landlords.

We know the members opposite give short shrift to consultation. We need to consult with landlords and tenants. We need to consider how to rebalance the rights of both parties while also clarifying how either party could end a tenancy arrangement. Our team is reviewing the landlord and tenant regimes in place across the country and is exploring options to inform future consideration and decisions in the context of Yukon laws.

Question re: Affordable housing and land development

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

The average cost of a single detached home has skyrocketed from \$420,000 at the end of 2016 to at least \$647,000 at the end of last year.

That is a \$227,000 increase to the average cost of a home in Whitehorse in just five years. That is outrageous. As a result, many Yukoners have come to realize that home ownership is completely unattainable.

What is the government doing to address this affordability crisis?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just before we get into specific programs within this jurisdiction, I think that it is important to note that we are talking about something that is happening at a national level, if not internationally, right now. I appreciate the fact that there have been some numbers that have projected or sort of defined what the growth has been in the last five years, but, again, we have seen growth across this country. It is something that many are tackling. It's part of the national housing strategy that we are working on. It is part of the bilateral agreements that we have in place and some of the funding that we see coming to the Yukon. That funding, of

course, is being put toward helping approximately 1,000 households at this particular time through programs such as our community housing programs. That is rent geared to income where we provide, in some cases, up to \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800. At this time, within our support programs, we do not have any wait-list.

The Canada-Yukon housing benefit and programs such as that — what are we doing? First, we heard earlier today the ministerial statement talk about very extensive investment into lots — \$30 million this year. We are seeing unprecedented investment into affordable housing — \$46 million.

What I did was that I went back and I looked over the last 10 years, and what I saw is that we are spending money on capital. Previously, it was spent on O&M and staffing. I think it needs to go into housing, and that's what we are doing to make things more affordable.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

It is clear that what the government is doing is simply not working. In five years, the average cost of a home in Whitehorse increased by more than 54 percent. This has put many Yukoners on the brink as they are forced to take on massive debt just to own a home. A major contributor to the crisis is the fact that the government has been unable to keep up with the demand for land.

Will the government agree to identify new blocks of land for release to private developers to expedite housing development and keep up with demand?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that there may be a difference of opinion at least on one fact. The member opposite stated that, under this government, we did not keep up on lot development, but what I can say is that, when you look at the increase in residential units and we take a look at that 12.1-percent increase in population over the last five years, the residential unit growth was actually at 12.9 percent. So, we have been having a lot of conversations today about pure statistics, so, yes, we did keep up. I think that is important to know.

I will leave the rest to Yukoners to figure out why we are still playing catch-up, but I will leave it at that.

Are we committed to supporting the private sector? Absolutely. Over the last number of years, we have had debates in this House. I certainly urge the member opposite to go back and take a look at Hansard to see some of the comments from her colleagues around their feelings around private land development. I think that we have been the first government to really move this and push that concept. We have a number of big blocks that are going out.

We are reconfiguring and going out to tender on 5th and Rogers. We believe that this is something that we should be doing.

We are working with the City of Whitehorse. We have led that discussion, and now the city is working hand in hand with us on a discussion around what is known in Whitehorse as the "tank farm".

So, I think there have been a lot of opportunities that have been in front of multiple governments, and we are going to seize that and we are going to continue to move it, and, yes, we are fully supportive of private sector development in this space.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

The government can list off all the stats they want. The two statistics that matter are that, in 2016, the average cost of a house was \$420,000. By the end of 2021, that had increased to \$647,000. The fact of the matter is that the Liberals have been unable to address the housing crisis. We need more land developed and we need it developed faster. We know that a stumbling block is permitting and zoning and that municipalities are strapped for resources.

So, will the government agree to inject municipalities with emergency funding to help expedite the release of land and the development of housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are getting now to the root of it where, I guess, we are talking about lot development, and the members opposite wanted to know if we believed in residential, private sector development. We do.

I was shocked to hear the member opposite blame municipalities for the juggernaut — that is new — but I do believe that if you look at the federal budget for this year, what you will see is something called the “accelerator program”. That essentially is providing funding to municipalities across this country to enhance their human resources capacity within their planning departments. It is something that at least we have talked to the municipality about. We certainly will be urging to see that.

Again, I am shocked — at one point, it was us being blamed for what has happened, and then there were some numbers provided — nobody wants to hear the statistics, okay — and then from that we hear that it is the municipalities that are causing the problem.

So, look, we’ll talk to our municipal leaders. I don’t think that they are the problem. We’re all working together because we have immense growth. This growth has led the G7. Our economy is leading the country, and I think many jurisdictions are envious of this. I still understand and am empathetic to what people are going through, and we are going to focus on continuing to make sure that there are affordable options. We’re going to look at innovation, and that’s how we’re going to solve our problems.

Question re: Faro community support services

Ms. McLeod: On November 15 last year, the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin brought forward questions from the community of Faro about the mental health and counselling supports in that community in the wake of the tragic shooting. He asked for the government to agree to immediately put in place permanent mental health and counselling service supports in that community.

In response, the minister told the Legislature that there were already extensive supports available in Faro. Does the minister think that the current mental health and counselling supports in Faro are adequate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to be able to speak to this situation today. The tragedy and the loss that occurred in the Town of Faro in October 2021 were truly felt across the territory. It has shaken both the community and the Yukon, and

it will have a lifetime of impact on those who were witnesses to that horrible tragedy and crime.

We have come together to support the Town of Faro and to provide the needed supports — first, initially, by responding to the community and then ultimately by continuing to serve the community of Faro and the individuals who need support there. As I have noted, I expect that it will be a lifetime of learning.

The community of Faro is served by the hub that’s located in Carmacks, and I can indicate that the counsellor is now assigned to the towns of Faro and Ross River. There was a separate counsellor available at the Carmacks mental wellness and substance use hub, and I look forward to continuing to outline the services available.

Ms. McLeod: Residents of Faro have yet again raised serious concerns about the lack of support for that community in response to the tragedy that occurred last year.

This is despite the fact that the minister and Premier both promised to expand and improve those services. So, what supports have been put in place in Faro to help the community recover from last fall’s tragedy?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Perhaps the member opposite didn’t hear. The hub that is located in the town of Carmacks services a number of communities in that area. Services delivered to communities include rapid access counselling, ongoing one-on-one counselling, group counselling and workshops, as well as support work, outreach, and harm reduction services. I should also note that the Office of the Auditor General last year reviewed the mental health services in rural Yukon. A positive review was noted by the Auditor General for the concept of the hub services — the increase from only two mental health workers in all of the territory to now having five hubs provide service across the territory.

The Auditor General also included a recommendation to complete and implement a recruitment and retention strategy. I am happy to say that is also underway. I look forward to the opportunity to note that another counsellor has been recently hired for the Carmacks mental wellness substance use hub, which will allow one of the counsellors to support specifically Faro and Ross River and the second counsellor to support the Carmacks and Pelly Crossing communities.

Ms. McLeod: I’m going to remind the minister that Carmacks is not a suburb of Faro.

An e-mail sent to the Premier and minister last year from a resident in Faro about lack of services in that community said — quote: “There are no supports ... for victims of domestic abuse.”

Now, today, we hear similar comments from residents of Faro in the media. What steps, if any, has the minister taken to improve supports for victims of domestic abuse in Faro?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The tragedy and the crime that was committed in Faro back in October 2021 was truly felt across the territory. I can indicate that it was particularly difficult for those of us who have worked in the area of domestic violence for some 30-plus years. We have added an additional counsellor to the mental wellness hub in Carmacks, which serves the towns of Faro, Ross River, Pelly Crossing, and Carmacks.

I think the flippant comment about geography in the territory is completely unwarranted. We're talking about serious matters here. We're talking about mental wellness and victim services for individuals who have been through a tragedy like no other.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Victim Services, and the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services unit continue to provide supports in the Town of Faro. We recognize that this will be a lifetime impact with respect to how the individuals in the Town of Faro, and other places in the Yukon who experience domestic violence and the horrible crime that it is, will need support long term. We will continue to do that.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

Deputy Chair: At this time, I will ask if any private members wish to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole this afternoon to provide relief to the Chair.

Member for Copperbelt South and Member for Porter Creek Centre rise

Deputy Chair: The matter before Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, 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

Acting Chair (Mr. Kent): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Acting Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity

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

Is there any general debate?

Women and Gender Equity Directorate

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to first, of course, welcome our officials to the Legislative Assembly — our deputy minister responsible, Nicole Morgan, and our director, Hillary Aitken. Thank you for coming to assist us in the debate today.

Today, I am happy to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate budget for the 2022-23 year. This budget is reflective of the work of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and the work that we undertake with our partners in order to advance equality of all genders and sexual orientations throughout the Yukon.

This represents the first budget since we updated the name and formal mandate of the directorate in the fall of 2021. The work of the directorate has kept women's equality at the heart of what we do and continues to strengthen the breadth and depth of our work to reflect equality of all genders and sexual orientations and the unique intersectionality of these identities.

The Women and Gender Equity Directorate seeks to advance equality through three main mechanisms: first, by conducting policy development and research internal to government and by integrating gender-inclusive diversity analysis — or GBA+ — within Government of Yukon; second, through strategic leadership of interdepartmental initiatives, like SART, the sexualized assault response team, the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, and Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ strategy; and third, through financial and programming support to partners or projects that seek to advance equality.

Our government is committed to furthering the equality of all Yukoners and ensuring that we all have the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. The work of the small team at the Women and Gender Equity Directorate represents key projects to advance equality in the territory. I would like to begin by highlighting some of those key objectives and recent successes.

An important mandate commitment that I have talked about several times in the House already is our commitment to LGBTQ2S+ inclusion. This coming summer, we will be marking one year since the release of the Government of Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan. This will provide an opportunity to review the plan and progress internally. In year 2, we plan to return to the community to make sure we are still on track and to adjust as needed. The action plan paves a path forward to end discrimination and improve inclusivity, both within Government of Yukon services and within the territory as a whole.

It includes over 100 action items representing programs and services in several key departments across governments. This year, we are adding one FTE to the directorate in order to provide additional support, research, engagement, and collaboration for this action plan.

We are also pleased to be providing funding to Queer Yukon Society for Yukon's very first Pride Centre, which has long been a priority for the LGBTQ2S+ community and is one of the major goals outlined in the *Inclusion Action Plan*. This year, we are providing \$425,000 to Queer Yukon Society to support this work. The Pride Centre will serve the LGBTQ2S+ community, which has experienced discrimination and systemic barriers for far too long.

Queer Yukon Society is currently in the process of seeking community input and further navigating COVID protocols before they can open safely to the public. We are committed to the vision of a Yukon that is a place where everyone feels safe, welcomed, valued, and celebrated. This is meaningful work, and I believe that it will help create more equitable programs, services, and workplaces for citizens who have faced barriers for far too long.

Moving on, I want to highlight the work that has gone into the next steps of the Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people strategy. The Government of Yukon is committed, of course, to taking action to address the crisis in missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people. We will continue to do this work in partnership with First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, RCMP, communities, and, most importantly, the families and survivors.

The Yukon's strategy is a long-term, whole-of-Yukon approach. It outlines 31 actions and four main paths: strengthening connections and support, education and economic empowerment, community safety and justice, and community dialogue and action. The Yukon advisory committee on MMIWG2S+ has worked with a technical working group to write the implementation framework for Yukon's strategy, which will provide more details to the 31 action items in the strategy.

This fiscal year, we are providing \$285,000 in funding for the Yukon missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people strategy, which is as follows: \$100,000 for research in support on updating the record of those lost; \$150,000 for the Yukon MMIWG2S+ strategy forum, including a transfer payment agreement with an NGO to coordinate involvement of family members of MMIWG2S+ folks; and \$35,000 to support the ongoing work of the Yukon advisory committee on MMIWG2S+.

The Government of Yukon had planned to host an accountability forum in February for partners and signatories and family members, but this event had to be postponed and is now scheduled for May 18 and 19. At the time, the postponement was really due to the impacts of the then-Omicron variant that was causing further restrictions in our community. We remain committed to doing this work differently in the spirit of decolonization and reconciliation. This means that it will take time. I'm very committed to, of course, continuing that work in a good way.

Another initiative that supports the increased needs due to COVID-19 is the sexualized assault response team. As many of us know, the Yukon has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in the country. The vast majority of assaults are not

reported to the police. Since SART was launched in Whitehorse in March of 2020, we have worked hard to increase coordination of existing services, while also building public awareness of new services for victims of sexualized assault. New SART services in Whitehorse include weekend support workers, on-call specially trained medical care providers, and priority access to mental wellness care. Across the territory, any victim of sexualized violence can now access a 24/7 toll-free support line and a website with information and local resources. We have always known there is an even greater need for victim-centred collaborative services to be available outside of Whitehorse. This year, we are partnering with the Government of Canada to provide \$125,000 to support the planning for expansion of SART services.

As we plan how to expand SART services to communities beyond Whitehorse, we will work with community partners, including First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, and service providers in communities. I believe that working together to address the unique needs of communities is essential in moving forward. This is a principle in much of the work of the directorate and throughout Government of Yukon.

I wanted to speak a little bit about Sally & Sisters. They provide a critical service for so many women and children in our community. It has been in operation in Whitehorse for nearly 10 years, providing a safe and sober environment to meet emergency needs for food security. Just as important, it provides a place for women and children to access peer support, referrals to services, and navigation of services. Again, these are not luxuries; they are fundamental needs for many of our community members.

As the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I'm so grateful for the grassroots work of local organizations that create and run programs like Sally & Sisters. We will continue to work with local equality-seeking organizations to increase accessibility to other sources of funding and to build opportunities for further collaboration. That is why I'm pleased that, this year, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate will be providing an increase of funding of \$143,000 to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to continue the Sally & Sisters program. This will allow the program to operate four days a week.

I'm happy to be here today to speak about the important work that the Women and Gender Equity Directorate does on behalf of government and on behalf of Yukon. It has been a pleasure to be the minister in the last mandate and now this mandate. I'm happy to be here today to answer questions and have discussions with members in the opposition.

Ms. Clarke: I would like to thank the officials for being here today and for providing a thorough briefing for the opposition earlier in the Sitting. I do have a few questions for the minister regarding funding.

There has been much instability around funding for NGOs throughout the Yukon, and women's organizations are not immune from these pressures. We have heard a number of concerns from organizations that core funding needs, first of all, to be increased to enable them to adjust salaries and wages,

as many do not receive a salary or wage that reflects the work that they do. Some could also benefit from being able to fund additional positions.

Will the minister ensure that women's organizations are being properly resourced and advocate for multi-year predictable core funding from Health and Social Services?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have just spoken about this, but I will say it again in terms of how grateful we are for the work that all equality-seeking organizations do in the Yukon to reduce gender-based violence and build safer communities. This past year has shown us both the critical importance of these services and the ability to be flexible in the face of changing community needs.

I think I will just start by stating that our budget for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — the majority of our budget goes to equality-seeking organizations. Our 2022-23 O&M budget estimate for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate is \$3,680,000. Out of that, this fiscal year, equality-seeking organizations are receiving a total of \$2,075,000 from the directorate.

As we continue to respond to the recovery from the pandemic, we recognize the increased demands for services and clear requests from NGOs for sustainable and appropriate long-term funding. We are committed to continuing this work with community partners and the Government of Canada.

There were additional funds that became available in 2021 to be disbursed over a five-year funding period that will also include capacity for indigenous women's groups and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations. In terms of a bit of a breakdown of the funding that we are providing and some small increases that we were able to provide this year, the women's equality fund is \$197,000 per year in ongoing operational funding for four non-indigenous women's organizations. That includes: the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, which right now is at \$55,000; the Yukon Status of Women Council at \$49,000; Women in Trades and Technology at \$49,000; and Les EssentiElles at \$44,000. We also have an indigenous equality fund that is \$600,000 in operational and capacity funding over three indigenous women's organizations. This is a new fund. It's a partnership between Yukon and Canada.

Plus, we do have the prevention of violence against aboriginal women — that's \$200,000. We have a women's community project funding that's \$10,000. These are small grants that folks can apply for, and we provide small amounts to those organizations for specific projects.

Of course, I take note — I know that there is a desire for women's equality-seeking groups to increase their operational funding. We've had several discussions with them — very hopeful and forward-looking with the release of the federal budget. We're still working out details in that regard. We are committed — and have worked at the national level — to endorse the gender-based violence national action plan and are still working on some of the aspects within that plan that pertain to the connection to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and populating that particular pillar within that strategy. I believe that it is going to be a huge focus for us in

the territory overall to work toward increased funding for the Yukon.

Ms. Clarke: Will the minister commit to reviewing the funding for the women's equality fund with the Status of Women Council to ensure that funding is adequate to the needs of women's equality fund recipients?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. Again, I am very committed to working with the equality-seeking groups. I have met with the groups that fall under the women's equality fund, and I certainly have heard the pressures that they have. I do not believe that I have all of the other numbers with me in terms of all of the other supports that come from other departments within Government of Yukon, but there are a number of partners who contribute to each of these organizations.

I know that it is a new, emerging area, but you will be hearing me speak about this a lot over this mandate because this is a new initiative. The gender-based violence national action plan is a very, very important national initiative at the federal level and throughout the provinces and territories. We have all supported this national action plan. There is also a national action plan on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and they are parallel to each other.

The funding that has been announced recently through the recent federal budget will flow through that action plan.

Specifically, on the indigenous side, that pillar that is within the national action plan will be informed by the needs on the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls side. Yukon is currently working to define what our needs are in the Yukon around that specific area within the national action plan. This is certainly a new approach for Canada and one that we welcome.

In much of the national action plan on both the gender-based violence and missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, you will see similarities in Yukon's approach — to the approach that we took on our strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. You will recognize some of the key areas within these strategies, including a declaration and commitment to ending violence against women and marginalized folks throughout Canada.

You will hear me speak about this a lot, and I look forward to bringing back more detailed information as it becomes available and as that work unfolds at the national level.

Ms. Clarke: The Yukon government uses the national consumer price index, or CPI, as a benchmark or key indicator for adjusting the cost of living. We have seen sharp increases in the cost of living, especially in recent months. What is the benchmark for NGOs such as women's organizations? How does the Yukon government adjust their funding to reflect increases to cost of living?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We continue, of course, to respond as we move into recovery from the pandemic and certainly see our NGOs as an important service provider in areas where it makes sense for grassroots organizations to be providing direct services to folks and continue to be supportive of that. I have gone over the numbers in terms of what we have within women and gender equity.

I hear the member opposite speaking — and I've heard it a couple of times around core funding. We provide grants to organizations — ongoing toward operational funding. The specific question that I'll bring back in a legislative return to the member opposite — but I also want to note that we do have work going on within government that's being led by Economic Development around the needs and ongoing needs of the NGO community.

That work is underway and ongoing, and certainly the equality-seeking groups fit within that. We will be able to provide some more information from that work that is happening there as well, so I will commit to bringing back a return on the specific question that the member opposite has raised today.

Ms. Clarke: Just for the record, that question that will be answered later is: What is the benchmark for NGOs such as women's organizations, and how does the Yukon government adjust their funding to reflect increases to the cost of living? Thank you in advance.

My next question is on the sexualized assault response team. During the opposition briefing, we asked what the \$125,000 increase for SART was being used for. According to the written response that we received on this question, SART partners are working to determine the details of expanding the program to rural Yukon communities. This funding will continue the planning and begin implementation of expanded SART services.

I am hoping that the minister could confirm for me which staff positions SART is comprised of. I understand that the departments of Health and Social Services and of Justice and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate are old partners in SART, but I am wondering how many positions make up SART and which positions come from each department.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am pleased to speak about the sexualized assault response team. It certainly has been a high priority for our government since the last mandate and this mandate as well. Since SART was launched in Whitehorse in March 2020, we have worked hard to increase coordination of existing services while also building public awareness of new services for victims of sexualized assault. Key components of SART include a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault. Victim support workers are available during business hours during the week and all hours during the weekend in Whitehorse. A roster of on-call physicians at the Whitehorse General Hospital are specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault, and rapid-access counselling at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is available.

Maybe I will stop there for a second, and just before I move into that part about the expansion — we do have a full-time clinical coordinator with Health and Social Services. We have also a full-time victim support coordinator and a number of folks within Victim Services who provide the support that is needed during business hours, and then, as I have stated, we have after-hours and weekends that are covered in Whitehorse. Again, when you hear and listen and understand the makeup of this program — we have folks throughout the whole system

who are trained in their positions to provide specific services to victims of sexualized assault.

In terms of those on-call staff within Health and Social Services and Victim Services, I will return that exact number, but within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, we do not have a person dedicated to the sexualized assault response team. Within our small unit, we have policy analysts, our director, and we have other folks who work to support the initiatives and the areas of priority for Government of Yukon, and that is how we spread that work out.

In terms of a higher level of oversight, a high priority for our government is the expansion of the sexualized assault response team, which is being led by the Department of Justice and supported by the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. This will be an expansion of services to communities beyond Whitehorse, and we will reach out and work with our community partners, including First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, and service providers in communities. Work to address the unique needs of communities is absolutely essential, moving forward.

I think that covers it, but I will return with that specific number the member opposite is looking for.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate that answer. Thank you. Just for the record, the minister will return my question on how many positions make up SART and which positions come from each department. I thank the minister in advance.

I have a question regarding the website. I understand that the Indicators of Yukon Gender Equality website — that is yukongenderequality.com — has not been updated since 2018. This is quite concerning, as this is an important website that shares statistics, data, and other information with the public. Will the minister commit to updating this website so the public and women's organizations will be able to find up-to-date information and statistics?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. It's an important one. There is some history behind it, for sure, and I wanted to just make sure that I get this right.

The website that we're talking about here and the work that was done by the Women's Directorate at the time was done on the 30th anniversary of the Women's Directorate, and it's hosted in an external website outside of yukon.ca, and I'll explain why. Right now, it's under yukongenderequality.com. When Yukon government went through a rebranding, the website was not compatible with current Yukon government branding. All of that content is currently being migrated over to yukon.ca. So, that work is underway now. There have been some updates over the last few years, but once we get it into this new — under yukon.ca, it will be easier to update and also will become a more sustainable tool for Yukoners and will be fully updated at that time with the new statistics, because I do agree — I think that we need to have the data available to us to understand where our benchmarks have been, where they're going, and be able to compare year over year.

Ms. Tredger: I'm glad to be discussing this today. I want to thank the department officials for being here. I appreciated the briefing very much, and I appreciate having you here today.

I actually want to start by following up on my colleague's questions about the sexualized assault response team. I understand that the minister will be returning with information about who makes up that team. I'm wondering, when she does that, if she could include some information about those positions. So, I'm curious how many of them are permanent positions, how many of them are term positions, and how many are AOC. Particularly for the casual and AOC employees, I'm wondering if there are benefits available to them, which isn't typical for AOCs, but that's hard work they're doing, and I can't imagine trying to do that work without having access to counselling, for example. I'm wondering if there are benefits that are available to those people doing that work. So, that's for the return.

I also wanted to ask about the expansion. I don't think I quite understood what's happening. I believe it's \$125,000 to plan the expansion to the communities. Who is doing that work? Is that \$125,000 for a position in the department? Or is it going to external agencies that are going to do that planning work? I am hoping that the minister can let me know more about that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. I will commit to adding those details to the legislative return regarding the positions and some of those finer details that we are being asked to provide. Again, if you go back and look at the mandate letters — this has been a high priority for three areas within government since taking office in 2016: Health and Social Services, Justice, and, at the time, the Women's Directorate and now the Women and Gender Equity Directorate continue to have the sexualized assault response team within our mandate letters, and now, to move into the expansion — Justice is the lead on this mandate item and takes support from Health and Social Services and Women and Gender Equity. We accessed the \$125,000 that you are asking about — we accessed that funding through Canada at the same time that we accessed funding for the increased resources for Sally & Sisters. It was a nationally based program.

The sexualized assault response team fits within the mandate that we have to expand to communities. It will not be a fund that will fund employees. It really is about engaging with our communities and engaging with our partners to determine the details of expanding the program to rural Yukon communities. We know that Yukon communities are all very different and that is what I heard loud and clear. I had a lot of discussions with folks in rural Yukon communities, particularly when we were doing the consultation and work around MMIWG. I spoke with all First Nations, all partners, and the sexualized assault response team and expansion into communities came up frequently. It is actually an action item within the MMIWG strategy for this expansion and continued support, because it is so vital that we provide this specific support.

We know that all Yukon communities are very unique and need to be treated as such. I think about one community in particular — Dawson — which said to not come and just do what you did. Whitehorse is a great model for Whitehorse, but it may not fit in Dawson, and this is why — and they described

the activities that they already have underway — SART-type services — and so we need a really specific response there.

That's what the \$125,000 will go toward, is that really community engagement. We know that we will take what we learned from the establishment of SART in Whitehorse, and of course, the 24/7 line does extend to all of Yukon, and so does the rapid access to mental health wellness and crisis counselling right now. So, there are services available to rural Yukon, and this will see more of that.

We know that there are three areas that we focus on, which is our justice system and legal response — including RCMP response, victim services, community response — and our clinical response, which is really how folks are provided service when they need medical attention. We have had a lot of focus on training and protocols and ensuring that we have folks specially trained to work with victims of sexualized violence.

We will take what we learned in Whitehorse and we will talk about that in the communities, but not have that agenda to just recreate that exact service and the way that it is done in Whitehorse in the communities, because they're all so unique. So, that's our intent — to do that work in a good way with our three departments — the two supporting Justice — to ensure that the work gets done in a timely manner but also in a thorough and right way.

Ms. Tredger: I completely agree about the need for consultation and making sure that there are models that work for the communities. I'm just trying to understand — and I'm not trying to make a point about how funding should or shouldn't be used; I'm just trying to understand where that \$125,000 is going to go, because it's not just staff. Is it going to a contractor to do the engagement? Is this department leading that engagement or will it be done by an external body?

I'm just trying to understand what that money is going to go toward.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the follow-up specific to the question you are asking. Those are really good questions. Our intent is to ensure that we are meeting the needs and uniqueness of each community. This will certainly include some travel to communities. It may very well include some contract work specific to a community. There will be work that will happen internally. The three departments — two of which are supporting and one is leading — are really determining some of those finer details right now, but I think that the main point is that our intent is really to ensure that we are expanding the sexualized assault response team approach into all of our communities in the best way possible.

We will remain committed to that and working with our partners and organizations within communities. As I said, using Dawson as an example, they certainly have a lot of work that is already underway there. We would want to ensure that we are working with them in the way that the community works and utilizing these additional resources from Canada in an effective way to ensure that we have, again, the right approach for each community.

So, this is a little bit of what you asked about in terms of what that will look like.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you to the minister. I am looking forward to seeing that work happen. It is an exciting project.

I would like to talk about the taxi survey and some of the concerns around taxi safety, particularly in Whitehorse. The final report made a number of recommendations to the territorial government. I would like to quote one of them — and I quote: “Several Yukon government departments negotiate and secure standing contracts with Whitehorse based taxi companies whose drivers transport vulnerable individuals. Given the prevalence of...” — gender-based violence — “... as reported presently, the Yukon Government has an obligation to review the criteria it uses when selecting taxi companies.”

Has any work been done to review the criteria this government is using to secure contracts with taxi companies? I am wondering what those criteria are and whether they consider metrics of social safety and gender-based violence.

One more follow-up would be, if that work is happening, I wonder about how that can be communicated to the people who are actually going to access those taxis, because they need to make a decision about whether it is going to be safe for them to access that service or not. Knowing what work is being done would be really helpful.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. I think that this is a really vitally important issue within our territory — something that has been talked about in a lot of different angles. I know that, prior to coming into the position that I’m in now — we flagged this at Kwanlin Dün years ago as an issue and really worked at that time with the city to make the changes that were required. I’m very happy that the work has been done to look deeper into this, because safe transportation has been a critical issue in our communities for decades. As I said, it certainly was an issue when I was a director of justice for Kwanlin Dün and it remains — fast-forward to today, I can certainly guarantee that I’ve had a lot of discussions with Chief Bill about this at Kwanlin Dün. The report recently released by the Yukon women’s coalition reinforces that more work needs to be done to ensure that women and all Yukoners can get where they need to safely. I can tell you that previously, in my role as Minister of Tourism and Culture, this was a huge issue as well. We were welcoming the world and we need to make sure that folks can get to and from where they need to go safely when they visit our city. I am pleased to see, of course, that now the City of Whitehorse has taken action to improve taxi safety. We are currently continuing to review the report and recommendations related to Government of Yukon.

Again, there are a number of places where this is being discussed, but one in particular is the sexualized assault response team implementation committee. This includes the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, Justice, Health and Social Services, RCMP, the Crown, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, specifically through the First Nations Health Programs, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the transition home. It’s a well-attended, very committed group of folks who are working around the response to sexual assault, safety, and violence in our territory overall. This is an area that they are looking at. We will continue to work with our partners around

what is needed in terms of the relationship to Government of Yukon.

I know that you’re specifically talking about the contracts that we have with cab companies.

I’ll probably just speak from an Education perspective for a second. We do provide transportation through the Department of Education from time to time and hold contracts with a cab company. We have recently changed cab companies. Again, our criteria, of course, is safety and well-being and following our policies around safety as we would with busing services or any others. We contract our bus services to Standard Bus. There are a number of policies and laws that it falls under and regulations and policies that come after that.

I may be able to give some specifics around that in a moment, but I’ll also just speak about Yukon’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls strategy, which includes an action on providing safe transportation options. I continue to look forward to working with the City of Whitehorse and with the Yukon women’s coalition and other partners on this. I know that this came up repeatedly during our consultation and work that we did on the strategy for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It also was hand in hand with proper communication tools as well in our rural communities and access to cellular service throughout the territory. Those are all things that we will address in that particular action plan, but certainly it’s something that we’re well aware of. I’m happy that the work has been done to reinforce the assumptions that we had, and now they are reinforced through a report that we are absolutely working with.

Ms. Tredger: So, did I understand that there is a policy in place for — the minister compared it to the bus company. I assume that there is a policy in place that the bus company has to follow. Is there a policy in place that taxi companies have to follow if they are being contracted by the Yukon government? I would be really interested to know — and perhaps to see that policy.

I wonder if there are any plans particularly outside of Whitehorse when we are talking about safe transportation. This is an issue that we have highlighted lots of times about — you know, there is no public transportation for most of the rural communities to Whitehorse or to each other. That is a huge safety risk, and it leaves people in dangerous situations that they have no way out of.

So, I am wondering if there are any plans to look at other models of transportation, whether it is community bus programs to Whitehorse or safe ride programs. What kind of creative work is being done to try to make this a safer situation for people?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, transportation within rural communities and between communities is very important. I am speaking, of course, from the lens of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. As I have stated, we certainly have identified this as a gap in our services within our communities. “Transportation and Communication” is 2.8 in the MMIWGS2+ strategy: “Create safe and affordable transportation and communication options to and between Yukon communities.” Again, this is a Yukon-wide strategy, so

we are working with a lot of partners here — all levels of government.

There are a number of partners and contributors to this strategy that include all those levels of government, but when we're talking specifically about issues arising out of safety in regard to domestic violence or other safety issues within our communities, victims can access support through Victim Services by being in touch through phone, e-mail, or in person in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson or by setting up in-person meetings where Victim Services can travel to an individual's community. I know that's not specific to what you're asking, but I just wanted to frame this up a little bit in terms of access to Victim Services workers. They can certainly help with safety planning, protective orders, and accessing safe places to be, including transportation.

Victims of domestic violence and other forms of violence can access independent legal advice to assist in making informed choices, exploring options through Victim Services, and inclusive of safe transportation. All three Yukon transition homes provide transportation on a case-by-case basis, when operations allow. They do not receive funding from Government of Yukon to specifically cover this. These are areas that we want to cover in our action plan — well, implementation framework and plan on MMIWG and also the then more detailed action plans that will scope out what the possibilities are, but it is a high priority and one that I heard many times.

I certainly know from the work that I've done previously at the front line and working to support people in all sorts of situations that transportation is always an issue, especially since we do not have bus service in the Yukon any longer. When you look at that in relation to where the *Our Clean Future* plan is and those implications — and I'm sure the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Environment can speak more in-depth around that, but again, my voice and my lens right now is on women and gender equity and those who are marginalized and in need of services in the communities, so I will always be at that table with that voice and that lens.

In terms of — maybe I will just leave it at that for now and we can move into more clarity around where you want to go with this.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that answer. The one piece I was hoping for is that, if there is a policy currently — like a written policy that taxi companies have to follow — so perhaps the next time the minister is on her feet, she could answer that.

But I do want to ask a different question. So, in the minister's mandate letter, it talks about the department leading on gender-inclusive diversity analyses, and it says that this department will provide training, research, support, and analysis. I believe that is this department providing that. So, I am just trying to understand — when an analysis needs to be done, does this department go and do it for other departments? Do they provide support?

The other piece of that is that I don't think there have been any new positions in this department, if I am correct, to do that, so I am wondering how that is being managed in terms of

workload for the department staff. Are there other things that have had to be dropped, or where does the capacity for that come from?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. Yes, this is definitely one of our priority areas in terms of conducting policy development and research internal to government by integrating gender inclusivity and diversity analysis. Another way to describe it is GBA+ within Government of Yukon. It is one of our key priority areas. We do this support upon request. We certainly apply this lens over legislative considerations and policies.

Thanks for pointing out that it is within my mandate letter, but it is also in the Premier's mandate letter to the Executive Council Office and also the Public Service Commission — those other two key areas within government that have that widespread through government and definitely have that responsibility as well. So, it's looking broadly to all work of government so that we have that lens placed on all aspects of government and as we make decisions, and this is how we make good, informed decisions that really are inclusive of that intersectionality lens and have that view — definitely focusing, from the directorate's point of view, on building capacity.

We recently launched an online training earlier in February. This has been well-received — really good uptake. I think the best way to describe it is — as we look throughout government and as we start to really lay this blanket over and have this lens from many different angles — that there are already some huge champions of this within government, and we're looking eagerly to build more.

I think that when we take this approach and have that type of lens that looks at — and we're not only talking. When we talk about gender inclusivity and diversity, diversity is from all aspects — so really looking at it from other views, like from a First Nation lens, from a francophone lens, from a Filipino lens, or from a Chinese or multi-cultural lens. When we work to find what would work for the Yukon, expanding it into that diversity was really important. It's not only from a gender lens; it's from all those other ways that we intersect.

It's really important and vital work, and it takes time to change culture within a mainstream government, but it's certainly an area that we are very committed to. I look forward to this having that really broad-reaching blanket over the work that we do.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I am really glad to hear that work is happening in an intersectional way. I do think it's very important. I guess the point that I would like to make is that work like that is work. If it means resources, I would be more than happy to support a budget that provided more resources to that if it's needed.

The last thing that I want to comment on is — I want to go back to the minister's conversation with my colleague for Porter Creek Centre about core funding for Yukon women's organizations. I know that the minister and my colleague went back and forth, so I don't really have any additional questions, but I do want to comment. The minister talked about grants that are provided to those organizations and that she is hoping that there will be money in the federal budget for those

organizations, but hoping for grants is a really rough way to run an organization. Every grant is hours of work on applications. It is hours of work on reporting. It is hours of work to try to figure out which grant will pay for computers, which grant will pay for wages, and which grant will pay for winter tires for our vehicles. It is a lot of work to try to piece those things together. As my colleague pointed out, cost-of-living increases are real, and if organizations want to attract and retain qualified people, those people need to be supported. They need to have access to benefits and competitive wages, and that is very difficult to do out of grants. Suggesting that they wait for the federal budget is hoping that someone else will take care of it.

This is just my pitch for core funding — for core funding increases — and not making organizations jump through hoop after hoop to piece together grants and budgets, but just give them the money that they need to do the work.

With that, I will end my questions for today and give my thanks again to the officials. I look forward to debating this again soon.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for that final question. Our women's organizations are critical in creating a more equitable society. These organizations provide, as I said earlier today and many times, direct services to women, girls, and two-spirit and gender-diverse people.

They also contribute to research, advocacy, public education, and programming. It's important to have those diverse views — not always from a government view, but from other organizations. They hold us to account as well. I know that, because I have been in those positions myself, so I know. I actually really understand and have had these in-depth discussions with our equality-seeking groups right from the beginning of coming into office to look at ways of how we can work together and ensure that our funding goes further.

I know the world of having to apply for grants and contributions and creating projects to make things work for our communities. I did that for a lot of years — actually a couple of decades doing that very work, so I really truly understand the pressure that our organizations are under. That is why we have been meeting with our equality-seeking groups to look at ways forward.

Whatever resources we have direct access to, we have done whatever we can to really support — and this may sound very small, but in the 2022-23 budget — I know it's small, but it is significant because it shows us working to find ways to provide a little bit of extra where we can, and we have provided \$4,000 to \$5,000 each for the organizations. This was due to a lapse with one organization no longer accessing the women's equality fund. That's in the 2022-23 budget.

I note the member opposite talking about that we do not actually expect our organizations that are under the Women and Gender Equity to apply for the money. It is operational money, so the dollars that I had talked about earlier under each of these organizations — those are resources that go directly to them through a TPA, or a transfer payment agreement. As I have stated, we are increasing — not a lot, but up to \$5,000 for each of the organizations this year.

We will continue to work with our partners in Canada. They are an important partner. We are not just hopeful that we will get what we need in the Yukon. I think that I worked on that national plan at the national level. Our department has spent a lot of time working on identifying our needs in the Yukon and what would make a difference, so that is a new investment in eliminating gender-based violence in Canada. That is new. We have not had an action plan like that.

I am happy to have been a part of shaping that. We will continue to work with our federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues to make sure that this gets implemented the way in which it is intended, which does include investments into our communities. When we were working toward the early days of that national action plan, we finalized it during the pandemic because we did not want to sit idly while we were in this world pandemic. We continued the work, and I was really happy to be a signatory to it.

We will continue to work with our partners. I think that is one of the key things as well — to really have a strong partnership with the federal government so that they do not forget about the Yukon. I know that we have had a huge influence over some of the policy decisions that they have made, and we will continue to have that.

I note, as well, that all of our equality-seeking groups within the territory — whether they are indigenous women, non-indigenous women, or LGBTQ2S+ — have leveraged. We have provided funding, and that funding from the Government of Yukon has been leveraged with national funding for capacity development over the last several years since I have been in the position. A lot of those decisions were directly influenced by Yukon's model, which we proposed to the Government of Canada. We will continue to do that and find all avenues to ensure that our organizations have the funding that they need to do the important work and seeking the type of territory that we want to live in.

There has never been a more important time than now, as we are in the substance use emergency. We will work with the Minister of Health and Social Services in the lead of that action around that particular strategy going forward, along with a lot of other leaders in the Yukon. I look forward to connecting all of the dots here, connecting all of the plans and work that we have done and the work that still needs to be done and breathing life into these strategies that we have before us.

Thank you very much for the debate today. I think that the smaller departments or directorates often get sort of sidelined a little bit in the debate, and I think that it is vitally important that we are talking and having open discussions about these important topics because they mean a tremendous amount to Yukoners and particularly the most vulnerable — or among the most vulnerable — in our territory.

Thank you to our officials for being here today and assisting with the debate. I thank Nicole and Hillary for their hard work and for all of the staff who are behind the scenes doing this important work and to all of our partners who help us to do this work each and every day on behalf of those we represent.

Acting Chair (Ms. Clarke): Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate?

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

Mr. Dixon: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried

Acting Chair: The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Acting Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,680,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,680,000 agreed to

Women and Gender Equity Directorate agreed to

Acting Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Education — continued

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to be back again to have another opportunity to debate the Department of Education budget. I have not had a chance to debate yet with the critic for the Official Opposition, so I'm looking forward to that opportunity.

I would like to welcome back our Deputy Minister of Education, Nicole Morgan, and our director of Finance, Andrea McIntyre. Welcome. I will not make any further comments so that we can get into debate.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for her opening remarks. I would also like to welcome the officials here to support her today. I know that my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, had some questions in previous debate for the minister in asking questions in my absence. I appreciate his work as well. I'm just going to jump right into a few topics. I know that we have limited time this afternoon.

The first issue that I'm looking to ask the minister some questions about is the Jack Hulland Elementary School. I'm looking for an update on what's happening there. We know that, last fall, there was a meeting with the minister — and, I believe, the deputy minister and staff — in October. Then, following up on November 12, the staff were offered an opportunity to have a confidential conversation with a third-party contractor to share concerns and were also able to use their professional development day on November 12 to complete the Working Mind training to support creating and maintaining a psychologically healthy and safe work place.

I'm looking for, I guess, an update on what has happened since. I understand that Grove Street school no longer has students in it. I'm just looking for some follow-up from the minister going back to those November meetings.

As well, I'm wondering if the minister can give us an update on if there has been any training for educators at Jack Hulland to help them better address classroom violence.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. I will work to give an update as to where we are with Jack Hulland and some of the issues that have arisen at the school. I definitely know how very serious this matter is and that children have the right to learn in a safe environment. We certainly have communicated the serious nature of this.

There are a number of investigations that are going on into the use of holds and restraints at the school from the onset of the investigation through direct communication with parents and guardians of Jack Hulland Elementary School, so I am confident in bringing forward information here today in Committee of the Whole, as we have been communicating with folks directly impacted throughout. We are continuing to fully cooperate with the RCMP investigation, which is still ongoing.

I will get a little bit more into where we are at, as we move through this part of the debate and today's discussion that we are having, but specifically, the member asked about training on November 12. This is training that was conducted with staff. It was entitled "The Working Mind — training on psychologically safe workplaces", so that did occur.

Also, on February 23 and 24, we were able to provide training and worked with a number of family members and parents. We have been working with a parents group, along with the school council. This was one of their high-priority areas — to provide the training on non-violent crisis intervention.

This, of course, is a huge step forward to ensuring school-wide, developmentally responsive — that there is an understanding and approach to responding to — tracking and preventing escalated behaviours in the workplace. That training happened on February 23 and 24. We were able to do it in two sessions so that we could accommodate families, so that we

could accommodate teachers and educators within the school and to cause the least amount of disruption. Again, we worked with the school council, and we worked with the families and parents group that has been formed to work with us on a number of priority areas. So, that has happened.

I am certain that the member opposite has more specific questions, so I may just wait for those questions to come before moving into some of the areas we are currently at.

Mr. Kent: Just a follow-up then with the minister. That February 23 and 24 — and I believe that she said it was training for non-violent crisis intervention — was that specific to Jack Hulland school, or was it broader among the education professionals in the territory?

Then, the final question that I have on Jack Hulland, at this point, is the issue with the administration. I know that, before Christmas when we talked about this, there was an acting principal or a principal in place at Jack Hulland who was splitting time between Jack Hulland and Elijah Smith Elementary School. So, I am wondering if that is still the case and what the plans are — if that is the plan going forward, or is there recruitment underway for a full-time principal at Jack Hulland for the upcoming school year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the non-violent crisis intervention training, this is a service of the Student Support Services for the Department of Education. It is a requirement for all schools, but the session on February 23 and 24 was specific to Jack Hulland. We had to make special arrangements with the school community to be able to fully accommodate the need and work to make sure that — because of the various challenges that we have had with COVID-19 and other challenges — we were accommodating the school and ensuring that everyone had access to that training in a timely manner and that full access was provided.

This particular session was actually facilitated by the Crisis Prevention Institute, which is an institution out of the United States, so it took some real coordinating — especially during the pandemic and some challenges around February and earlier — to make sure that we were able to bring them over within the current restrictions and all of the other challenges that we have had this year. We were able to provide that, and that was one of the highest priority areas that was identified by the parents group. We were very happy to be able to have that happen.

In terms of where we are at with the administration, families were informed on March 4 that the acting principal, Jeff Cressman, would be continuing to work with the school until the end of the school year. There is an open posting for the principal and active recruitment for a full-time permanent principal for the 2022-23 year.

In terms of other — there is a full-time vice-principal who was appointed for the remainder of the school year to provide additional administrative support. We now have Mr. Cressman working full time at Jack Hulland Elementary School until the end of the school year. He is no longer — until the end of this school year — splitting his time between Elijah Smith Elementary and Jack Hulland. He is there full time.

I know that the member wanted to move on in the questions, but I think it's important to note that the department

has received an initial report from the lawyer who was contracted to conduct a fact-finding review of all workplace risk assessments at the school — to further investigate the issues from a human resource management lens. That report is being reviewed now. Next steps will be determined from a human resource management lens.

I think it's also important to note that the child advocate's involvement in the matter is vital, and we certainly are working closely with her to ensure that we are always upholding the rights of children and youth. As I have stated already today, we are working to support the RCMP investigation, which is still ongoing.

There is more information to come. When that information is available, I will certainly bring it forward in a timely manner.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that update on what's happening at Jack Hulland. I'm just going to jump around here a little bit just given, as I mentioned, the time that we have left today.

I do have a couple of questions about the Whistle Bend school. When I look at the Yukon Liberal Party platform from last spring, during the 2021 election, it says that they would establish a Whistle Bend school council in the spring of 2021. We know that didn't happen. Then recently, everyone will know that school council elections concluded for the spring of 2022, and I don't believe that there was a Whistle Bend school council established after these most recent elections. I am hoping that the minister can give us an update on why this initial deadline of spring 2021, as promised in the platform last year, was missed and when we can expect that school council to be established.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. I had hoped that this question would come forward today, because I know that I brought information forward in Question Period indicating that we would have a May school council established for Whistle Bend. The school council attendance area will be under more assessment due to changes that have happened. We certainly intended to have a school council in place for this spring, but there are a number of developments that have happened — I will get into a little bit more about that — and particularly it involves the First Nation School Board and the dissolving of the attendance area for Takhini, but in terms of the Whistle Bend elementary school, we now are proposing to have this held alongside.

When we work to establish the First Nation School Board, we will hold this particular school council election at that time, and once established, they will have a role guiding the aspects of the school build and assume regular school council duties, such as hiring a principal and other key decision points.

Again, the Whitehorse Elementary School attendance area requires further refinement to reflect the First Nation School Board coming online, and establishing a new attendance area for the Whistle Bend school coincides with this work. The school councils for Takhini and Grey Mountain will remain in place until the day before — the current school councils will remain in place until the last day of the school year, at which point the Interim Governance Committee of the First Nation School Board will then take on the responsibility. There are

impacts on the attendance areas for a few schools, and so we need to sort that out, and then we will be in a position to establish this new school council alongside the election for the First Nation School Board.

Mr. Kent: Again, just going back to the platform commitment from last year made by the Liberals, it was to establish the Whistle Bend school council in the spring of 2021. We didn't get it done during the normal election cycle for school councils in the spring of 2022, which just concluded, and that is because there is additional work being done to the attendance area. So, I guess that I am looking for a little bit of clarity from the minister. When will that attendance area be set for the Whistle Bend school, and is there any sense — the minister mentioned Takhini school's attendance area being dissolved because they have chosen to join the First Nation School Board. Will the Whistle Bend school take in Takhini school for those families who don't wish to send their children to the Takhini school? I am just looking for some clarity.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think maybe I will start with the timelines that have been pointed out. In the spring of 2021, we did not have school council elections, so it would have been impossible for us to meet that. This was due to COVID-19. That's why we moved it.

Yes, we had anticipated that we would have the school council established, and much has changed. Education is quite dynamic at this time.

Another item within my mandate letter was to establish a First Nation school board, which we did. At that time, there was no way — up until the referendum was done, we had no way of knowing which schools would establish under the First Nation School Board. In that process, Takhini Elementary School and Grey Mountain Primary School achieved a yes vote to come under the First Nation School Board. You can see that this then causes some changes there. We're now targeting the fall of 2022 to establish the Whistle Bend school council. I feel very confident that we will be able to achieve that and that we will have the first year of the First Nation School Board underway and have a better understanding of what the final enrolment will be there.

In terms of the establishment and how things will shift around in terms of the catchment area, I will first say that a ministerial order is required to establish the Whistle Bend elementary school attendance area. When signed, the attendance area, which previously included only the Whistle Bend neighbourhood — we had gone through that process to establish a Whistle Bend — which included that Whistle Bend neighbourhood. Now with the establishment and the changes that have happened with the First Nation School Board, we will now add parts of the former Takhini attendance area for students who will choose to go to a different school and potentially not the First Nation School Board school. A by-election process will be required to accept nominations and conduct an election if that's required.

The department is preparing the necessary documents for Cabinet for approval of the ministerial order to approve the attendance areas and the changes that will happen, including

making adjustments that reflect the schools governed by the First Nation School Board.

A by-election will happen in November to align with the First Nation School Board trustee elections conducted by Elections Yukon.

So that, I hope, covers the questions that the member opposite has. I am going back through the timeline to where some of these changes happened and why they happened.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister. We will monitor that situation, and hopefully, by the time we return for the Fall Sitting, there will be a school council in place for Whistle Bend.

I just have one quick question on the capital side of things. I know that Highways and Public Works is managing this project now on behalf of Education, but I just wanted to confirm that there is a design/build contract in place with a local firm. Can the minister confirm the total capital requirement for the project? I believe the number is \$25.18 million in this fiscal year and \$17.771 million in the 2023-24 fiscal year. I am just looking for some confirmation of those numbers that we have from briefing notes and the documents provided at the Education briefing.

I just wanted to step back again to the platform that the Liberals put out last spring saying that they would complete the construction of a new elementary school in Whistle Bend by 2023. However, as I said, the 2023-24 budget request is for just over \$17.7 million. Is that 2023 timeline still the goal, or are we looking at not opening the school until the fall of 2024?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the capital, Ketz Construction has been awarded the design/build contract for \$42.8 million. We have \$25,180,000 in our budget for 2022-23. For the next fiscal year, we have forecasted \$17,771,000. That is what we have forecasted in our capital budget. I think that those were the two questions the member opposite had. If there is something else that is required, please let me know.

Mr. Kent: Just to confirm then, when looking at the Liberal platform from last year, they said: "Complete the construction of a new elementary school in Whistle Bend by 2023 and establish a Whistle Bend School Council in spring 2021." So, it seems that both of those commitments made last spring are late, if I'm understanding the minister correctly. Obviously, we have established that the school council wasn't put in place last year, but it sounds as though — I'm looking at the budget documents — the new elementary school will not be ready by 2023, so that will be a little bit later as well.

I do want to turn to some questions regarding Hidden Valley Elementary School. I am just curious if the minister can give us a sense — with respect to the additional supports for students, families, and staff and a lot of that, of course, is around counselling and mental wellness support. Can the minister give us an update of what is taking place at Hidden Valley?

I have just one other question. My understanding from my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, is that there was a virtual meeting — I believe that it was done via Zoom on November 9 — and there was a commitment to release the video from that meeting, but I understand that this hasn't been

done. I am curious if the minister can give us an update on that as well.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to just go back to the Whistle Bend school because I did miss that aspect of the question in terms of the completion of the project. Whistle Bend school is a key investment for our government, with construction scheduled to be completed during the 2023-24 school year. That's a commitment. We are looking forward to having that done, with the school council being in place in the fall of 2022 so that they can definitely be part of all of the key decisions in terms of normal school council functions.

Moving on to Hidden Valley — and I will go into the question about the November 9 meeting after I talk about where we're at with Hidden Valley.

I certainly want to start by saying that I continue to hold up the dedicated and sincere administration and staff who have been going beyond their usual responsibilities really to ensure that children feel connected, well-supported, and safe. There has been a considerable amount of work done. As the reports of the four reviews are delivered and more conversations about next steps continue, we need to always be mindful of the supports that students, staff, parents, and guardians may need. We are responsive to those needs on an ongoing basis. The staff at Hidden Valley school are working really hard to provide students with engaging learning opportunities, while still being very vigilant to monitor for students who may require support and connecting them with appropriate supports. The most effective way to always ensure students' safety is to educate children about consent rights and wrong touching and boundaries, who to tell when they are feeling unsafe and have been harmed. These topics are included in our physical and health education curriculum and are taught in the school.

In terms of follow-up meetings and working alongside families, I certainly heard families say that they wished to have a voice in the actions that will be undertaken in response to the reviews and the investigations; therefore, one of the responses, which is in our action plan, is to establish a parents committee to inform the work of the Government of Yukon. We are now actively in that process of establishing that. We have had a first meeting with the parents committee on April 19, and a number of parents expressed their interest in joining this committee to set the groundwork for how we will work together, including undertaking school-level actions to support healing and restorative activities, of course, always in concert with the administration and school council. We had a great first meeting on April 19. We are really committed to walking side by side on this path with parents and the school community, no matter how long this takes. That's always the commitment I've made and will continue to be there.

We're just in the process of finalizing terms of reference and then will be meeting with the school administration, school council, and the parents committee together so that we can ensure that we're all on the same page and that folks are in clear understanding of what the role will be of this parents committee and how it will work to support the work that is ongoing and the work still to come.

In terms of school staffing, the Department of Education school staffing committee considers all the formal requests to increase staffing supports from schools and to deploy staff appropriately and equitably across all schools. The Hidden Valley Elementary School staffing allotment was increased this year to support requests for additional school administration support and educational assistant support to provide additional direct supports to students and staff, which the school has not had in the past.

The Schools and Student Services branch officials continue to work with the school administration and council to assess the needs and assignments of teaching staff at the school. That work is ongoing.

In terms of additional support — and I did talk about this in our last debate that we had around education and additional supports to students, families, and staff. One of the things that I have stated many times is that my intent is always that no family or child will be left behind. Supports have been, and continue to be, available to families and staff, including on-demand support coordinated via the school community consultant, who can assist families who are seeking or who may have funding or who have been funding their own supports.

So, we really need to always ensure that we have all of the information so that we can support families appropriately. We work with each family individually and will work to find options that work for them. That is the commitment of the Department of Education and a very, very clear commitment from me as the minister.

The Department of Education works with partner departments that provide, free of charge, a variety of appropriate services to those in need. Supports have included, but are not limited to — and these are a few examples: referrals to other supports and services are being facilitated as needed, such as through Family and Children's Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, and Victim Services. An example of this is child and family rapid-access counselling, which is available, as well as long-term individual and group counselling support for children and their families. Of course, there is assistance with how to talk with children about abuse and how to support children's personal safety.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use facilitated six parent support evening sessions with the clinical counsellor and an outreach worker. This was held off-site to best accommodate the request and privacy of families. That has happened. We are always prepared to do more in that regard. The child and youth and family treatment team has been attending the school to monitor the needs of staff, students, and families, providing services to parents and families, and they have delivered sessions on resilience and socio-emotional skills for grade 5, 6, and 7 students. Supports have been and will continue to be provided to staff, including presentations on services and supports available to them, crisis counselling, services through LifeWorks, and information on broader employee and family assistance programs. I will wait to see if there are other questions in that regard in a moment.

I did table this, so I may just read it into the record. On March 31, I tabled a response because it came as Motion

No. 320, where, on March 15, the Member for Lake Laberge gave notice of the following motion:

“THAT this House urges the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education to live up to their promise to provide Hidden Valley School students with a copy of the video from the November 9, 2021 online meeting between those two ministers, department officials, RCMP, and parents.”

There was a preamble, of course, to the motion that suggested that, as a minister, I was not following the law, including following the requirements of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. I definitely appreciate the opportunity today to provide further information and context.

The meeting recording being referenced contains third-party personal information. Therefore, we have provided opportunities upon request for individuals who attended the meeting to review the recording.

In response to an access to information request to receive a copy of the video, the Department of Education worked with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to ensure that we were meeting our legal obligations to individuals to access their personal information while protecting the personal information of third parties.

In a letter dated January 22, 2022, the Information and Privacy Commissioner’s office provided the following advice — and I quote: “Our analysis of the matter found that the Public Body had authority to withhold the record from the applicant under subsection 70(1) of the ATIPP Act. However, to strike an appropriate balance between the applicant’s right of access to their own personal information and the protection of the third party’s personal privacy, we recommend that the Public Body allow the applicant to view the record at issue, without providing a copy.”

The Department of Education accepted this recommendation and notified the applicant of this. We extend this offer to anyone who attended the November 9, 2021 meeting who would like to view the video. Individuals can e-mail publicschools@yukon.ca to express their interest to coordinate a time to view the video.

I hope that covers it, but perhaps the member can advise if there is further information he would like me to cover in terms of Hidden Valley supports.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. I will take a look at the Hansard tomorrow to see if there are any additional questions based on what the minister provided here today.

I want to move on and just ask a couple of questions with respect to the Education Appeal Tribunal. We have heard from a Yukoner who is looking to have a matter considered by the Education Appeal Tribunal, or EAT. However, they were informed that currently there is no chair appointed to that tribunal. That’s an appointment made by the Minister of Education.

Can the minister confirm if there is or is not a chair currently in place for the Education Appeal Tribunal? If not, when does she anticipate making that appointment?

Also, our understanding is that the secretary/registrar of that is a contracted position through Education, so I am curious

if the minister can let us know if that contract is current or if it needs to be renewed and then if she does have information on the number of outstanding cases that still need to go before the Education Appeal Tribunal.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. The Education Appeal Tribunal plays a really critical role in giving parents the ability to appeal education decisions such as a suspension or an individualized education plan that they may disagree with — so a very important body.

The Department of Education has received applications from members of the public who are interested in joining the tribunal. I am really pleased to announce, of course — and I did do this in a legislative return yesterday — that Janet Van Bibber, a current board member, has been appointed chair of the tribunal. She has had a number of terms with the tribunal. In addition, I have appointed four new members, bringing the total number of members to seven, including the chair and one Council of Yukon First Nations representative.

In terms of the contract for the position of secretary, which expired at the end of March — a replacement is being sought right now. The department has made a temporary arrangement for the secretary position until the role is filled. I really want to thank Deana Lemke for her years of service and support and for assisting us with this transition.

In terms of the number of cases that we have before the tribunal, we currently have two cases.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. I missed the legislative return that she tabled yesterday with respect to this, so I do thank her for providing that information yesterday and again here today.

In the number of minutes that we have left here, I have some questions regarding the First Nation School Board. In looking at the *Education Act*, section 174 is entitled “Annual operations and maintenance budget for School Board”. Then if you go down to 174(3)(c), it says that the minister shall “approve an annual operations and maintenance budget for each School Board on or before March 15 of each year subject to the regulations for grants and contributions to School Boards.”

I believe we have missed that deadline, obviously, so I am hoping that the minister can give us an update on when she would anticipate an annual O&M budget being in place for the newly established First Nation school board, which, I understand, will be starting operations with the new school year this fall.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. Again, a huge milestone for the Yukon in terms of establishing a First Nation school board. It is quite a historic step to get to this place — really working within the laws that we have in the territory to realize, I think, the intended vision that the elders had almost 50 years ago when they worked toward *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. It was quite a milestone to establish and sign some very key formal documents on the 49th anniversary of this historic document — *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

I worked hard with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the newly established First Nation School Board Interim

Governance Committee in the exercise of really working collaboratively to oversee the authorities. I want to just note that we knew that we had an incredible amount of work to do to meet the goal of having the First Nation School Board in place by the beginning and to be ready to operate the schools under their jurisdiction for the 2022-23 year, which is why we agreed to establish an interim governance committee to move forward with governance and funding arrangements.

The committee includes a number of very capable and highly regarded individuals who have a very solid track record in education within our territory. The Department of Education is working with this Interim Governance Committee to establish a preliminary funding formula and to address operational matters, such as registration and busing — particularly in Whitehorse, where parents will have the choice of where to send their children. This interim committee will negotiate the financial arrangement with the Department of Education and will take over the operation of the schools that fall under their authority at the start of the new school year.

The department has been meeting with technical representatives from the interim committee and have delivered a number of presentations on the budget process. They last met on April 19. All of this is to say, I think — just to establish that context around the work that is going on and the collaborative work that we are doing with the Interim Governance Committee, the Chiefs Committee on Education, and the technicians. Everyone is working collaboratively to get us through to be able to have all the pieces in place so that we have a seamless start to the school year.

We will have a one-year funding agreement in place that will support the schools under the First Nation School Board.

Going forward, we will have and will meet that March 15 timeline in terms of having a budget in place. I had my first experience as a minister to actually be part of that process with the CSFY and their funding arrangement this year. I had the opportunity to work through all of the details and be within that process. I think that we have had a lot of learning from CSFY and the establishment of the Francophone School Board, and that teaching is being applied as we go forward. There is some uniqueness, but it was a great experience to go through that with the Francophone School Board and to be in the process, and we look forward to having our First Nation School Board be as seamless as that going forward.

Mr. Kent: I have a follow-up question for the minister on that. She did mention that there would be O&M funding for the school board and then, going forward, we will meet the March 15 deadline that is spelled out in the legislation. She also, I believe, said that there may be additional funding for the schools themselves. I am assuming that there could be cost implications that may come forward this fall. Could I just get the minister to confirm that there may be additional resources dedicated to the schools themselves?

Also, I want to make sure that those schools that didn't choose to join the First Nation School Board will also receive additional resources that are in line with additional resources that are given to the schools that have chosen to join the First Nation School Board governance model.

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of — I will just reiterate that we are working toward a one-year funding agreement — premature — the negotiations and work are ongoing right now, in terms of what will be in that funding agreement. Again, I think that we have learned a lot from the work that we have done with the CSFY and the Francophone School Board. What we do know is that we have staff allocations and certain aspects that are the same, and then there are things that are different. When you look at the — and I will give this as an example: There are a number of areas within the funding that we provide to the Francophone School Board that are based on certain and specific types and parameters around staffing allocation, and then the Francophone School Board has arrangements with Canada. They receive funds directly from Canada for the operation of their schools. So, that is an example of an area that is different.

Again, I cannot comment specifically on what will be in that first-year funding agreement, but I will absolutely be happy to bring the information back, as it becomes available. There is an incredibly aggressive agenda that the Interim Governance Committee and the Department of Education are working from to ensure that we are ready to transition these schools that are part of the First Nation School Board over to the First Nation School Board in our timeline.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike 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. Silver: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled April 27, 2022:

35-1-48

Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2020-21 Annual Report (Speaker Harper)

35-1-49

Second Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges (April 2022) (Mostyn)

35-1-50

Third Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges (April 2022) (Mostyn)

The following legislative returns were tabled April 27, 2022:

35-1-50

Response to oral question from Ms. McLeod re: forestry industry (Streicker)

35-1-51

Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: mining industry greenhouse gas reduction targets (Streicker)

35-1-52

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: mining legislation (Streicker)

35-1-53

Response to oral question from Mr. Dixon re: mining within municipal boundaries (Streicker)

35-1-54

Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: land costs (Streicker)

35-1-55

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Yukon nominee program (Pillai)

35-1-56

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Yukon nominee program (Pillai)

35-1-57

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — contractor engagement on Old Crow project (Clarke, N.)

Written notice was given of the following motion respecting committee reports April 27, 2022:

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 2

Re: concurrence in the *Third Report of Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges* (Mostyn)

The following written question was tabled April 27, 2022

Written Question No. 20

Re: full-time equivalents in 2016-17 budget year (Istchenko)